

EXEMPLARY SAMPLE PAPER FOR FILM ANALYSIS

“Jaws”

Part 1, Question 2. Dramatic irony refers to a situation in which events or facts not known to a character on screen are known to another character and/or the audience. How is dramatic irony used in this film. Cite and explain at least two examples.

Dramatic irony is used famously throughout this film through the shark musical motif and underwater shots. In addition to these examples, there are several times when the movie uses other methods of dramatic irony. One of these scenes is the shark attack in the pond. The irony starts as a teenage girl who is painting a tranquil beach scene (ironic in itself) spots the shark headed toward two small boats in the pond and yells “shark!” As there has just been a false shark sighting along the beach, no one initially believes her – kind of as if she is “crying wolf” – yet she knows what she sees is true. This situation creates a horrific sense of helplessness for the viewer as we want Brody to react sooner and do something to stop the shark. Further dramatic irony occurs in the same scene when we see the shark coming up from behind the man who, in a great example of situational irony, is trying to help the boys on the raft. The audience is compelled to shout warnings at the screen, but just ends up feeling powerless amidst these terrifying examples of situational and dramatic irony.

Part 2, Question 4. Recall a scene that impressed you aesthetically. What did you like about it - the editing, camera placement, lighting, etc?

The scene in which Hooper and Quint show off their scars and Quint tells the USS Indianapolis story has always been one of my favorites since the first time I saw this film several years ago. The personal yet ominous mood of the scene is established wonderfully through several methods. First, the lighting in the room is warm and relatively soft, adding a homey feel to the scene, but the lamp above the table is constantly swinging, creating an uneasiness and instability. Also, the camera stays still with only slight, occasional movements, but outside the cabin windows we see ocean swells and the rocking of the boat, which is quite dramatic at times. This, combined with the topics of conversation which themselves make the viewer laugh and cringe at the same time create a very uncomfortable scene.

In addition to the lighting, the camera placement in this scene is fantastic for setting the tone. Every shot is either a medium shot or close-up. The medium shots are very comfortable and natural to the viewer, but the close-ups during the telling of the Indianapolis story are unnerving. The audience doesn't want to be that close to the story, but at the same time it's told so beautifully that the script and cinematography force our attention to it. Even the close-ups are unique because they are 2-shots, including a slightly faded Hooper in the background. This symbolizes a loose bond or connections between these characters created by their common scar and nautical experiences. Brody, though, is always shown in a medium 1-shot, showing his isolation from the experiences of the other two men. Interestingly, after the story is completed, each character is shown in a one shot. This shows that Brody still feels distanced, but also that Hooper is no longer worthy of being associated with Quint who has survived such a horrific experience. Essentially, lines are drawn between each of the men showing how different their pasts are. Finally, to end the scene, we view the three men together in a 3-shot from a high angle. In this shot, the audience is glad to see the three men once again finding a common ground and united together, but the high angle brings on a sense of the impending doom for all of them. The scene constantly contradicts itself and creates conflicting emotions leaving the viewer feeling tossed about, just as the boat is being tossed about by the ocean waves. Simply brilliant!

Part 3, Question 11. Consider the concept of the hero journey. Pick one of the three primary characters - Chief Martin Brody, Quint, or Matt Hooper - and cite whether he follows the traditional heroic path.

The story of Chief Martin Brody through "Jaws" fits the path of the hero's journey very well. To first begin the path towards heroism, one must respond to a calling. Brody's calling is the defense of Amity's beaches when threatened by shark attacks. The safety of these beaches is taken away and must be reclaimed to save the town. Brody's responsibilities change from settling the minor disputes of this friendly town to hunting down a killer beast as he answers this call.

Next, the prospective hero must cross the threshold and begin his adventure. Typically one encounters resistance as he tries to cross this threshold. He also is joined by companions and provided tools to aid him on his quest. A tool that is essential to the completion of the journey is often referred to as a talisman. Brody is not yet set on his path to the hero journey until the

second attack on the beach that killed the Kitner boy. It is certain there is a shark, the whole town knows it, and it's his responsibility. When a shark is caught and killed, the town thinks the danger is over, but Brody, Hooper, and Quint, his journey companions, know otherwise. It's at this point that they know they must cross the threshold. Mayor Larry Vaughn stands in his way, preventing him from closing the beaches or allowing a charter to pay a shark hunter. Brody and Hooper go out looking for the shark, and come across another victim. Hooper identifies the shark as a great-white, but the mayor still denies they're efforts to keep the town safe. Another attack occurs before Vaughn finally approves to pay Quint to hunt down the shark and signs Brody's paperwork. Quint is the veteran, providing hands on experience and his boat, and Hooper is the shark expert with knowledge and fancy equipment. Hooper also brings the "talismán" that will aid the journey: the oxygen tanks. Now Brody has approval of his journey, his companions, and his talismán. The journey begins.

After crossing the threshold the real challenges begin. Unless one can survive these challenges, he cannot pass on to be a hero. It is during these challenges that the companions offer the most help and tools received early on come in handy. This is a trying time for a potential hero and is preparation for the final battle. Brody's challenges start before ever seeing the shark, as even getting on the boat is a hard thing for him as he is terrified of water and unaccustomed to nautical life. Next, he and his companions start tracking down the shark. Rightfully he is the first to encounter the shark, but it terrifies him. He wants to give up and try again, stating "We're gonna need a bigger boat." Quint stands in his way, making him face the shark with the tools at hand. Barrels are attached to the shark one by one in feats of valor by Quint and Hooper as Brody stands aside and slowly learns how to handle himself on a boat, tie knots, and what true courage is. When Hooper descends in the shark cage and comes up missing and the shark eats Quint, Brody enters his abyss, his moment of truth.

Once the initial challenges are completed, the character must face the ultimate battle, known as the abyss. This is his true test of heroism and the event that determines his future. The prospective hero usually faces this battle alone and often calls the aid of his talismán for assistance. Brody's abyss is the one-on-one battle between himself and the shark. His companions are gone, his boat is sinking, and there's still a great white shark in the water. He utilizes the equipment that Hooper brought on the quest and throws a tank of pressurized oxygen into the shark's mouth to distract it so he can try to escape the sinking cabin, and also hoping it

will puncture the tank and blow itself up. It effectively allows Brody to escape to the top of the boat where he grabs a rifle and climbs the mast of the sinking boat. But, the mast is leaning into the water the shark charges him. Brody fires the rifle into the air-tank inside the shark's mouth and the tank blows up destroying the shark. Martin Brody conquered the abyss.

When the final test is over, the hero is transformed in some way. They realize something about themselves, and shed off part of their old self to become something better. While passing through the abyss, Brody realized he alone could save the town. After all, that was his job as chief of police. He overcame his fears and did what he had to do. No longer is he the police chief of Amity who was afraid of the water; he is the savior of Amity and a real hero.

We do not see Brody's return, a common ending for a hero journey, but we can imagine it. He will be hailed as the hero of Amity. The beaches will be open for the 4th of July and the town will prosper. Brody's external rewards will likely fade as the town moves on to other things, but his inner growth will last a lifetime, and that is all the gift he needs. He now knows with certainty the very thing he said about himself early on in the film, "I'm the chief of police. I can do anything I want."