**Edward Scissorhands**

**Choose a film which is an example of a specific genre such as horror, romance, action or comedy.**

**Explain how the film makers have used the features of the genre to create a successful film.**

‘Edward Scissorhands’ is a film that was directed by Tim Burton in the early 1990s. Since then it has gained a reputation for being one of the most renowned films of its era – nominations for the BAFTA and Academy Awards prove this. Throughout the film, Burton plays with the viewers’ stereotypical ideas of good and evil. He effectively conveys this by creating the hero as an unfinished artificial man called Edward. Although on the inside Edward is an ‘uncommonly gentle man’ – (according to the theatrical release poster,) the opinions of onlookers differ as all they see is a monster who, due to being incomplete, has scissors for hands. Burton intelligently includes many key themes into what he refers to as his ‘favourite and most personal’ piece of work. The most obvious themes to recognise include the harsh nature of society and the complexity of love/relationships.

Burton manages to alter the genre of horror into a genre of dark fantasy and romance. The unanticipated transition in the way that Edward is presented to the audience at the start of the film sets the precedent of change for the rest of the movie. The genre of horror is first introduced during the opening credits as the viewers are shown a greyscale abandoned Gothic mansion. Suspense is added by an eerie soundtrack. With this added suspense, Burton cleverly creates an anti-climax with a sudden transition to an un-threatening pastel coloured village. Although Edward is first categorised as a villain, it becomes clear to the viewer when he first meets Peggy that he is just confused and lonely. This lightens the genre, allowing for a later transition to romance.

Edward, the main protagonist, is acted out by a young – but no less outstanding – Johnny Depp. Depp first portrays Edward as a shy, self-conscious character who is ashamed to be different. Later on in the story, the viewers can see that his character develops a more confident and optimistic attitude to life. This is shown when Edward begins to put his unusual hands to good use by cutting hair, grooming pets and making glorious sculptures out of ice and hedges. Another noticeable development in Edward’s character is when he is taken from his mansion into the Boggs’ household by a curious and sympathetic Avon representative called Peggy Boggs. Peggy, although innocent and kind, immediately realises that Edward does not fit in with the society in the town. Trying to help, she gets Edward some new clothes. It is then visible that his new outfit, which is predominantly white, also happens to be the colour of purity and innocence. This is in stark contrast to his previous outfit, a scruffy black leather suit with lots of buckles and metal straps. Burton included this colour change to make the audience think that he is a new person, as black is sometimes associated with evil, death and mystery. Although his new set of clothes are white, he still has long straggly black hair, black eyeshadow and black lips. This is an intentional decision that the makeup department chose to include because, again, it is in contrast to his pale white skin. Throughout the story it becomes clear that Edward is ashamed of his hands as he just wants to fit in but, despite all this, he manages to keep a positive attitude in life. He shows his optimistic side when he makes an appearance on a local TV show. When the TV host asks him what was the best part of his new life in town, Edward states it’s “the friends that [he’s] made”. Furthermore, this reinstates the director’s challenge of the stereotype of a monster as this is another example of how gentle Edward really is. In addition, this helps to create sympathy for the protagonist, a vital part of any horror or romance film.

Burton originally planned for Burbank, California, to be the filming location for the movie, but Burton believed “the city [had] become too altered” since his childhood. This just shows how personal and important ‘Edward Scissorhands’ is to Tim Burton. Also, the director said that one of the many reasons why the film means so much to him is that because when he was a teenager he used to sketch a character that had scissor-hands. Burton later revealed that he did this to vent out his own feelings of isolation and his inability to communicate to people around him. Having this personal link to the film, makes it feel much more realistic and, at times, heart-breaking for the audience. In the end, it was decided that Tampa Bay, Florida would be the setting of the film.

When Peggy first drives up to Edward’s mansion to try and sell him cosmetics, Burton shows the viewers that despite the eerie looks of the dark Gothic building, inside the garden walls lie beautiful, stunning topiaries. This helps to establish that ‘Edward Scissorhands’ is a film that is very much based around not judging a book by its cover. The community that was created by the director also represents the saying as despite all the houses having bright pastel exteriors, on the inside they are non-descript and quite frankly, all of the houses are exactly the same.

To have good lighting is essential in any thought-provoking film. Burton takes full advantage of this ability to emphasise the un-predictability at the start of ‘Edward Scissorhands’. In the opening credits the director cleverly conveys a sense of unease by contrasting the bright white sun next to a dark, ominous mansion. Also, Burton compares the stereotypical difference from the monstrous Gothic castle to a community with brightly coloured houses. Another occasion when Burton contrasts polar opposites is in the opening scenes. He does this by setting the mansion in winter and the town in summer. This helps to create the illusion that portrays Edward as a ‘monster’, and makes the plastic community appear as heroes. Furthermore, the winter/summer comparison is also effective as winter is often associated with darkness, freezing cold weather and mystery, whereas summer is seen as a warm, bright, colourful time of year.

Although it is clear that the film is loosely based around the love aspect between Edward and Kim, the relationship which has the biggest impact on the protagonist is the one between Edward and Peggy. The main key event in their relationship is when they first meet. As the film just began prior to their meeting, it is important that Burton manages to create the characters’ personalities whilst the audience still have a relatively open mind. Peggy describes herself as Edward’s “local Avon representative and [that she’s] as harmless as a cherry pie”. This simple line from Peggy shows the audience that she is a character to be trusted. It also builds confidence between the two characters as in the beginning, they are both frightened of each other. Burton also skilfully added in a simile comparing Peggy’s harmlessness to that of a cherry pie. Another influential moment in their meeting is when Edward shows Peggy his hands. Here, Burton conveys the kindness and acceptance of Peggy as immediately, she says that she thinks he “should come home with [her]” instead of remaining alone.

Despite Peggy’s character knowing the difficulties with society that she and Edward will have to face, she keeps her morals held high, and tries to help Edward. This shows great strength from Peggy and vastly improves her reputation in the viewers’ eyes. However, the film is not always a feel-good story as the closing scenes establish. Although Edward is an innocent and caring character, his scissor-hands are usually the things that get him into the most trouble. This is primarily shown when he tries to save Peggy’s son from getting hit by a car. As he jumps in the way and pushes Kevin away from danger, he scratches Kevin’s face. The on-looking crowd then deem his selfless actions as a vicious attack on the boy and so they chase after him and pursue him back to his original mansion. Furthermore, Burton explores the genre of horror in this scene as there is a mob who drive Edward back to his previous setting with the intention to kill. In addition, the scene is also stereotypically associated with horror as it has been used in well-known previous works, such as ‘Frankenstein’.

Overall, ‘Edward Scissorhands’ is a unique adaptation of the horror genre. This, you could argue, is what makes the film so extraordinary. Although Edward's character is very quiet, through lighting, camera angles, costumes and makeup and of course a brilliant portrayal by Johnny Depp, you can tell how the protagonist is feeling just by his eyes. This is very uncommon in most films let alone a horror, so all these abnormalities, and how Burton fits all of these aspects together, is what makes watching ‘Edward Scissorhands’ such an unforgettable experience.

S: Detailed and thorough analysis of the film which clearly shows your understanding of the key points of the film.

NS: Use more quotes to back up your points. Ensure all sections link together cohesively.