

Stage 2 English Studies
Assessment Type 2: Individual Study
Critical Essay: *Drive/I am Legend*

How do the texts *Drive* (2001 film) and *I Am Legend* (1954 novel) use literary and film techniques to explore the protagonists becoming the monsters they fight?

The novel and film, *I Am Legend* and *Drive*, written and directed by Richard Matheson and Nicolas Winding Refn, explore the transformations of the main protagonists from each text as they slowly develop from good to bad without realising and become the monsters that they fight. This conversion is portrayed through the authors' innovative utilisation of literary devices and film techniques such as imagery, symbolism, characterisation, music and *Mise En Scene*. These diverse techniques allow each text to control the audience's perception of the characters through the authors' sculpted channel of discernment; the characterisation that tells the audience what to feel and think. This is also seen in their use of imagery and the way the texts end. Each of these elements are key components in depicting the development from good to bad, as each protagonists' journey is realised by the audience to develop the texts' full effect for entertainment and intellectual understanding. From this, the characterisation of the protagonists and their supporting characters eventually allows them to ironically appear as their own antagonists.

Individually, each text stands out from one another in plot and themes, but the main characters share similar methods of characterisation and personal development into the monsters they become. The leading protagonist of *I Am Legend*, Robert Neville, is a lone survivor; trapped in a post-apocalyptic world ruined by a vampiric plague, while The Driver of *Drive* is a secluded individual with meticulous habits seen in his conditions for business. The Driver's faultless details are witnessed in the first scene of the film when he states that:

There's a hundred thousand streets in this city... You give me a time and a place, I give you a five minute window; anything happens in that five minutes and I'm yours... Anything either side of that and you're on your own.

As The Driver explains this, the frame shows a map of the city marked out in preparation and a television broadcasting sporting channels. This foreshadows the end of the subsequent action since he plans so far ahead of a car chase as to drive into a sporting stadium at the end of a game to escape into the crowd. The Driver's situation illustrated through the film is also one of loneliness and despair, as his life is seemingly perforated with constant unfortunate events and circumstances, all of which force him into relentless solitude. Neville struggles to retain his humanity in an attempt to preserve what morals remain in the world in hopes of reversing the plague whereas The Driver just wants to be with Irene and end his lonely driving. However, as The Driver protects Irene's family from criminals, he becomes one by assuming their method of business to get rid of them, which is mirrored in *I Am Legend*, when Neville literally switches roles with the vampires and becomes the monster;

...Full circle. A new terror born in death, a new superstition entering the unassailable fortress of forever. I am legend.

Neville discovers that he has become the monster of his story by definition as the vampires take over as the dominant species and humans, or Neville, "like the vampires, was the anathema and black terror to be destroyed". While *The Driver* copied the criminals of his situation and murdered them to bring peace, Neville attempted to rid the world of the monsters, thereby copying the vampires and murdering them. It is clear that each text is mostly different except for similar protagonist development throughout both *Drive* and *I Am Legend* as they both unintentionally become monsters.

The moralities instil a natural quality of good within both Robert Neville's and *The Driver's* characterisation. The fact that he is not ever referred to by a name besides "Driver" or "Kid" and his limited dialogue shows intended characterisation by the director to make the audience perceive him as taciturn and imperturbable and is also seen alone in many scenes, reflecting his isolation in life. This shows that Refn wanted to characterise *The Driver* as a sympathetic hero to be sided with by the audience and is comparable to *I Am Legend* as Neville is also characterised as a sympathetic hero through similar techniques. Although the reader is exposed to all sides of Neville's personality and thought processes with person limited point of view exhibited by Matheson to only show Neville's perspective, Neville is also characterised as a sympathetic hero. This is because one of the novel's themes is isolation, showing Neville overcoming the rage and desolation of being alone. It is the powerful characterisation of each protagonists' journey and all of their misfortune that aligns the audience with them. *The Driver* has the unfortunate situation of his only friend and mentor being killed while his failure to help Irene's family has her husband is killed as well and he could not be with Irene himself. Misfortune is also used in *I Am Legend* to create sympathy for the main character. This is shown as Neville not only suffered from a constant battle to keep his sanity and humanity, but he lost everyone he knew including his child and wife. He not only had to bury her twice because of the vampire plague, since "he had put Virginia to her second and final rest", but he also had to fight to keep her from being thrown into a pit of fire. Neville was even taunted by the vampires as "the women had seen him and had started striking vile postures in order to entice him out of the house." The reader sympathises with Neville more as his harsh situation occurs and his horrible past is shown to the reader through flashbacks as if to compare them to bad memories instead of normal scenes, enhancing the horrific nature of his past. As Neville and *The Driver* become more like their antagonists and over time, the audience is convinced that they are doing the right thing as the justification to their actions is for a good cause, especially when the lives of Irene and Bericio are threatened. Though each protagonist is characterised by the authors to be heroes in the beginning, the characterisation is developed and is so strong that by the end of each text the protagonists are still sympathised by the audience after they become the monsters that they fight.

The depiction of the heroes becoming the monsters that they fight was developed by each author throughout the texts using film and literary techniques to compare this to becoming the evil. *The Driver's* cause for his actions are seen as good while he fights evil; a comparable situation to *I Am Legend* as Neville is a sympathetic character who also fights evil. The vampires that he fights are characterised as evil monsters that from Neville's point of view are "filthy bastards" that ruined the world. Through the development of the protagonists and plots of each text, the audience is unaware of the evil being committed as the acts of murder and other crime are all portrayed as necessary. Toward the end of the texts however, the authors display a key scene showing a greater perspective of the plot making the audience realise the acts were in fact evil. Matheson shows this as a twist in the end of *I Am Legend* where Neville realises the wrong he has done as "suddenly he thought, I'm

the abnormal one now. Normalcy was a majority concept, the standard of many and not just one man." This is also reinforced as "The street was filled with people. They milled and stirred in the gray light of morning", since the imagery implemented by the new "people" gathering in the "morning" of a new day makes Neville and the reader aware of how his vampire slayings were now evil. The realisation of Neville becoming the evil is also used by Refn in the most significant of four elevator scenes in *Drive* by using film techniques. Of all elevator scenes, the last shows the elevator descending which could symbolise both descending to hell, representing or even foreshadowing the evil and also the cage that traps The Driver in his situation of loneliness. The elevator scene is also significant as it mirrors the pace of the film from peaceful and slow to violent and quick, just like the progression of The Driver's transition to evil. Refn puts one part of the scene in slow motion as the lights dim and shows their associated blue and orange lighting between the characters mix while non-diegetic music plays and they engage in a kiss. This cuts to back to normal speed, lighting and sound when The Driver turns toward the criminal and gruesomely murders him, enhancing the reality of The Driver's evil actions. Irene reacts by leaving the elevator into a grey-blue car park and looks back at The Driver in the gold-orange elevator. This shows that Irene sees the evil of The Driver's actions and aligns the audience to understand her disapproval before the elevator doors shut between them which closes Irene from the frame to end it. In each case, the characters, Robert Neville and The Driver, unknowingly commit evil in an attempt to destroy the greater evil.

The way the texts end is integral to present the result of each character's development into monsters and instil the summation of the plot and the authors' messages. This is because the end of each text is mainly what the reader remembers the most and so there is a substantial amount of detail and precision to its execution. An example of the thought put into the way the text ends is seen in *Drive* when The Driver leaves the city. After the realisation of The Driver's evil and the devastating disapproval from Irene, the Driver seeks to end all of the trouble for Irene's family once and for all by reaching a peak in his monstrosities and murdering the bosses of the criminals who threatened Irene's family. Before The Driver kills the second leader, Bernie, he is assured that after they:

Shake hands, you start the rest of your life. Any dreams you have or plans or hopes for your future; I think you're going to have to put that on hold. For the rest of your life you're going to be looking over your shoulder... But the girl is safe.

This exit is significant as it symbolises The Driver's ^{loneliness} ~~loneliness~~ and shows that the driving of *Drive* represents the solitude of his life. The subsequent non-diegetic lyrics repeat "real human being, and a real hero", which ironically refers to The Driver's heroic actions and subliminally adds to his characterisation. This reflects the same theme in *I Am Legend* as Neville only wanted to save humanity and survive though it resulted in his transition to a monster and an entire population perceiving him as a "scourge even worse than the disease they had come to live with", ultimately leaving him to die alone. Each text ends to encapsulate the idea of punishing the monsters for their evil crimes, though it is these unfortunate events that characterise the protagonists to be sympathetic and forgiven by the audience.

Both protagonists' efforts and motivation were of positive intentions; Robert Neville endeavoured to save humanity and the driver strived to save Irene's family. Although each characters' motives or methods could also pertain to alternate interpretations proving to be more selfish than the former,

such as how Neville and The Driver yearn to be free from loneliness, this was not focused on in their characterisation. This is because the authors desired to characterise the protagonists as heroes that are eventually consumed by their own quest and evolve into the monsters that they fight. The authors also chose to portray messages to the reader through their utilisation of literary and film techniques referring to how the protagonists evolved into monsters they hate. This indicates a meaning to how people who fight monsters should see to it that they themselves do not become a monster in society.

2000 words

Assessment Comments

This Individual Study is a B grade.

Knowledge and Understanding

- KU1 Knowledge and understanding is demonstrated of the ways in which Refn and Matheson use stylistic features and language techniques to communicate ideas, and to influence the reader's response. Imagery, setting, characterisation and the texts' conclusions are explored and linked to the concerns presented in the texts. There is a genuine attempt to connect the author, reader and text, with some exploration of the effects of particular devices.
- KU2 There is evidence of knowledge and understanding of some ideas, values, and beliefs in familiar, and some unfamiliar, texts. The idea of becoming that which you fight and losing yourself in the process is explored, with some detail.

Analysis

- An2 In this comparative exercise there is a clear analysis of connections between texts, based on analysis of similarities and/or differences. A genuine attempt has been made to examine the texts in relation to each other and evidence moves between texts, connecting and comparing them, with some detailed exploration.
- An3 There is evidence of analysis of a range of ways in which both authors use language techniques to influence opinions and decisions in familiar, and some unfamiliar, texts. There is a major focus on characterisation, whilst other devices are referred to rather than explored in detail.

Application

- Ap1 There is evidence of use of a range of language skills and techniques to create a clear and coherent essay that addresses the question formulated. This question is referred to throughout the essay, so building an argument clearly and coherently.
- Ap2 There is evidence of recognition of connections between texts, through responses that compare and contrast texts in an integrated way. There is movement between the texts within paragraphs rather than treating them sequentially.
- Ap3 Appropriate use of evidence from texts supports responses, with textual references incorporated into the discussion.

Communication

- C1 Mostly fluent and precise writing, using appropriate style, structure, vocabulary and literary terms.
- C2 Appropriate use of form and register.

Performance Standards for Stage 2 English Studies

	Knowledge and Understanding	Analysis	Application	Communication
A	<p>Knowledge and understanding of a wide range of ways in which authors use stylistic features and language techniques to communicate complex and familiar ideas, and to influence the reader's response.</p> <p>Detailed knowledge and understanding of the ideas, values, and beliefs in familiar and unfamiliar texts.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators and readers of familiar and unfamiliar texts use a range of textual conventions to make meaning.</p>	<p>Analysis of complex connections between personal experiences, ideas, values, and beliefs, and those explored in familiar and unfamiliar texts.</p> <p>In comparative exercises, a perceptive analysis of connections between texts, based on analysis and synthesis of similarities and/or differences.</p> <p>Perceptive analysis of a range of ways in which authors use language techniques to influence opinions and decisions in familiar and unfamiliar texts.</p>	<p>Use of a wide range of language skills and techniques to create sophisticated and coherent texts that address the meaning and intention of the task.</p> <p>In comparative exercises, a perceptive recognition of connections between texts, through responses that integrate discussion of texts and move easily between them.</p> <p>Detailed and appropriate use of evidence from texts to support responses, with textual references incorporated fluently in discussion.</p> <p>Skills in using the textual, structural, and conventional features of text types for a range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts, audiences, and purposes.</p>	<p>Fluent and precise writing and speaking, using appropriate style and structure for a range of mainly unfamiliar audiences and contexts.</p> <p>Appropriate use of form and register to convey mostly complex meaning in a range of unfamiliar contexts.</p>
B	<p>Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which authors use stylistic features and language techniques to communicate complex and familiar ideas, and to influence the reader's response.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of some ideas, values, and beliefs in familiar, and some unfamiliar, texts.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators and readers of mainly familiar texts use some textual conventions to make meaning.</p>	<p>Analysis of some complex connections between personal experiences, ideas, values, and beliefs, and those explored in familiar, and some unfamiliar, texts.</p> <p>In comparative exercises, a clear analysis of connections between texts, based on analysis of similarities and/or differences.</p> <p>Analysis of a range of ways in which authors use language techniques to influence opinions and decisions in familiar, and some unfamiliar, texts.</p>	<p>Use of a range of language skills and techniques to create clear and coherent texts that address the meaning and intention of the task.</p> <p>In comparative exercises, recognition of connections between texts, through responses that compare and contrast texts in an integrated way.</p> <p>Appropriate use of evidence from texts to support responses, with textual references incorporated in discussion.</p> <p>Skills in using some of the textual, structural, and conventional features of text types for a range of mainly familiar, and some unfamiliar, contexts, audiences, and purposes.</p>	<p>Mostly fluent and precise writing and speaking, using appropriate style and structure for a range of mostly familiar audiences and contexts.</p> <p>Appropriate use of form and register to convey complex and simple meaning in a range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts.</p>
C	<p>Knowledge and understanding of a narrow range of ways in which authors use stylistic features and language techniques to communicate mainly familiar ideas, and to influence the reader's response.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of some ideas, values, and beliefs in mainly familiar texts.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of some of the ways in which creators and readers of a range of familiar texts use textual conventions to make simple or factual meaning.</p>	<p>Analysis of simple connections between personal experiences, ideas, values, and beliefs, and those explored in familiar texts.</p> <p>In comparative exercises, analysis of connections between texts, based on some understanding of similarities and/or differences.</p> <p>Descriptive analysis of a number of ways in which authors use language techniques to influence opinions and decisions in familiar texts.</p>	<p>Use of language skills and techniques to create texts that address the meaning and intention of the task.</p> <p>In comparative exercises, recognition of some connections between texts, through responses that compare and contrast texts, usually in a sequential rather than an integrated way.</p> <p>Competent use of evidence from texts to support responses, with some use of textual references in discussion.</p> <p>Skills in using some of the textual, structural, and conventional features of some text types for familiar contexts, audiences, and purposes.</p>	<p>Generally fluent and functional writing and speaking, using appropriate style and structure for familiar audiences and contexts.</p> <p>Appropriate use of form and register to convey simple meaning in a narrow range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts.</p>
D	<p>Knowledge and restricted understanding of some simple stylistic features and language techniques used by authors to communicate mainly familiar ideas, and to influence the reader's response.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of some familiar ideas, values, and beliefs in familiar texts.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of a restricted number of ways in which creators and readers of a narrow range of familiar texts use some textual conventions to make simple or factual meaning.</p>	<p>Reference to simple connections between uncomplicated personal experiences, ideas, values, and beliefs, and those explored in familiar texts.</p> <p>In comparative exercises, answers that make partial comparisons and contrasts.</p> <p>Reference to some ways in which authors use a narrow range of language techniques to influence opinions and decisions in familiar texts.</p>	<p>Use of some language skills and techniques to create texts that partly address the meaning and intention of the task.</p> <p>In comparative exercises, some awareness of connections between texts, through partial responses that mainly deal with texts separately.</p> <p>Some use of evidence from texts to support a response, with use of a narrow range of textual references.</p> <p>Skills in using some of the textual, structural, or conventional features of a text type for a familiar context, audience, or purpose.</p>	<p>Achievement of a level of fluency in writing and speaking, in a mainly appropriate style.</p> <p>Occasionally appropriate use of form and/or register to convey simple meaning in familiar contexts.</p>
E	<p>Knowledge and understanding of a restricted range of simple stylistic features and language techniques used by authors to communicate familiar ideas, and to influence the reader's response.</p> <p>Identification of an idea, a value, or a belief in familiar texts.</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which a creator or reader of a highly familiar text uses textual conventions to make factual meaning.</p>	<p>Recognition of a simple connection between a straightforward personal, experience, idea, value, or belief, and that explored in a highly familiar text.</p> <p>In comparative exercises, answers that make a simple comparison or contrast.</p> <p>Reference to the way in which an author uses language techniques to influence opinions and decisions in a highly familiar text.</p>	<p>Attempted use of a restricted range of language skills and/or techniques to create a text or texts that attempt to address the meaning or intention of the task.</p> <p>In comparative exercises, identification of limited connections between texts, through fragmented responses that deal with texts separately.</p> <p>Restricted use of evidence from texts to support a simple response, with limited textual reference.</p> <p>Skills in using the textual, structural, or conventional features of a text type for a highly familiar context, audience, or purpose.</p>	<p>Emerging development of fluency in an occasionally appropriate style.</p> <p>Occasionally appropriate use of form and register to convey literal meaning in highly familiar contexts.</p>