
Investigative essay

The focus of an investigative essay is to perform research in an unbiased manner. The basis of an investigative essay is the investigation question, which is presented in the introduction. In your discussion, you need to refer to outside sources to give your essay credibility.

Model answer

1 title

Female Liberation in a Male-dominated Society

2 introduction

The year 1991 saw the release of Ridley Scott's film *Thelma & Louise*, and whatever its intended message, it went on to spark more than a little controversy. Two friends, Louise (Susan Sarandon) and Thelma (Geena Davis), are to spend a weekend in a cabin, but when Thelma becomes the victim of an attempted rape and Louise shoots the perpetrator they embark on a road trip that takes them deep into a relentlessly patriarchal society. They even find themselves doing things normally associated with male characters in this particular genre, for example armed robbery. This and various other events in the film have led many to ask whether or not *Thelma & Louise* is a feminist work, and it is precisely this issue that is under investigation in this essay.

3 investigation question

Abby Osman explores the feminist perspective in the paper 'The Effect and Affect of Feminism on *Thelma and Louise*' (2011), stating that *Thelma and Louise* "shows how feminism impacted the film industry by challenging Hollywood and the social patriarchy, providing women a voice, and changing how spectators view how women are looked at through women's eyes and their experiences". This is an accurate assertion since the audience is forced to see events through the two women's eyes, thereby experiencing a female perspective of phenomena such as male oppression.

4 body

Another feature of the film is that women are able to use violence to protect themselves and to break free, from the restraints of an oppressive patriarchy for example. Needless to say, some critics did not approve of this, complaining amongst other things that the film appears to justify and even glorify the use of violence. However, according to Osman, "female violence against males and suffocating male oppression is the perceived threat to a patriarchal world where violence against women is the accepted and the norm, where all women who resist or simply try to live their own lives are crushed". In other words, the use of violence in the film carries its own important feminist message.

One can also see a feminist standpoint in the transformation that Thelma and Louise undergo during the course of the film. "Thelma transitions into a new, more independent self" (Chocano, 2011) and the film is "about transformation and liberation that [is] at once intensely personal and deeply political" (Lipsitz, 2011). This theme of liberation has clear feminist undertones, with the protagonists being placed "on a path of liberation, freedom, and exultation" (Osman). Thelma and Louise find a new road in life, to a society free from male dominance and oppression. They are set free of their own accord and it is this same freedom that the male characters are continually seeking to take from them.

At the end of the film Thelma and Louise drive off a cliff in order to escape the police, prison and perhaps even lethal injection. Although this could be regarded by some as a resounding defeat, to Raina Lipsitz it represents "not death or punishment but hope, and even a kind of radical, ultimate fulfillment". Thus, Thelma and Louise win the spiritual war against male oppression, striking a clear blow for the feminist ideal.

5 conclusion

Thelma and Louise is, in many respects, a feminist work. The two female characters challenge a patriarchal society and impose a female point of view on the audience. The protagonists also use violence as a means to free themselves from male oppression and aggression. By choosing eternity before confinement in a society ruled by men, Thelma and Louise stand on firm feminist ground and emerge triumphant in their final battle.

(590 words approx.)

6 Works Cited

Works Cited

Chocano, C. (2011) 'Skipping Through the Popular Culture, Snarling at Everyone'. *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, 24 April 2011, MM48

Lipsitz, R. (2011) "'Thelma & Louise': The Last Great Film About Women". *The Atlantic* [online]. Available from <<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/08/thelma-louise-the-last-great-film-about-women/244336/>> [25 April 2019]

Osman, A. (2011) 'The Effect and Affect of Feminism on Thelma and Louise'. *SBCC Film Reviews* [online]. Available from <<http://sbccfilmreviews.org/?p=15002>> [25 April 2019]