

Gran Torino

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HCOM 322

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1. What is the thematic significance of the title and what does the car symbolize in the movie?

The car is a symbol of connection to a particular generation. It represents life itself and how something can be “pure” in a corrupt world. Thao is given the opportunity to drive the car into town because it represents the hard work he has done and the hard work that was put into maintaining the car. Walt believes that Thao will have Walt’s beliefs and ethics as the car gets passed down to Thao. Most importantly, the car represents Walt’s legacy and the relationship that is Thao and Walt. The title represents the main event of the car being given to Thao after Walt dies.

2. What have we learned about Hmong people's experience from the movie?

What we've learned about the Hmong people is that they all tend to help and live close to each other. Since most of them probably left relatives back home they feel safer and better if they have their own community in a foreign country. Also, that they brought all their values home, including their native language. Lastly, that even though they are all together they still struggle, like Thao, to not be part of the gangs.

I learned that they value family more than American culture does and that they value those that help the Hmong community.

3. Would you argue that Hmong people's experience in this country is typical? Why or why not?

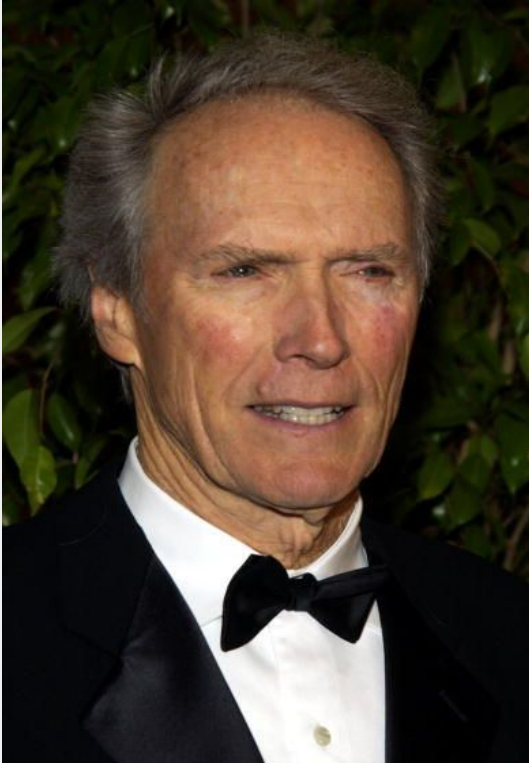
- ❖ Yes , because like any other culture, the people from the same culture tend to have a very close community. In many case, those communities faced the same social problems.
- ❖ Yes, because they faced things that other groups experienced. Gang violence and the struggle of fitting in while still holding on to one's heritage are problems that other communities have faced.

Bonus Question

What does the Grand Torino represent in the movie?

It represent life itself and how something can be “pure” in a corrupt world. Thao is given the opportunity to drive the car into town because it represents the hard work he has done and the hard work that was put into maintaining the car. Walt’s legacy and the relationship that is Thao and Walt.

The background information about the movie



Clint Eastwood is an American actor, director, and politician. He was born in San Francisco, California. After graduating from high school in California and briefly attending Los Angeles City College, Eastwood held various jobs and served in the U.S. Army before moving to Hollywood. A screen test with Universal in 1954 netted him a 40-week contract, but after one renewal and a series of bit parts in such movies as *Tarantula* (1955) and *Revenge of the Creature* (1955), his option was dropped. He appeared in several TV series before he got his big break in 1959 by being cast as Rowdy Yates in the popular TV western *Rawhide* (1959–65).

Works by Clint Eastwood

LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA (2006)

MILLION DOLLAR BABY (2004)

MYSTIC RIVER (2003)

THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY (1995)

UNFORGIVEN (1992)



WHITE HUNTER BLACK HEART (1990)

PALE RIDER (1985)

HONKYTONK MAN (1982)

THE OUTLAW JOSEY WALES (1976)

HIGH PLAINS DRIFTER (1973)



Central themes of the movie

Culture and Language barriers: Walt and some members of the Hmong community do not speak the same language and they just communicated by facial expressions. At first, Walt does not accept the Hmong's practices but later he had the opportunity of being part of their traditions.

Peace: Walt was never at peace with what he did in the war. He was always angry with the world. Until the father came over many times to tell him to confess but that wasn't what made Walt confess it was Thao and Sue who motivated him. After confessing he was somewhat at peace but when he gave his life to save Sue and Thao's family that is when he was finally at peace.

Stereotypes: Walt asked Thao to count birds with the idea that Asian people are good at math.

Family: Walt was never close to his family because they only cared about Walt's will. Walt soon learns that family doesn't mean being related by blood. He grows close to the Hmong people and becomes a part of their family.

Character analysis

Walt Kowalski: He is an angry, lonely, and insensitive old man who can be both strong and weak. Walt struggles with issues of race, religion, and changes in his community. People around him are generally annoying to him as he just wants people to stay off his lawn and leave him alone. Later, Walt shows acceptance of the ethnic change in his community and develops a good relationship with members of a Hmong immigrant family.

Sue: She is Walt's neighbor and Hmong. She is an independent lady and brave. She was the one that befriended Walt first and made him gain his trust. She was there whenever he needed her and wanted Thao to not be like her cousin. She was brave even at the end. -

Thao Vang Lor: He is a brother to Sue. The Hmong community see him as a weak man because he helps with household chores. He is apart from other Hmong teenagers because he does not fit their profile of a typical teenage Hmong.

Father Janovich: He is a priest that is trying to convince Walt to go to confession at the behest of Walt's late wife. Janovich, at first, is confident that he knows what he is talking about and can get Walt to go to confession. However, he soon learns the truth about life and death when Walt sacrifices himself for Thao and Sue.

Styles & techniques

- ❖ In the movie, Clint Eastwood incorporated different cultures for example: African American, Asian, Mexicans, Italian and Americans. Also, He represented the conflicts between the cultural norms of the Hmong people and an American based on a lack of knowledge of culture from both sides.
- ❖ He uses foreshadowing as well. For example, in the beginning Walt pretended to have a gun inside his jacket and he actually did have one. But at the end he did the same move and did not have a gun.
- ❖ He uses an american car as a symbol of salvation for Thao.
- ❖ Clint Eastwood isolates the character of Walt whenever he is in the same scene as his family. There is always a physical distance between the characters. However, as he grows closer emotionally to the Hmong people, he grows physically closer and closes the distance between the characters.

What you get out of the movie

Angelica

- ❖ I learned that it is important to give second chances to people because that could not only change their lives, but my life as well. Sometimes, troubled kids need someone to give them an opportunity to be able to overcome social problems and to change their lives for good.

What you get out of the movie

Ana Paola

I learned how even the grouchiest hearts always have a soft side. Also, about the Hmong community. Why they came to the United States and where they came to live. It was interesting to see that the immediate family of Walt only wanted him for his money but Sue and Thao never seeked his friendship to get something out of it.

What you get out of the movie

Roseanne

I learned about the importance of having diversity in our community because everyone can share their traditions to each other and learn about everyone's culture. Also, I think people should stop having stereotypes about other cultures without knowing about them.

What you get out of the movie

Sarah

I learned about the Hmong people and their culture. I also learned to listen instead of just trying to push my own ideas and opinions. Father Janovich learned this through his conversations with Walt and through Walt's actions.

What you get out of the movie

Patricia

The idea of racism and how it is a hypocritical idea because in the movie it shows that nationalism is a flawed concept. Not everyone is a “true” American. I also learned through a snap view of what the Hmong culture is like and how they value family.