

School: 600

Subject: Stage 1 Modern History

Assessment Type: FOLIO TASK 4 – Historical Film Analysis (25% total grade)

SACE Registration Number:

Task : Students analyse the accuracy of historical accuracy of a film of their choice. They will consider the accuracy of the film in relation to historical evidence and events. They will use historical language to communicate informed arguments.

What you need to do:

1. View a film from the list provided.
2. Research the events and people of this time. **U&E2**
3. Consider the film for accuracy in relation to the evidence that you find. **A&E1**
4. Use clear and precise information from the sources to produce arguments.
5. Use of appropriate evidence from the sources in your answer.
6. Construct a film analysis using the SEXEXY format which argues if you believe the film is historically accurate, backing your statements up with evidence. **A&E1**
7. Cite your all sources using correctly formatted footnotes and bibliography. **A&E3**

Understanding and Exploration		Application and Evaluation	Analysis
A	Comprehensive understanding and insightful exploration of the role of ideas, people, and events in history.	<p>Perceptive application of the skills of historical inquiry to critically examine and evaluate sources and interpretations.</p> <p>Communication of well-reasoned, coherent, and insightful historical arguments, with appropriate acknowledgment of sources.</p>	
B	Some depth of understanding and thoughtful exploration of the role of ideas, people, and events in history.	<p>Thoughtful application of the skills of historical inquiry to examine and evaluate sources and interpretations.</p> <p>Communication of reasoned and coherent historical arguments, with some insights, and with appropriate acknowledgment of sources.</p>	
C	Understanding and considered exploration of the role of ideas, people, and events in history.	<p>Application of the skills of historical inquiry to examine sources and interpretations, with some evaluation.</p> <p>Communication of generally reasoned and coherent historical arguments, with acknowledgment of sources.</p>	
D	Recognition and basic understanding of the role of ideas, people, and events in history.	<p>Basic application of some skills of historical inquiry to select and use sources.</p> <p>Partial communication of a historical argument, with attempted acknowledgment of sources.</p>	
E	Awareness of one or more ideas, people, or events in history.	<p>Attempted application of the skills of historical inquiry to select and use one or more sources.</p> <p>Attempted description of a historical event, with limited or no acknowledgment of sources.</p>	

Is *The Blind Side* Historically Accurate?

The Blind Side is a film released in 2009 and directed by John Lee Hancock in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. This sports and drama film shadows the rise of Michael Oher in the NFL industry during the early 2000s. The portrayal of events and characters in this film are highly accurate as they follow Michael Oher's journey to fame. However, the setting of *The Blind Side* is inaccurate due to the fact that Michael Oher grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, USA, whereas the film was filmed in Atlanta.

Michael Oher, who is portrayed by Quinton Aaron in *The Blind Side* was a homeless African American teen who had a rough upbringing. His mother was a single parent with a crack addiction and was in and out of rehabilitation.¹ Michael had little supervision in his life, and this resulted in rarely attending school. Previously, the only father figure in Michael's life was Tony Henderson (Big Tony), the dad to Michael's friend Stevens.² Big Tony wanted more for Michael and his son, this led him to taking both 16-year-old boys to Briarcrest Christian School (portrayed as Wingate Christian School in the film). This school was a predominately Caucasian Christian school and led to Michael standing out against the crowd due to his tremendous size, race and seemingly lack of academic. However, Leigh Anne Tuohy (Sandra Bullock), Sean Tuohy (Tim McGraw) and the children of the Tuohy family offered him a place to stay, and this fortunately resulted in Michael eventually being adopted by in 2004.^{3,4} With the help of his new family and devoted tutor, Miss Sue (Kathy Bates), Michael was able to overcome his learning difficulties and achieve excellence in American football due to his protective instincts and size.⁵ Michael developed into a college football star at the University of Mississippi and was drafted by the NFL team, Baltimore Ravens in 2009. This film is considered historically accurate as it is based on a true story and a book called *The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game* by Michael Lewis.⁶

The Director ensured the events in *The Blind Side* were as accurate as possible to the real events that occurred in 2004. Michael and his family faced a lot of racism during his rise to fame in this film and in real life. However, in the film during the game against the Lions team, the opposing player to Michael not only delivered racist comments but made threats and called him fat with every play. After player 66 kicks Michael in the head and hollers, "Black piece of crap!" Michael reacts by lifting his opponent up by his pads and carrying him off the field.^{7,8} This event is very similar to the one in real life, however Michael did not get the player over the fence, instead he dropped player 66 right before the fence.⁹ Another event that is correctly portrayed in the film is the car accident involving Michael and S.J Tuohy. In the film, the distracted Michael did not see the landscaping truck backing out in front of him as he and S.J travelled through Memphis.¹⁰ In real life, the accident occurred slightly different as it was caused by icy conditions.¹¹ However, in both the film and real life, Michael stopped the air bag from seriously injuring S.J and Michael sobbed uncontrollably when Leigh Anne first arrived at the accident.¹² Hancock included these events to help develop Michael's character of protectiveness and lack of tolerance for racism. Therefore, Hancock portrayed real life events such as offensive comments from the opposition, infuriated defending from Michael and the car accident in *The Blind Side* to ensure that the film accurately reflected Michael Oher's life and story.

¹ Garykmc, (2009), 'Plot', IMDB, accessed 18 Nov 2019, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0878804/plotssummary>

² Unknown, (2009), 'The Blind Side (2009)', History vs Hollywood, accessed 18 Nov 2019, <http://www.historyvshollywood.com/reelfaces/blindsideside.php>

³ Unknown, (2005), 'Michael Oher Facts', Soft Schools, accessed 18 Nov 2019, http://www.softschools.com/facts/biography/michael_oher_facts/3437/

⁴ McCarthy, R (2007), 'Michael Oher', Time Toast, accessed 18 Nov 2019, <https://www.timetoast.com/timelines/michael-oher-3dab2364-4de9-4288-8842-21200ef12553>

⁵ Unknown, (2009), 'The Blind Side (2009)', History vs Hollywood, accessed 18 Nov 2019, <http://www.historyvshollywood.com/reelfaces/blindsideside.php>

⁶ Lewis, M, (2007), 'The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game', Goodreads, accessed 18 Nov 2019, https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/817791.The_Blind_Side

⁷ John Lee Hancock (2009), *The Blind Side*, Alcon Entertainment, 1:19:10

⁸ SergeiK, (Unknown), 'The Blind Side script – Dialogue Transcript', Rama, accessed on 18th Nov 2019, http://www.script-orama.com/movie_scripts/b/the-blind-side-script-transcript.html

⁹ Unknown, (2009), 'The Blind Side (2009)', History vs Hollywood, accessed 18 Nov 2019, <http://www.historyvshollywood.com/reelfaces/blindsideside.php>

¹⁰ John Lee Hancock (2009), *The Blind Side*, Alcon Entertainment, 1:07:20

¹¹ Unknown, (2009), 'The Blind Side (2009)', History vs Hollywood, accessed 18 Nov 2019, <http://www.historyvshollywood.com/reelfaces/blindsideside.php>

¹² Unknown, (2009), 'The Blind Side (2009)', History vs Hollywood, accessed 18 Nov 2019, <http://www.historyvshollywood.com/reelfaces/blindsideside.php>

Correspondingly, the Director of *The Blind Side* ensured the costumes worn in this film were as accurate as possible to the 2003-2004 fashion. The film featured many trends such as snakeskin and the brand Under Armour that were prevalent in the early 2000s.¹³

Numerous times Leigh-Anne Tuohy wore snakeskin prints, for example the button-down shirt and the pencil skirt (figure 1). During the film S.J is featured wearing the brand Under Armour (Figure 2) multiple times. This is accurate due to the fact that this brand was becoming increasing popular in the early 2000s.¹⁴ The incorporation of the Briarcrest Christian School sports uniforms also suggests Hancock tried to make *The Blind Side* as historically accurate as possible. The football and cheerleader uniforms in the film closely resemble the uniforms of Briarcrest Christian School due to the colour scheme that features emerald green, yellow and white (figure 3 & 4) and the incorporation of Michael Oher's real jersey number, seventy-four (figure 5). As a result, Hancock used similar sport uniforms and fashion trends from the early 2000s to ensure the film was as historically accurate as possible.



Figure 1: snakeskin button-down shirt and snakeskin pencil skirt worn by Mrs Tuohy

Figure 2: S.J Under Armour T-shirt



Figure 4: Michael Oher's jersey and Collins cheerleader uniform in the film.

However, Hancock was unsuccessful in using the real settings throughout *The Blind Side* and consequently caused the film's setting to be historically inaccurate. *The Blind Side* was filmed in Atlanta, Georgia when in reality Michael Oher grew up in Memphis, Tennessee and many viewers found obvious indicators that verified this. For example, a Georgia lottery sign is featured in the background of many scenes and the area code 770 phone number for Atlanta appears during a travelling scene.¹⁵ Due to the difference in filming locations, the schools used to film *The Blind Side* are not the Briarcrest Christian School in which Michael attended in reality. Instead, Hancock used the Atlanta International School, Agnes Scott College and Westminster Schools to create the fictional Wingate Christian School in this film.¹⁶ Through Hancock not filming *The Blind Side* in the real setting of Memphis, the film's setting is historically inaccurate as other schools had to be used in the replacement of Briarcrest Christian School. However, this should be dismissed as the film is more importantly focused on the characters and historical events, and not the location.

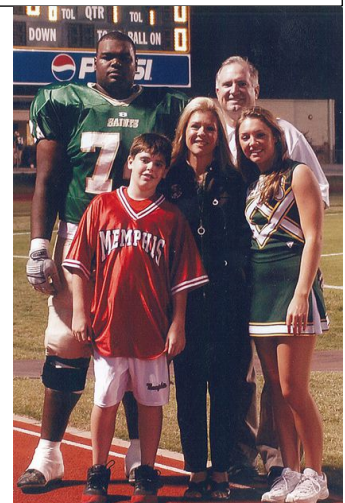


Figure 5: Michael Oher and Collins sports uniforms in reality.

Conclusion:

The Blind Side is a film directed by John Lee Hancock in Atlanta and was released in 2009. This film depicts the rise of Michael Oher in the NFL industry during the early 2000s. The portrayal of events and characters in this film are highly accurate as they follow Michael Oher's journey to fame. However, the setting of *The Blind Side* is inaccurate due to the fact that Michael Oher grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, USA, whereas the film was filmed in Atlanta. Despite this inaccuracy *The Blind Side* is highly historically accurate.

Bibliography:

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¹³ Razi, S, (2019), 'Trend report: Snake print', Who, accessed 20 Nov 2019, <https://www.who.com.au/snakeskin-trend-2019>

¹⁴ Baer, D, (2015), 'Here's how Under Armour grew into a \$15 billion athletic-apparel empire', Business Insider, accessed 20 Nov 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/history-of-under-armour-2015-2?r=US&IR=T#sales-grew-in-2004-they-were-over-200-million-8>

¹⁵ Unknown, (2009), 'Goofs', IMDB, accessed 20 Nov 2019, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0878804/goofs>

¹⁶ Unknown, (2009), 'Filming & Production', IMDB, accessed 20 Nov 2019, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0878804/locations>

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