



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>	

Selma – Film Review – Amy ward

Introduction: In 2014, director Ava DuVernay premiered the historical drama film *Selma* in Los Angeles. Using costume, setting and dialogue, DuVernay created a historical tone for the 1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights marches. Due to the uses of historically accurate costumes and settings the film *Selma* can be considered highly historically accurate.

Context: The film *Selma* follows the story of Martin Luther King Jr and his journey fighting the Civil Rights acts during 1965, as discrimination was still rampant in certain areas, making it very difficult for blacks to register to vote. Played by David Oyelowo, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his followers pressed forward on an epic march from Selma to Montgomery with purpose to get President Lyndon Johnson to sign the Voting Rights Act. Set during the Civil Rights movement *Selma* received generally positive critical reception as the film emotional touch many African American with its realistic scenes.

P1: Knowing that costumes played an important role in this film DuVernay ensured that she perfected the outfits during specific scene which she recreated. Designer Ruth Carter was involved in the costume process, doing extensive research on outfits from the decade by reading vintage *Ebony* magazines and watching the documentary *Eye on The Prize*¹. During her interview with Refinery29 journalist Gina Marinelli a sense of importance was identified as Carter knew making the outfits tell the right story was crucial, which was clearly succeeded in the film². In particular this snapshot from the film (see figure 1) of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and his wife Coretta Scott King with many of Kings followers during the Selma march shows just that. The scene shows the characters in traditional 1960s fashion with many of Kings male followers in suits and the females in colourful patterned dresses, skirts and coats. Small details were also included like the sizes of the ties as Carter dressed many with skinny ties which had become popular in the 1960s³. In reality Carters costumes were rather identical to the event, as seen in figure 2. Specifically, her attention to details was shown as the background characters had many different accessories such as hats, glasses and props. For example, in figures 2 and 3 many people are seen the waving American flag, which Carter also presented in the movie. Numerous other scenes also show her accurate representation of the 1960s fashion, particularly with the police uniforms. Comparing the side by sides of the film (see figure 5 &6) and the reality the details in the outfits are clearly represented. For instance, the strips on the sleeves, the helmets, badges, buttons on the tops, material of the clothes and the gun straps are both the same. The way Carter has paid attention to the costumes details provides a reality to the audience's experience, thus making *Selma* historically accurate.



Figure 1: Snapshot of Selma march from the film *Selma*.



Figure 2: Reality of Selma march with Dr. King and his wife.



Figure 3: Black and white wide shot of the Selma march with supporters holding flags.



Figure 5: Snapshot of Police offices lined up defending against the march.



Figure 6: Photograph of Police officer speaking down on a supporter during Bloody Sunday in Selma.

¹Selma Costume Designer Ruth Carter. 2019. Selma Costume Designer Ruth Carter. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2015/01/81104/selma-movie-costume-design>. [Accessed 21 November 2019].

²Selma Costume Designer Ruth Carter. 2019. Selma Costume Designer Ruth Carter. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2015/01/81104/selma-movie-costume-design>. [Accessed 21 November 2019].

³Men's Ties History of the 1920s to 1970s. 2019. Men's Ties History of the 1920s to 1970s. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://vintagedancer.com/vintage/mens-tie-history-1920s-to-1970s/>. [Accessed 21 November 2019].

P2: With the film being based around the Selma to Montgomery march it was important for DuVernay to film scenes in the town of Selma, as it provided that realism that the film was looking for. Obviously since the 1960s buildings had been modernised, however DuVernay managed to keep the authentic setting throughout the film as most of the town still had its old retro vibes. Although, it was not only the setting which she wanted to keep real she wanted to “invite the spirit of the movement”⁴. Through film techniques such as events and setting DuVernay achieved this, making the film historically accurate. For example, the death of 14-year-old Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley and Carole Robertson and 11-year-old Denise McNair set the scene for *Selma*. During the scene you witness the young group of kids walking down a stairwell of a church, dressed in their Sunday best, as they are chatting a bomb is set off and pieces are sent flying everywhere⁵. The long extensive scene captures the audience at the beginning and its “it’s a quintessential pivotal point of departure for everything that happened after in the movement.”⁶. As quoted by DuVernay herself. In reality unfortunately this event did occur at the 16th Street Baptist Church, which had long been a significant religious centre for the city’s black population and a routine meeting place for civil rights organizers like King⁷. Thus, the film *Selma* is historically accurate as it has recounted real events with detail and accuracy.

P3: The film, however, showed an extremely biased representation of the relationship between Dr. King and President Lyndon Johnson, making the dialogue an inaccurate fault in the film. During the film President Johnson was presented at the antagonist on the civil rights movement as he was firm on not passing the Voting Rights Act. Early in the film this perspective of President Johnson is revealed as during his meeting with Dr. King there is conflict between the two. Resulting in President Johnson ignoring what Dr. King is proposing as he states, “it’s a matter of political priorities... and this voting thing is just going to have to wait.”⁸. Although in reality Johnson had a very good relationship with King as he invited him to the white house on numerous occasions and telephoned him in person to discuss how to collaborate their efforts for racial equality. Evidence of their relationship really shows through with the outcome of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Although this is stated at the end of the film the relationship between the two characters was portrayed inaccurately. Thus, providing the audience with the idea that President Johnson wasn’t for equal rights and only came to the agreement at the end due to back lash he was receiving.

Conclusion: The film *Selma* was a historically accurate representation of the real-life Civil Rights movement as it depicted events which happened during 1964-1965 in an approachable and enjoyable manner. The film follows the story of Martin Luther King Jr and his journey fighting the Civil Rights acts during 1965, as discrimination was still rampant in certain areas, making it very difficult for blacks to register to vote. The film historical accuracy is nonetheless supported by a strong and talented cast which portrayed each individual accurately and the accurate set being filmed in Selma, North Carolina, United States.

⁴ YouTube. 2019. Director Ava DuVernay on sharing the story of ‘Selma’- YouTube. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmVZRevHa-M>. [Accessed 21 November 2019].

⁵ Ava DuVernay, (2014), *Selma*, Pathe, 00.04.00

⁶ YouTube. 2019. Director Ava DuVernay on sharing the story of ‘Selma’- YouTube. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmVZRevHa-M>. [Accessed 21 November 2019].

⁷ HISTORY. 2019. Birmingham Church Bombing - HISTORY. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/1960s/birmingham-church-bombing>. [Accessed 21 November 2019].

⁸ Ava DuVernay, (2014), *Selma*, Pathe, 00.11.00