 Analytical Paragraphs

Analytical Paragraph 1

Perspective: Economics vs ethics - we choose comfort over integrity

Murrow must contend with the overwhelming forces of capitalism which threaten to crush traditional value systems of honesty and integrity. His vocalisation of truth is hindered by whether his truth will offend sponsorship – thus democracy is clearly being strangled by the prioritisation of profits and economic forces. Television was still in its infancy during the 1950s; Murrow’s awareness of television was optimistic and guided by the notion that it could ‘change the world’ if the citizens would embrace its educational qualities. His fervour for quality journalism is essentially his fervour for the truth; he is attempting to construct a narrative about identity and threats to identity in a world where identity is shifting and unstable (postmodern condition). Murrow’s identity is influenced by what he reports; thus, the choice of his issues dictates how he will be viewed by others, his reputation. It is difficult, therefore, for Murrow to compromise quality in order to foreground what he prioritises as significant – he opts to cover ‘fluff’ stories to ensure that pertinent stories are also covered. Conflict with CBS executive, Paley, is consistently addressed throughout the film to show where the source of tension often finds itself in America – economics in conflict with ethics. Murrow and Friendly pay for commercials to ensure the message of democracy being hijacked is communicated to the public – familial sacrifices are made because truth is paramount. Murrow’s accusation that America is ‘fat and complacent’ is a critique of pervasive consumerism- Americans are protective of their comfort and retreat to the insular, making them much more vulnerable to control and exploitation, even by those who purport to be invested in their country’s security. M.Keith Booker in his book ‘The Post-Utopian Imagination –America in the 1950s – claims that Peter Pan is a simulacrum of America – infantile, fearful and insular. Thus, Murrow can be said to be the paternalistic influence guiding America to its maturation process.

Find language techniques and aspects of form that support the perspective put forward in this analytical paragraph. Rewrite this paragraph, integrating these techniques and form aspects to compose an essay paragraph. Students may add their perspectives to this paragraph.

Analytical Paragraph 2

Perspective: The significance of agency in a time of sedation

Existentialism is primarily concerned with transcending the futility of life. It advocates freedom, individuality and responsibility. Murrow epitomises all these aspects and thus is designated as an existential hero who gives meaning to his life through the Sartrian belief in one’s reality being asserted through action rather than simple existence. Murrow brings meaning to his life, mirroring the individualism and pioneering spirt of the American frontier signified in his battle with McCarthy and the emblematic military ‘cowboys’

What scenes in the film support the perspective in the table?

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