**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.*

A vivid and moving film, ‘Edward Scissorhands’, directed by Tim Burton, follows the classic storyline of a ‘monster’ constantly shunned by society. In the case of ‘Edward Scissorhands’, Burton tells the tale of Edward, a man created by his inventor to be a companion. Ironically, Edward ends up being the one in need of company when his creator dies, leaving him incomplete with scissors for hands. Burton builds on the horror and romance genres when Edward is met by Peg, “[his] local Avon representative”, who takes him back to live with her family. Initially welcomed into the community, a man with scissor hands is a point of interest. However, this changes rapidly and we see Edward become a victim of prejudice and alienation, targeted by this clashing and bright community. Peg’s daughter Kim, however, is drawn to Edward. The more he is pushed away, the more she sees him as this kind and gentle man. Her feelings of romance are shared by Edward, adding depth to Burton’s storyline and the film as a whole.

Typically in movies of the horror genre, we can see characters as either good or bad, these roles are reinforced by appearance. In ‘Edward Scissorhands’, Burton plays with this idea. Edward looks like the typical monster or baddie. Dressed in black, he is a pale-skinned, messy-haired and scarred stereotype. However, we see that he is in no way bad. In fact, he is far from it. We soon learn that he is to be pitied and this is made clear when Peg asks him, “Are you alone? Do you live up here all by yourself? What happened to your face?” Clearly, Peg feels sympathy for him. This is someone who looks like a monster externally but internally he is kind and warm-hearted and brave. All the qualities of a hero. This adds to the film, teaching us not to judge a person by simply what they look like. It adds another layer to Burton’s story, making it interesting and unique – not typical horror at all.

In contrast, the community Edward is taken to live in look like, on first glance, the good people of the story. Colourful, bright and matching. All the houses are well-kept, lawns trimmed and neighbours are chatting together. However, when Peg drives Edward to her house we see the flip-side of the community. Focussing on the gossiping band of housewives, Burton shows them moving as a pack, a block of solid colour and noise. Everywhere they go they are accompanied by a lark and ominous music, contrary to their initial appearance. They all move as one, copying each other. In ‘Edward Scissorhands’ these women are the real villains. They are seemingly ‘normal’ on the outside but corrupt and miserable internally. This is exciting, as instead of being the victims of the story – the poor villagers targeted by a monster – they are, in fact, the ones bringing misfortune. They are the ‘bad guys’, not Edward. This switching of roles creates a much more interesting and varied film, using simple things like costume, set and music to convey the characters roles in the story. This makes a successful movie.

In a community where everything is the same, Edward was initially welcomed as an exotic object of curiosity. This is shown when the pack of women hunt down Peg and invite themselves to a barbecue. For the neighbours, this is an opportunity to ogle at the latest edition. For Peg it is a cause for concern. She wants Edward to be accepted:

“There’s no need to be nervous. They are so eager to meet

you. You just have to be yourself. Just your own sweet self.”

Peg is clearly nervous. She knows how judgmental the neighbours can be. She doesn’t know how Edward will react. This builds suspense as we see both how Edward could harm the people coming to see him and, equally, how the people coming to see him could harm Edward. At this point, we don’t know much about either. This creates suspense. Will something happen? At this moment in time, who is the villain? The man with scissor hands or the women who hunted him down? Burton has blurred the lines between the good and bad characters, creating an interesting alternative to typical horror.

At the barbecue, Burton uses costume and colour to show us how Edward is different and not completely welcomed. Whilst all around him are dressed in bright, jewel-like colours, Edward is in stark black-and-white. This pushes him to the side, making him seem alone.

This effect is repeated throughout the movie. The bright colours become almost venomous as the community turn against him. Burton uses high angles and establishing camera shots to show Edward as a lone figure surrounded by a sea of colour. It creates a sense of danger. All the pinks, reds, greens and blues act as a warning. This is another reversal of typical horror. In monochrome colours, Edward is dressed as a villain. In clashing, almost childlike colours, the community are dressed as the innocents. Burton has again switched the appearances of typical characters around, creating a successful and alternative horror movie.

However, Edward is not completely alone. Peg dressed in pale pastel colours, stands by him. She is a member of the community as well as being on Edward’s ‘side’. Burton shows this by her softer, muted clothing. A blend between the two opposites.

Peg’s daughter, Kim, also dresses in paler, softer tones, though at first she does not welcome Edward, screaming when she finds him sleeping in her bed. For Edward, who has already formed an attraction to Kim, this is both surprising and terrifying. However, this initial repulsion is replaced by an almost sisterly love. Like her mother, Kim begins to pity him. Edward, on the other hand, is secretly devoted to her. He will do anything she asks. This is shown when he helps Kim and her boyfriend Jim to rob Jim’s parents. When it goes wrong and Edward is left inside with alarms sounding, Kim begins to realise her feelings for him. She is furious with Jim, begging him to go back for Edward. Later, when Kim is alone with Edward, she hears his point of view:

Edward: “I knew it was Jim’s house”

Kim: “You …. You did?”

Edward: “Yes”

Kim: “Well, then why’d you do it?”

Edward: “Because you asked me to”

Kim realises quickly that Edward loves her, not a soppy fake kind, like she has with Jim, but a real and innocent kind. Kim sees him now, not as a lost boy to feel sympathy for, but a real person who she can love. However, we can see from the way the community is starting to turn on Edward that they will never be accepted together. This is a classic storyline that Burton plays with. In this case, it is between the Heroine and the ‘Monster’. Something different from the usual love story, creating an effective and gripping relationship.

Kim sees that she can’t be with both Jim and Edward. She has to decide who to be with. She chooses the latter but Jim can’t seem to understand. We see him quickly change from pleasant to violent and stubborn. Kim tries to make him understand:

Kim: “Jim, I don’t love you anymore. I just want you to

go, ok? Just go!”

Jim: “Are you serious? Losing me to a loser like that?

He isn’t even human!”

Kim: “Just get out of here, ok, just go!”

However, Kim has no real power over him. We see the situation escalate quickly as Edward is hounded out of the town and up to the lonely castle he came from. Two people follow him inside; Kim, desperate to see him and Jim, gun in hand and bent on revenge. It is by the open window, Jim’s body lying underneath, killed by Edward but Kim finally says what Edward had been waiting to hear: “I love you”. This is very effective. We see that this will be her last words to him. It is an end to a relationship that was doomed from the start.

Through reversing roles and mixing up genres, Burton has created an effective and successful film. His simple switching of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in the horror genre created interesting elements, adding to the romantic storyline. Kim and Edward – a classic and tragic tale of romance – both opened and closed the movie, with old-aged Kim telling her story of how Edward Scissorhands changed the community. With snow falling, the credits roll, leaving behind the feel of a fairy tale. With a mix of techniques, Tim Burton’s ‘Edward Scissorhands’ is a modernesque and blended take on classical stories, making it a successful horror and romantic movie.

**NOTES**

**Detailed and perceptive essay which would clearly pass at N5 level. Articulate and fully explored views throughout. Well Done!**

**Try to join short sentences together.**