Hunt For The Wilderpeople

Theme Analysis

By Aidan Spurgetis

 Hunt For The Wilderpeople is a movie about a teenage foster child that began being taken care of by a family in the New Zealand countryside, who, from tragic circumstances finds himself on the run in the “bush” with his remaining caretaker the master wilderness survivor, Hector. In this movie, three themes (among others) can be identified. Those three themes are one, perseverance is rewarding. Two,

change can happen; and three, who you become is heavily affected by your circumstances (You can’t always choose who you become). This essay contains events that are climactic to the movie, so, reading this may cause the experience of watching this movie ruined.

 The first theme specified is that perseverance is rewarding. This is illustrated in the movie, first by Ricky (the teenage boy) constantly throughout the movie trying to survive and learn from Hector, and ultimately becoming an equally fine shot with the rifle, as well as with his survival skills. The second way this is shown is in the final minutes of the movie, when, even when being pursued by an armored vehicle that closely resembles a armored personnel carrier without the cannon, and a convoy of about twenty assorted contingent of motorcycles, trucks, and cars, he kept driving. The reward of this rock hard perseverance was a few extra minutes (which Ricky seemed to enjoy) before the inevitable capture. The final piece of evidence for the theme that perseverance is rewarding is actually shown by the antagonists, a child welfare agent that leads the charge after Ricky, and was using the tank as a chase vehicle. The entire movie, she didn't give up the chase, which lasted months, and was rewarded by ultimately capturing Ricky.

 The second theme shown is that change can happen, and this is illustrated by four points. The first of which is that Hector actually in the beginning, hated Ricky. This is no exaggeration, as Hector tries to attack Ricky, and both blatantly told the other they wanted them dead,as well as calling them ba\*\*\*rds. The theme that change can happen is shown by the event of Hector actually coming to care for Ricky, and even forgiving him when he let him down and put them in danger of being captured. The second piece of evidence is shown that, Ricky begins the story by being sullen and not speaking, but as time goes on,he becomes generally more talkative and sarcastic, to everybody, friend and stranger alike. The second to last piece of evidence is small, but sufficient. Ricky begins as your average foster kid, a bad track record and prejudice that your bad. That prejudice only kind of doesn't go away by the end of the movie, but his being on the run made his name printed everywhere. So he began with no one knowing his name, and soon, every one knew his name. The last piece of evidence also incorporates my favorite character, bushman. He is a crackpot conspiracy theorist; living alone in the wilderness, eating grilled rodents and spending his days with his back covered in grass, resembling a bush. He begins in their interaction, only caring about his safety; but, by the end he actually sacrifices himself to give them the few desperate moments needed as Ricky hotwires bushman’s truck.

 The final theme I mentioned was that who you become is heavily affected by circumstance. This is illustrated firstly by Ricky, in a quote he repeats at least three times in the movie. That quote is the following: “You don’t choose the skux life. The skux life chooses you.” Although that quote was never actually explained, it is simple to infer that the skux life is the equivalent of being “thug”. Ricky would have experience with harsh circumstances that shape his personality. More often than not, we become what other people expects of us, and every one expects Ricky to be a “bad egg” (quote from social worker lady that chases him in the aforementioned tank). Now the second question is, how is it known Ricky was a “bad egg”? Were his actions abnormally worse than those of a average child? The answer is yes. The first example of this is found at the end, when Ricky shoots Hector. You can see in their interaction throughout the movie they began to care for each other. Thirteen year olds don’t normally shoot people they care about, seeing as shooting someone can cause death, and children don’t want people they care about usually dead. Also, if they do want them dead in real life, usually they have adverse childhood experiences or just a traumatic childhood. It makes sense that Ricky, being a foster child, hopping from one home to the next, may have had experiences that shaped him into who he became. Now, Ricky shooting Hector appears to be an accident, but he still leveled the rifle at Hector and threatened him to not take another step. Ricky had killed a boar earlier in the movie, so he was well aware of the consequences.

 As shown by this essay, Hunt for the Wilderpeople contains three themes (among many others, as previously stated), change can happen, perseverance is rewarding, and who you become is heavily affected by your circumstances. This movie is a funny movie that at the same time tackles and addresses some very serious events in society, making it an entertaining movie to watch, while bringing to light some important matters.