

ESL: *THE CASTLE*

Explain how Rob Sitch film *The Castle* expresses or shows Australian Values. Give examples from the film.

Australia is a new country with its geographic location is isolated with the rest of the world. However, its culture is distinct in relation to the way Australian people view themselves, view the world and defining their position in the global context. The film “*The Castle*” directed by Rob Sitch in 1997 is one of the typical movie in which Australian voices are described through the voice of different characters. Some aspects of Australian values depicting in the film include sense of humour, believing in justice and having a “fair-go”, and mateship with acceptance of multiculturalism.

Distinct Australian’s sense of humour contributes greatly towards positive manners that Australian people possess to perceive things. At the beginning of the movie, we hear Dale Kerrigan’s voice-over, who serves as the movie’s narrator, talks honestly with no sense of irony about his family. He introduces the house as having a great location through the repetition “location, location, location”, which is contradiction with what we see the visual image of the house is next to an airport. The juxtaposition here makes the movie more entertaining to audiences and indicates the family’s satisfaction with what they got, given their poor living conditions. Another example is when Steve (the middle son) uses gun to protect his father (Darryl) from being threatened by the guy from the company. The serious matter turns to a hilarious conversation about bargain price of the gun. Through the Kerrigan’s family’s sense of humour about different things, we can see a distinct Australian’s sense of humour leading to their optimism about the future.

The film “*The Castle*” is centred on the theme of the underdog versus authority, indicating Australian’s ideology of having a “fair-go” that everyone should stand up and fight for their rights. This is shown through the fact that Darryl persistently sues the government for their compulsory acquisition of his home. To him, it is not a normal house; it is what he calls “his castle”, where all of his love and memories of the family are embraced. It is his right and fair for him to live happily with his family in their own house. He is unaware of any form of legal power that also has the right to take his house. In all of three court cases, the technique low angle has been employed to emphasise the superior power of the government who is presented by the judge, over the underdog. When Darryl, Dennis (Darryl’s friend who is a lawyer) and Hammill stood in front of the High Court building, the camera is angled up towards the building symbolising the government’s significant power over the three little people stood there. They may be physically small but they are not insignificant mentally and emotionally as they are willing to fight for what is right and what is fair. Along with the low camera angle, the costume worn by the judges, Mr Hammill and Mr Lyle (counterpart’s QC) reveals their high status in comparison to Darryl and Dennis. Although many challenges will be faced on the way of being a larrikin, Australian society values people’s determination to have their voice being heard and come out of victory, no matter of their social class background, as exemplified by Darryl’s case.

Australian people have high respect for mateship and multiculturalism. In the movie, we can see Darryl’s loyalty to his mates. When he received the letter from Airlink, he does not care about hiring the best barrister, he sought help from his friend Dennis who is a local lawyer and has no experience of constitutional law. Lawrence Hammill’s presence on behalf of Darryl in High Court also originates from their former coming-across in Federal Court. Although Hammill is a Queen Counsel, who is highly respected in the society, he still chooses to help Darryl as he is sympathetic with Darryl’s case. Their strong mateship has led to their triumph in court, which then even further enhances their relationship. The picture of Darryl and Lawrence holding up the fish at the end of the movie is an imagery and symbolism for their blossomed mateship. The ideology of multiculturalism is explored through the characters of Con and Farouk. Con is a Greek accountant who is Darryl’s son-in-law. His successful wedding with Trace indicates Australian’s acceptance of multiculturalism to their family. On the other hand, Darryl’s harmonious relationship with Farouk through the use of

slang “wog” shows us the open-mindedness of Australian society. “Wog” is an offensive term for people from Southern Europe. In this context, Darryl uses “wog” with Farouk rather means love and affection, substantiating their caring for each other regardless of different backgrounds. Through Darryl’s strong value of mateship thus promoting multiculturalism, Australian’s strong emphasis on mateship and diversity is essential for a culture to flourish.

The movie “The Castle” has successfully demonstrated various examples of Australian voices, especially sense of humour, justice and “fair-go”, mateship and multiculturalism through a variety of filmic and language techniques. Every single voice in this movie is distinctly Australian voices and together they explore the uniqueness of how Australians view and understand the world.