Film Study: The Bourne Identity, directed by Doug Liman

**TOPICS (Choose ONE)**

1. Analyse how verbal AND visual features of a text (or texts) you have studied are used to give audiences a strong idea.
2. Analyse how important techniques are used to engage your emotions in a text (or texts) you have studied.
3. Analyse how atmosphere is established and maintained in a text (or texts) you have studied.
4. Analyse how the beginning AND ending of a text show an important change in a character or individual in a text (or texts) you have studied.
5. Analyse how a character or individual is influenced to make decisions in a text (or texts) you have studied.
6. Analyse how the growth of a relationship affects the climax in a text (or texts) you have studied.
7. Analyse how symbols are used to develop an idea in a text (or texts) you have studied.
8. Analyse how successful a text (or texts) you have studied has been in influencing you to think differently about an issue.

Idea: The main idea of the film is the protagonist’s journey to self-discovery. Bourne moves from being in the figurative darkness as to who he is and what his role in society is, to coming to terms with the person he really is and discovering love through Marie. His conscience and moral values takes control over the rigorous CIA training he has undergone and he realises he is capable of love and affection and incapable of cold blooded murder.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Question 4

In the film The Bourne Identity, the director Doug Liman, shows the viewer how the beginning and ending of a text show an important change in a character. The important change is the protagonist’s journey to self-discovery. Bourne moves from being in the figurative darkness as to who he is and what his role in society is, to coming to terms with the person he really is and discovering love through Marie. His conscience and moral values takes control over the rigorous CIA training he has undergone and he realises he is capable of love and affection and incapable of cold blooded murder. The director contrasts the start and ending of the film and uses the visual techniques of light and colour, camera movement and angles, setting and the verbal technique of dialogue to show the viewer this change that Bourne undergoes.

The amnesiac Bourne feels that he is a good guy but gradually uncovers evidence that he is not. His journey takes him from total amnesia to regained memory, through the phase of acceptance and rejection of who and what he is/was. He tries to reject the past he discovers, finds he is unable to do so and is forced to confront that past. He ends by insisting that he died three weeks earlier and so is a new person. His journey is like that of someone trying to get home; his apartment is a false home, and he finally finds his true home with Marie. It is the ability to feel love for her that allows him to break out of the emotional ice-box he is in – the winter weather of the film is a metaphor for his emotionally frozen state and he finally meets Marie again in the summer in romantic Greece.

First of all, the director uses the visual techniques of light and colour to show Bourne’s journey to self-discovery

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| - begins in the intense darkness of the stormy ocean- low-key lighting is used - the lighting is more towards the greyer and darker scale- Back-lighting is used at the start of the film - convey the idea that Bourne is without identity - identifying features removed- This technique emphasises the character has no emotional attachments and works alone in mysterious ways.- Silhouette suggests that Bourne has been wiped clean of any previous knowledge - what kind of character he was-The dark, murky setting, lurching camera movements, and flashes of lighting illuminating Bourne’s face for only split seconds at a time, reflect the confusion both he and the audience feel- dark blue lighting creates an ominous feeling- The cool blue, white and grey colour palette of the exterior shots of Europe evokes the freezing temperatures Bourne must endure, and symbolises the lonely isolation he feels.Type of light: naturalism: most of the film is shot in natural light, albeit the softer, light of winter. Although some of the action may seem unreal, the naturalism of the light helps to keep it feeling authentic. | light and colour | - ends in the pleasing bright sunlight on a Greek island in summer- High-key lighting is used to indicate a brightly lit scene with a minimum of shadows and a key light that is bright and dominant- It shows his figurative journey of self-discovery, moving from being in the dark as to who he really is to discovering love and realising his love and protective nature for children- numerous wide angle shots - bright summer sunlight of Mykonos is in stark contrast to the mid and close up shots at the start of the film.- The naturalism of the light in which the scenes are shot, helps to keep the film that feeling authenticity- Marie brings warm colour into Bourne's life – a metaphor for the emotional warmth she will give him. She wears red, has red streaks in her hair, and drives a red mini; there are several shots of it as a splash of red against the blue-white environment. She also leaves in a red car. The red bank bag provides a similar accent, which also links Bourne to Marie visually. When we see Marie in the closing scenes, she is wearing a red dress and the red bank bag is used as a flower pot.- The film ends back at the Mediterranean (Mykonos Greece) – but a finer, bluer, calmer water. Marie is wearing a red dress which shows a continuation of her link to Bourne. |

Secondly, the director uses the visual techniques of camera movement and angles to show the viewer Bourne’s journey to self-discovery

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| - Use of close-up shots and extreme close-up shots in the confined space of the fishing boat add to the feeling of confusion that Bourne (and the viewer) experiences at the start of the film- The swaying effect of the hand held camera, not only imitates the movement of the boat but also adds to the feeling of disorientation and confusion felt by Bourne.- The hand-held camera stays close to the action in the scene, creating a sense of immediacy and inviting the audience to share in the panic of the situation.- this technique conveys Bourne’s disorientation and fear, producing sympathy from the viewer. | camera movement and angles | - Wide angle crane shots creates a sense of calm and tranquillity with the viewer, reflecting Bourne’s peace of mind and suggesting the end of the symbolic journey of self-discovery. - wide angle shots shows the romantic setting of Mykonos with the white-wash houses against the blue ocean, a perfect environment for falling in love – which Marie and Jason do. - wide angle shots create a sense of relief with the viewer, the tension created by throughout the film is finally resolved, we as viewer also experience the carefree romantic atmosphere that these shots create.  |

The director uses the visual techniques of setting show the protagonist’s journey to self-discovery.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| - SCREEN TEXT: 'MEDITERRANEAN SEA, 60 MILES SOUTH OF MARSEILLES' this vague indication as to the setting is reflected in Bourne’s loss of identity, the director cleverly is vague as to where the setting is, matching Bourne’s confused state of mind.- Europe in winter, Cloudy SkiesPartly clouded Paris days- Winter is a metaphor for Bourne's frozen emotional state- Wide aerial establishing shot of CIA headquarters shows a white cold snow covered building. This cold exterior reflects the organisations ruthless approach and modus operandi.- The interior bank scenes have a similar chilly mood / atmosphere, as does the embassy, with its predominant dull greens; Treadstone HQ continues this look, with its pale greens, blues and whites, set against heavy dark red walls. | Setting | - The film ends back at the Mediterranean (Mykonos Greece) – but a finer, bluer, calmer water.- The chill of winter is replaced by summer warmth = metaphor for Bourne's feelings.- Aerial travelling shot shows Marie, the island and town |

Lastly, the director Doug Liman uses the verbal technique of dialogue to show the protagonist’s journey to self-discovery.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| - Italian dialogue of fishermen adds to the sense of confusion the film opens with- Bourne’s constant questioning who he is, where he is- These questions are cleverly combined with a tone of desperation, confusion and frustration – Bourne clearly realises he has special skills (knot tying, able to speak foreign languages, weapon skills, map reading skills) but desperately wants to find out if he is a good natured citizen or a cold blooded killer. - Bourne: It’s not coming back, goddamn it. That’s the point’ a frustrated Bourne two weeks after being rescued and still without memory and identity.- Bourne: Who has a safety deposit box full of money and six passports and a gun? Who has a bank account number in their hip? - This illustrates the state of confusion Bourne finds himself in. | Dialogue | - Confused, aggressive tone of voice is replaced by a flirtatious tone of voice as Bourne shows up at Marie’s scooter hireBourne: Is this your store? Marie: Yeah. Bourne: It's nice. A little hard to find. Marie: Do you have ID? Bourne: Not really. - Bourne is now able to support Marie as she now finds herself in isolation – he has now discarded his previous life and is willing to start over. The viewer is able to relate that as human beings we are not supposed to be isolated, we need the emotional brightness of human company. |

In conclusion, this essay has discussed how the visual techniques of light and colour, camera movement and angles, setting and the verbal technique of dialogue to show the protagonist’s journey to self-discovery. Bourne discovers….

* that he is not a $30 million cold blooded killing machine Alexander Conklin (Head of Treadstone) wants him to be
* that he is a human capable of love and showing affection (towards Marie)
* he is caring and protective towards children (refuses to kill Wombosi in the presence of his children, is concerned for Emo’s children on the farm)

Liman wanted to show the viewer that people are naturally good and not inclined to evil and violence….