**Edward Scissorhands**

**Media Essay**

*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 features of the genre to create a successful film.*

‘Edward Scissorhands’ directed by Tim Burton is a thrilling tale and a perfect example of the romance and horror genres brought together through film. In the film we follow main characters Edward and Kim, who struggle to form a relationship in a world where abnormality is not accepted and society is constantly forcing them apart. Burton’s skilful and imaginative use of symbolism makes this film moving and exciting, as we are taken through the journey of Edward and Kim’s trusted love story and the barriers they must overcome.

Burton’s perspective on horror gives the genre a completely new meaning. The way Burton manipulates horror is twisted and strange, but not to particularly cause fear to the viewer. He has the capability to make the viewer think further into the meaning behind all the techniques used in the film, and without giving the viewer a stereotypical horror with a key relationship, he has created a character that is only seen as dangerous and horrifying when in reality it is the individuals surrounding Edward that are the monsters. Throughout the film we also see the budding relationship between Edward and Kim, which at the beginning starts at rock bottom. Kim is introduced as a beautiful young girl with a boyfriend and a happy life, and so Edward’s unexpected arrival automatically causes Kim to fear him and his abnormal appearance. However, slowly Kim becomes more accepting of Edward as she gets to know him. The characterisation of Edward especially intrigues the viewer as he is seen as dangerous and intimidating, but then immediately differs from what others would describe as a monster when he shows how sensitive, generous and caring he really is, making the film effective from start to finish.

The way Burton uses colour throughout the film plays a very important role in the film, as it symbolises each character and their personalities. When we are introduced to the village, it is evident that bright colours are very popular, and as we are drawn closer we see the women in the village moving together, following each other’s actions and voicing the exact same opinions. There is no individuality or personality, and so Edward’s arrival causes a disturbance in this ‘perfect’ community due to how different he appears. With his costume being entirely black, Burton is already showing how much Edward is different compared to everyone else, who are dressed in vivid colours and dramatic patterns. As Edward becomes acquainted with the community, he begins to try and introduce some creativity by cutting hedges into amazing shapes, styling hair and animals. However, even this fails to succeed as everyone wants the same styles and it proves impossible for the community to ever be different. It is evident that at this point Edward feels very vulnerable considering how different he really is compared to the people he has met, and so he is trying to show off his hands as something amazing in order for the community to accept him. It is also clear that Edward is hoping that, by changing the ways of the community, he will fit in slightly more. Others describe him as “interesting, distinctive and unique” and although these words seem positive, they are all the things the women especially in the community are scared of making it even more difficult for Edward to find a place of belonging. Again, this is creating a strong sense of sympathy towards Edward and adds to the success of the film as the viewers are hoping Edward is accepted for his individuality.

Very shortly after arriving in the community, Kim is introduced. Edward up to this point has been very lost and lonely as he is the only one that held any signs of being unique, and so when Kim is introduced to Edward he no longer feels alone. Burton has successfully ensured that through colour, costume and characterisation Kim is perceived as very different, too, and although it is not accepted at this point, she is a lot like Edward. She wears pastel colours that are quite neutral, symbolising that even though she is very apprehensive at the beginning about Edward, inside she is very gentle, caring and accepting. It also shows that she is not one for following the crowd with their bright colours and negative opinions and how she isn’t scared to be unique; a key theme in Burton’s work. At this stage it seems that this budding romance would be simple as their differences would bring them together in a world of no individuality, but Kim’s boyfriend Jim completely disagrees. Jim is shown as very opinionated and controlling over Kim and refuses to accept Edward because of how different he is, and is not scared of anyone he believes to be less important than him.

As Jim sees Kim and Edward’s relationship strengthen, jealousy becomes common and Jim’s character becomes more overly protective and arrogant, which again is effective in showing that those who are seen as ‘normal’ are actually the monstrous ones as demonstrated when Jim shouts at Edward, “Get the hell out of here. Get the hell out! Go, freak!”

Jim finally snaps and begins to pick on Edward, intimidating him to the point where Edward feels so unwanted he runs away. The community see Edward as a freak, but this is only judged on his dangerous hands and abnormal colours, when in reality Edward’s personality is kind and gentle and the community are evidently prejudiced. This further engages the audience by making it clearer that those who are different are actually the ones with the pure hearts which is why Kim and Edward are being brought together.

Burton’s effective use of soundtrack plays a large part in how the characters are perceived by the audience. Even from the beginning of the film, we follow Peg into a mysterious house at the end of the street, and while approaching the building there is a rising feeling of suspense and tension. We then are shown Edward’s room and it is evident that Peg is already scared of what could be lurking in the darkness. As Edward’s silhouette approaches slowly, the horror of the sharp scissors on his hands is built up through the suspenseful music and Peg’s facial expression and reaction:

“Uh, put those down. Don’t come any closer. Just

please … Those are your hands? Those are your hands.”

Here Edwards is already seen as dangerous, intimidating and abnormal, and he is someone to be feared, with no place of belonging. Burton has effectively done this to show the horror of someone different in a world where everything is the same with no individuality, again making it an effective film.

In the beginning of the film, Edward cannot understand right from wrong and doesn’t see why he can’t be accepted or why Kim is so afraid of him, however all of these aspects are changed by the end. Edward understands that he is different and can be dangerous and that his scissor hands form a physical barrier, scaring away those who try to show affection. Even though he is an affectionate individual himself, he realises that by involving himself with Kim he could be putting her in more danger:

Kim: “Hold me.”

Edward: “I can’t.”

In the final moments of their time together Kim accepts Edward and sees that there is nothing to fear. She is no longer afraid but Edward is aware that their relationship would be dangerous and by being together would limit Kim’s opportunities in life. He knows what is right in this situation and so in the final scenes of Edward and Kim, he is the first to say goodbye. This shows that Edward has taken the initiative to let Kim go and move on with her life, as he is unable to grow in a society where he is seen as monstrous and so he must live on his own. This clearly adds to the romantic feel of the film as, even though the two characters have tried so hard to be together, it is almost impossible and it gives the audience a strong message; the consequences of prejudice and what a powerful effect it has on relationships and even individuals’ self-esteem.

Tim Burton has altogether created a gripping, thrilling and romantic film all in one through the effective use of colour, costume, characterisation and symbolism. He has manipulated the stereotype of a ‘monster’ and changed the audience’s views on prejudice and the consequences of it. Burton also teaches us the importance of individuality and that by being yourself and not being afraid to stand out from the crowd you will no doubt be happier and the bigger person in any situation. He teaches us not to judge someone simply by their appearance, as there is always so much more to someone than meets the eye, good or bad, and that sometimes it is important to make a choice for the safety of someone you love. Through watching Kim and Edward slowly come together it shows the audience that, no matter how many people are against it and refuse to accept it, true love will always find a way to avoid these barriers, and so through all of these techniques ‘Edward Scissorhands’ by Tim Burton is an incredibly successful and intriguing film.

**Notes**

**Perceptive and analytical essay which would clearly pass at N5 level. Thoughtful and sensitive exploration of the film. Well done!**

**Some areas would have worked better earlier in the essay as these denote the first introduction of Edward etc.**