

Analysis for “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest”

Rating: ★★★★★☆

Spectacular Movie Techniques

Often times when a movie is based off a novel or other piece of literature, many details will be left out. The reason for this is simply that it would just take way too long, and nobody wants to sit through a five hour movie. To incorporate these details more quickly and efficiently, directors choose to use movie techniques. Movie techniques are physical and technical effects the director uses to give a certain meaning to the shot. This extra information can be interpreted in such a way to better understand plot points or characterization when watching a film.

In the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, director Milos Forman uses spectacular film techniques to help his viewers interpret the information that had to be cut out:

- *Close Up*

Nurse Ratched, played by Louise Fletcher, is the protagonist of the film. Forman creates a zoomed in shot of Ratched’s face when ever she is present in a scene. One specific instance is during the group therapy sessions. Whenever a patient came up with an idea or something to change, Ratched would immediately shut it down while still speaking in a comforting tone. However, the close up Forman creates emphasizes Ratched’s true emotional coldness.

- *Dialogue*

Although we cannot hear the narrator’s voice or thoughts during a movie, we can hear the dialogue. Dialogue obviously has meaning alone on the surface, however what they are saying could give a second meaning.

For example, Forman integrates A LOT of swearing into the actors’ lines—especially Jack Nicholson. Nicholson plays the main protagonist, Randle McMurphy, a new patient in the medical ward for his “disease” of gambling. Certainly this absurd diagnosis frustrates his character, but viewers witness this not through the words he speaks but rather the consistent swearing. The integrated swearing and use of curse words helps the viewers visualize how angry that character or characters are.

Actor Jack Nicholson had a catch phrase: “wanna bet?” The excessive use of this phrase added on to the characterization for his character, McMurphy. Although viewers didn’t have to think hard for this incorporation, the use of the phrase “wanna bet?”, they clearly interpreted his character’s gambling problem.

Book vs. Movie

Ken Kesey, author of the original book, chose his narrator to be Chief. In the book, it can be clearly determined that Chief is a wallflower and doesn’t have much to do with the

development of the plot as a whole. However, Chief's role becomes very clear in the end when... well I won't give any spoilers.

In the movie things began to switch up. Forman chose to avoid the narration throughout the film and stick to the plot that focusses on McMurphy. Although still including Chief, actor Will Sampson, his character was certainly lacking. By not involving Chief, viewers have lost the main idea of the entire piece: you don't have to have a big body to have a big personality. Forman snatched this lesson from his viewers and the entire connection McMurphy and Chief developed in the novel.

Even though Milos Forman cut out the most important aspect of the book, I have to admit, he still brought together a great film and made a fantastic movie.