

Character Notes- Lucas and Bella

“A tragic hero is a literary character who makes a judgment error that inevitably leads to his/her own destruction.”

Hamartia:

Film techniques:

Maximus' stubbornness to jeopardise his loyalty to the empire and inability to set aside his morality in order to save his own life and family is his fatal flaw as it is what drives him to not join the side of Commodus.

Stubborn, resilient, will not give up.

Values his rights, freedoms, liberties.

His innate need to do what he believed was 'right'. This meant he didn't do what was in his best interests; because of this flaw and Maximus' stubbornness his family was executed and he lost his rank as General, becoming a slave and then a gladiator.

His error has resulted from the situation that he is put in, wherein he must choose between what is morally righteous but losing everything as a result or what is best for his outcome.

“There is always someone left to fight.”

Maximus' character greatly contrast's Commodus.

- Commodus cowers away from the battlefield awaiting news on the outcome, whereas Maximus joins his soldiers and leads them into the war. Commodus also barely interacts with his people, whereas Maximus does (Maximus visits the sick and wounded, shows compassion for his fellow soldiers/comrades).

This leads the audience to believe that Maximus is more worthy of ruling despite the natural order.

Maximus' desire to return home and live peacefully aids in his committing of his hamartia, as he strongly wishes not to remain amidst political conflict and choose to help Commodus rule for the better outcome of the kingdom.

Even as they are arresting him for execution, his men show signs of remorse and resentment of the actions they are about to inflict. There is a conflict of loyalty.

Hubris:

Film Techniques: Dialogue

Dialogue with Quintus at start signifies his stubbornness, resilience and pride, that Maximus will not give up in the face of adversity. He feels invincible and that his story and actions will be remembered for centuries after he dies, even though realistically most of us will pass away without making a major mark on the world. He is also very well spoken and articulates his words beautifully.

“What you do in life echoes an eternity”

Peripeteia:

Film Techniques: Costume, Jumpcut, monochromatic colour palette, high key lighting, low key lighting, music

Maximus begins as a highly respected Roman general to a slave and then gladiator whose violent behaviour is used for entertainment, as he begins to gradually gain respect from the Roman people as a gifted fighter, he dies, the possibility of prosperity being teased but ultimately stolen from him.

Fate greater than deserved

Of noble descent/high status

Opening scene shows Maximus' ring and his clothing (animal fur, armour). He is saluted by soldiers as he walks through camp. Interacts with them fondly. Greeted with genuine smiles. Both things hint that he has a high status, this position being so high amplifying his peripeteia.

Jumpcut from dream sequence to reality contrasts his happy or ideal world to his bleak reality.

As he walks among his soldiers, the audience notices that everyone is saluting, calling him general and generally respecting him as an important figure. His costume is different to the soldiers, he has fur and steel braces in contrast with the leather braces worn by the soldiers, signifying his higher importance.

Maximus rides into battle, cheering on his men and keeping them together, showing his power as a well respected leader. He rallies the soldiers together and maximises their fighting power.

He has prowess in battle and is a force to be reckoned with. Empowers and inspires his men. He strikes his enemies down with deadly force.

“There was once a dream that was Rome. You could only whisper it. Anything more than a whisper and it would vanish.” This line by Marcus highlights the hopelessness for the existence of Rome without political conflict. This foreshadows that despite his efforts to achieve this dream, it will vanish because Maximus tried to obtain it.

During the scenes which follow the opening battle, the concept of ‘home’ is mentioned frequently, foreshadowing that Maximus will not obtain his desire to return home and hinting at his peripeteia. The dialogue between him and Commodus also suggests that ‘home’ will be taken away from him.

Maximus goes from the ‘top of the food chain’ to the very bottom being among animals who are of lower status than the common human. The line “if **you** die in the wagons **they feed you** to the **lions**... The **lions** are **worth more than we** are.” as well as the maggots cleaning up his wound signifies his transition into lower status, the animal imagery, similar to Lear, importantly highlighting this.

The symbol of cages and bars represents that he is now trapped and cannot escape his terrible fate, hope or ‘home’ being lost.

Maximus allows himself to be beaten, he refuses to fight.

Loss of hope, refusal to preserve himself.

Lowest point.

His clothing is minimal, showing loss of his status, reversal of fortune and position in the food chain.

Cutting out the brand shows his dissociation from his old empire, shedding his identity.

Erasing every part of his past self.

His only function is to die. He is a pawn made to further the game. To entertain like a circus animal.

Scene in cage shadows Maximus’ first scene. Copy of what happened at the start.

He walks amongst his men. They respect him.

The people are always drawn to Maximus.

The tigers in the fighting pit indicates that Maximus, despite gaining approval of the crowd, is still at the bottom of the great chain of being among the animals.

Maximus is essentially a beast in a cage when surrounded by Commodus’ soldiers

Chained animal.

Anagnorisis:

Moment of recognition with Proximo.

Provides hope that he will come out on top. Gives him the idea that you could win your freedom.

“Not yet.” he needed to “win the crowd”

Cicero gives Maximus a small satchel with two figurines inside. His wife and his son. In this moment Maximus experiences anagnorisis.

Maximus is tormented by Commodus about the deaths of his family members, however, he chooses not to give in and act on his strong emotions and walks away without making a poor mistake, indicating that he is learning through suffering.

Nemesis:

Dream sequences woven throughout film to foreshadow his inevitable fate

Catharsis

Home = hope. Loses everything that is important to him, reaches his lowest point, similar to Lear.

"These slaves are rotten." "It adds to the flavour."

Shows how through suffering and hardship Maximus becomes stronger, more determined.

Film Techniques:

Lack of music or sound foreshadows a moment wherein something terrible occurs. The audience fears and expects this moment, aiding in this cathartic experience.

Heavy and sudden music and sound gives the audience hope, building tension and making us expect that the hero will cause a good outcome but this will quickly be taken away, aiding in this pity.

Jumpcut to Maximus being led away by soldiers to be executed enhances the pity or catharsis felt by the audience, since we understand that one poor action directly lead to a poor outcome. Everyone can sympathise with the loss of family as we all have one and fear this loss, allowing the audience to connect and pity Maximus.

Maximus doesn't see his men as just soldiers, tools to be used for a greater purpose. He sees them as individuals, real people. This shows his compassion and honour, as well as his status as a heroic figure.

This guides the audience into state of admiration and empathy. This furthers our feeling of pity when Maximus experiences his peripeteia.

Caesar gives Maximus a final task, to free the people of Rome, and end the corruption.

Maximus strives to complete this 'final' task given to him.

Father - son dynamic is strong.

Maximus is paternalistic towards the men under his command.

Bound by the duty of his country and what is morally good as opposed to what he feels is right.

Cicero is very loyal to Maximus. We see this in both the beginning and the end of the film.

Contrast between the relationship that Marcus has with Maximus and the relationship he has with Commodus: With Maximus there is mutual respect and admiration, while still maintaining a paternalistic connection, however, with Commodus, the relationship ends with the fact that they share blood, this is where their love is sourced, not in the same mutual respect that Maximus has with him.

To Marcus, Maximus is the ideal picture of Rome whereas Commodus represents everything that Marcus dislikes about Rome eg. corruption.

Maximus rides for days on end to reach his family in the hopes that they are alive. Over the course of this long journey we see him strip off his armour. (His status is gone, he is no longer a general, idea of reversal.)

Maximus brings his identity back, states his name and his past. (No longer just 'slave', 'spaniard' or 'gladiator') he is seen as a general among the other gladiators. Makes his intentions clear: revenge. Takes off his mask/ helmet to represent this revealing of his true identity and removal of his status as just another gladiator/ slave.

His name and his identity strike fear into both Commodus and the guard.

Maximus wins the attraction of the crowd, giving hope that he will prevail with the power of the people to back him up. The crowd also figuratively represents us as an audience and how we feel for Maximus as a hero while at the same time persuading us to believe we should root for him and that his fate is not deserved.

"We mortals are but shadows and dust" - Proximo trying to get Maximus to recognise that he isn't unstoppable

"I know that you are a man of your word general, I know that you would die for your honour, you would die for Rome, for your ancestors, but I on the other hand am an entertainer." - Proximo

- This further validates Maximus' hamartia, that he would rather maintain his morality and honour by escaping to bring his army to take Rome as opposed to making the smarter choice, laying low and

slowly making his way to power by continuing to fight in the gladiator pits until the right opportunity arises.

Commodus and Maximus are both equal and opposite.

Both loved Marcus

Both love Lucilla

Both are only acting to fulfill their dream of the 'perfect' Rome.

In these ways the two characters reflect each other.

However, Commodus represents the corruption of Rome.

The scene of suffering: After all of his allies are killed by Commodus' soldiers, including Proximo and Cicero, Maximus is caught whilst about to escape and imprisoned by Commodus, where his death is inevitable after Commodus stabs him. He later dies just after succeeding in killing Commodus.

Redemption is foreshadowed when Maximus is chained to a cross, Scott alluding to the death of Jesus Christ and Jesus' sacrifice for the good of the people, similar to how Maximus ensures that Commodus is killed in the pits and doesn't rule, for the good of the people, but at the cost of sacrificing his own life.

Death is somewhat of a reward for Maximus as he seemingly is able to reunite with his family that he values so much through the overlaid imagery which parallels the beginning of the film.