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ENG 102

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### Final on Arrival

The movie Arrival is based on the short story by Ted Chiang's "Story of Your Life" which tells us the story about how twelve massive spaceships with aliens land around the world in different countries, each of the countries affected by these twelve spaceships sends out their top scientist and armed forces to investigate these aliens that have landed. The U.S. entrusts linguistics professor Dr. Louise Banks, and theoretical physicist Ian Donnelly to lead the communications team with the aliens.

I believe the theme of alterity used in the film was through communication with the aliens, Banks wanted to balance enough familiarity of the language so that it could be comprehensible for the human readers while still having enough alterity in the text. As we seen at the beginning of the film, Ian reads Banks a poem she had written, which talks about communication "language is the foundation of civilization. It is the glue that holds people together. It is the first weapon drawn in a conflict." which is ironic being that communication is what they lack throughout the film. Another concept of communication was the idea of language, in the article "Arrival: Anthropology in Hollywood" by David Sutton he explains how the film uses the Sapir-Whorf theory developed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf that states the structure of a language determines or influences the thoughts and behavior characteristic of the culture. The article talks about how "the theory might be used in the film, however, the Sapir-Whorf is nowhere near the extent that the film implies although, the plot of the film hinges on this theory." the film seems to be trying to transmit a message by exaggerating the theory; how humans should always give others a chance to understand people because words in one language could mean something different in another language. This is important because we

see in the beginning how Banks cannot understand what the aliens are communicating neither do they understand what Banks is communicating, but we see how it is important to give them a chance even though we do not understand them.

At first, the characters seem to be scared of the aliens, they are distant and stay armed because they do not trust them and have no way of communicating with them. But rather soon in the film, Banks begins to take off her protective shield uniform so the aliens would trust her. With that small act, it began to change quickly with how the aliens trusted the humans. In this article, we were given "Arrival" by Robert Koehler, he talks about how the scenes become sonic passages; "characters become instrumental acts become a movement. Just as Mendelssohn interpreted the plays contrasting worlds of humans and fairies of the forest. These ideas are from the essential spirit and ideas that are intact with the meaning that hasn't been altered but from the details that are totally separate." given that information, we see the interesting choice not to develop conflict between the characters and the aliens. But as we watched the film we see how the conflict is within the human interactions, we see the different countries interacting with each other but as the situation continues, the countries begin to have disagreements on how to move forward. As their ongoing disagreements get heavier, some countries stop communicating with each other, which leads to China and others wanting to fire upon the aliens but the U.S. believes that is not the way this should end.

Although the film is missing an antagonist character they created that role with the aliens which forms the thriller sci-fi themed movie. As the film symbolizes the intelligence and relevance of time and language, rather than focusing on the thriller sci-fi aspect of the film, the movie really tries to tie together the deeper meaning of communication and language. The thriller side of the film made us react to the film sitting at the edge of our seats to see what happens next, but the symbolism made us connect with the characters and learn about the human mind. Throughout the film, we see images of Bank's daughter but we are unsure of if it is past or future images, however, we see her getting more of those images the more she learns

the language of the aliens, which leads us to the idea of them being future images. Because Banks is learning the language of the aliens she is thinking like them as well, in the film she tells us why her daughter's name is Hannah, her name represents a palindromic name. A palindromic means you can read it from the beginning to end and it would still mean the same, later we understand that the movie is palindromic; if the scenes' order were reversed, it's easy to see how the movie might still make sense, with the revelations of time and language coming first, with plot and circumstance appearing afterwards. It is all leading toward the same thing.

Although the ending of the film was not completely clear, Bank's asked this question to Ian and I think it really resembles the film, "if you would see your life from beginning to end would you change things." he replies "I would say what I feel more often." this question resembles the film because I think it was the moment she realized what she was capable of doing. As we saw the disagreements with the countries, we also saw them reunite with each other and begin to communicate again, which resembles the idea that in order to have peace you need to work together.

Work cited:

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Arrival Film