

ENGLISH ADVANCED

'How does Frost-Nixon represent conflicting perspectives in an evocative way?'

Through the clever use of a variety of film techniques, combined with language techniques in a visual representation, director Ron Howard explores and portrays the conflicting views of David Frost and Richard Nixon within the film Frost/Nixon. These opposing outlooks are emphasized in the final interview scene within the film, as Howard explores their clashing views regarding the events of; Nixon's misconduct in the Watergate scandal, and the reasoning behind such involvement. The integrated language and film techniques allow Howard to represent the conflicting perspectives of Frost and Nixon as the audience is heavily engaged into the film evocative of the Frost-Nixon interviews of 1977.

In this segment of the film, the view of Frost in that Nixon had an illegal contribution in the Watergate scandal, and Nixon's contrasting perspective in that he had no such criminal involvement in this scandal, are expressed. These are portrayed through Howard's choice of language, production and textual form.

Frost introduces the audience to his belief in Nixon's misconduct in the Watergate scandal through the repetition of 'obstruct justice'. The incorporation of the word with a negative connotation; 'obstruct', juxtaposed with the word with a positive connotation; 'justice', in this phase enhances his negative view of Nixon. These features are moulded into the question; 'did you ever obstruct... to obstruct justice?' This question is returned with Nixon's short, yet powerful reply; 'no', with his shaking of the head and repeated mumbling of 'no' evoking his denial of such allegations, expressing own contrasting perspective.

Through his defensive tone, use of words with negative connotations; 'consequences' and 'escaped', as well as the harsh visual imagery in; 'the direct consequences of your actions... escaped criminal prosecution', Frost paints an evil image of Nixon in the mind of the audience to allow them to apprehend his perspective. Through the rhetorical question; 'how can that not be a cover-up or obstruction of justice?', together with the sarcastically confused tone and close up camera shot showing Frost's bewildered facial expressions, Frost's perspective is enhanced. Nixon replies contrastingly with; 'the records show...' with this allusion to 'the records', and use of hyperbole in; 'far from obstructing justice', portraying his denial regarding his alleged wrongdoing. In the personification of 'justice, Nixon forms an image of himself protecting the justice of the nation in; 'justice... I was actively facilitating it', allowing Nixon to communicate the absent misconduct in his actions, referring to them contrastingly as preventing misconduct.

Nixon reiterates his belief in the legality of his actions in; 'that's hardly what you'd call obstructing justice', with his obvious tone and shaking of the head, as seen through the close-up of the camera, portraying this viewpoint. This is strongly opposed by Frost in; 'you were desperately trying to contain or block the investigation', with the visual imagery in; 'contain or block', and emotive language in; 'desperately', provoking an image of Nixon's misconduct in the minds of the audience. The long shot of the camera positions these two men in the same frame, presenting their clear disagreement as they talk over one another and both repeat; 'no, no', with the cutting of the camera juxtaposing these two men and enhancing the tension surrounding their clashing views.

Frost communicates his view in the baseless nature of Nixon's excuses for such misconduct in the hypothetical situation; 'if I try to rob a bank and fail, that's no defence', whilst subtly and metaphorically conveying Nixon's actions as being criminal as he refers to; 'rob a bank'. The utter disagreement between these men is enhanced in their contrasting comments as Nixon says; 'no evidence...' to which Frost argues; 'had mysteriously been erased'. Here, the sarcastic tone of Frost evokes his disbelief in, and disagreement with Nixon's defences, with such doubt heightened by Frost's mocking frown of concern and obvious tone in the rhetorical question; 'do you expect... no

knowledge of that?'. This is met with Nixon's short sentence and sincere tone in; 'none', expressing his opposing view upon such misconduct. Nixon continues to defend his absent criminality in; 'a rigorous and conscientious note taker', with the descriptive language used here persuading the audience of the genuine nature of the evidence proving his innocence. The use of listing in Frost's comment; 'delivered on the tops of...with gloves on', creates an increasingly tense atmosphere leading to the climax in the rhetorical question; 'not normally...is it?', with Frost's sarcastic tone humorously portraying the mystery surrounding Nixon and his involvement, whilst inferring his outlook in Nixon's misconduct. The words; 'gloves', 'aliases' and 'phone booths', create a visual image of secrecy in the mind of the audience, communicating his belief in Nixon's wrongdoing.

This segment of the film also explores the clashing perspectives of Frost and Nixon surrounding the nature of Nixon's involvement in the Watergate scandal as Nixon justifies it as essential and unalterable whilst Frost sees his participation as damaging and needless. Howard again makes use of film and language techniques to evoke such opposing views in an illustrative way.

Frost's cumulation of rhetorical questions, as seen in; 'isn't that just a cover-up of another kind?' and 'why didn't you call the police and have them arrested?' portrays to the audience the numerous other legal choices Nixon had, exemplifying the needlessness of his participation in the scandal. Nixon's fierce and severe tone in; 'I'm not made that way', together with the close-up to his angered face and widened eyes, introduces the audience to his strong belief in his necessity of his involvement, deeming them as an attempt to protect his friends. Through the short pauses, references to; 'families' and 'kids', symbols of innocence, and the close-up to Nixon's depressed facial expressions, in; 'these men... I knew their families... were just kids', Nixon portrays the strong emotional bond he shares with these men, enhancing the essentiality of his involvement. The personification within; 'the pressure on me... became overwhelming!', together with the raising of his voice and the words with negative connotations; 'pressure' and 'overwhelming', evokes Nixon's perception in that he was partially forced to participate in the scandal. Nixon expresses his victimisation in the scandal in the analogy; 'I gave them a sword...with relish'. The violent visual imagery and extensive use of hyperbole, together with the word with a negative connotation; 'relish', evokes his viewpoint that he was helpless to the situation, enhancing the unalterable nature of his partaking in the scandal.

In the juxtaposition of this crime and the 'interests of the nation', and the use of personification in the words; 'things that are not always... legal... in the greater interests of the nation' Nixon illuminates his perspective regarding the necessity of his actions. Nixon finalises the validation of his viewpoint in; 'when the President does it, it is not illegal'. The long pause after this comment together with the parallel shocked reactions of Frost and all else present within the house, as seen through the cutting of the camera, represents their complete disagreement with such a perspective. The close-up to Frost's face indicates his bewildered facial expressions, symbolising his utter disbelief and disagreement as he questions; 'I'm sorry?', thus expressing the clear clashing of such a perspective between Frost and Nixon. Frost's disagreement with Nixon's justification is expressed in the combination of his use of derogatory language in; 'my goodness', his deep sigh of disbelief, and the close-up camera shot illustrating his frustrated facial expressions. His outlook is enhanced in the consecutive comments; 'the American people... two years of needless agony' and 'you're going to be haunted'. Here, the cumulation of words with negative connotations; 'agony' and 'needless', together with the use of hyperbole in the deathly connotation; 'haunted', evokes the profound damage of Nixon's actions on the state of the nation. Thus, Frost's portrayal of such damage starkly contrasts Nixon's description of them being in the 'greater interests of the nation', thus exemplifying their clashing views regarding the substantiality of Nixon's reasoning behind such involvement.

Thus, through the assimilation of a variety of language, film and oratory techniques, combined with the visual medium of production, Ron Howard is able to convey the clashing perspectives of David Frost and Richard Nixon in the final interview segment of the film, Frost-Nixon. The opposing perspectives of these men surrounded; Nixon's illegal contribution to the Watergate scandal, and the reasoning behind Nixon's actions in this scandal.