 On the Road – resource 28

Teachers notes

| Quote (and speaker) | Observation |
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| “I haven’t really been anywhere noteworthy or mentionable.” (Walter) | Establishes Walter’s belief that he isn’t interesting, and his lack of travel experience. |
| “I just live by the ABCs – Adventurous Brave Creative.” (Walter) | This line in Walter’s daydream indicates the sort of person he wishes he was. |
| “Ground control to Major Tom. Can you hear me Major Tom?” (Ted) | This allusion to the song A Space Odyssey foreshadows the song’s later use in the film, and the astronaut character in this song is a symbol for Walter’s daydream alter-ego. |
| “Heard rumblings Life’s done. Wanted to say thanks. Take a look inside, a gift for all the years of hard work. Sorry about the neg roll, I spilled some blood on it while self-stitching a gun wound to my abdomen, but number 25 is my best ever – The Quintessence of Life, I think I trust you’ll get it where it needs to go, you always do.” (Sean) | Sean’s note demonstrates the sort of person he is, and just how different he is from Walter. |
| “That song is about courage and going into the unknown. It’s a cool song.” (Cheryl) | This line of dialogue shows that Cheryl is different to Ted and shares something in common with Walter. It also foreshadows her appearance in the daydream that inspires Walter to jump onto the helicopter in Greenland. |
| “Beautiful things don’t ask for your attention.” (Sean) | This quote is a metaphor for how Sean feels about Walter, and foreshadows Walter’s appearance on the cover of Life magazine at the film’s end. |
| “If I like a moment… I don’t like to have the distraction of cameras, so I save it.” (Sean) | This shows the importance of experiencing things for yourself, rather than experiencing things through a camera or someone else’s photographs. |
| “I saw you as a little grey piece of paper. But now I see you and it’s like Indiana Jones decided to become singer of the Strokes or something like that.” (Todd) | Todd’s allusions to the Strokes and Indiana Jones when describing Walter show how far Walter has come. The metaphor of the ‘little grey piece of paper’ represents Walter at the beginning of the film. |

Analysis of shot in Resource 29

* Foreground: Places an emphasis on the setting of the apartment, making the viewer conscious of where Walter is.
* Background: Walter is placed in the background to show his lack of power over his own life. He is ‘small’ and metaphorically ‘in the background’.
* Symbolism: The framed picture foreshadows Walter’s tendency to daydream, which features throughout the rest of the film.
* Light: The source of light casts shadows towards the front of the shot and leaves the foreground in shadow, establishing the apartment as a claustrophobic and uninspiring space.
* Walter’s body language: Walter’s body language shows his low self-esteem and timid nature.
* Props: The computer and cereal bowl are both fairly ‘normal’ items and help establish how uninteresting Walter is.
* Costume: Walter’s costume blends in with the clothes of every other office worker and shows his lack of individuality and lack of adventurousness.
* Colour: Grey and white indicate dullness and a lack of excitement in Walter’s life.

Some points for discussion:

1. at the 8 minute, 26 second mark; how do we know that Walter’s joke is in his head and not really happening? How does the shot change to show this?
2. the negative of Sean’s photo, ‘The Quintessence of Life’, drives the plot. How?
3. which element sparks Walter’s true journey the most?
4. eHarmony
5. Cheryl Melhoff
6. his job at Life Magazine being put in jeopardy
7. the song A Space Odyssey
8. in what ways is Sean the opposite of Walter?

Challenges faced by Walter

What challenges does Walter face on his journey?

* Does he take a ride with a drunken helicopter pilot?
* Does he jump from the helicopter into the boat?
* Does he run for the bike?
* Does he search for Sean in a foreign and unknown country?
* Does he travel through a high altitude area inhabited by dangerous warlords?

What risks does Walter face with each challenge?

* The helicopter pilot is drunk and may crash the helicopter.
* The water is freezing and infested with sharks.
* Running for the bike means that he has to beat a ‘dozen horny Chileans’ to it.
* The trip to Iceland puts him at risk of death by volcano.
* The warlords are befriended with a Clementine Cake, and Walter has to make ‘oxygen choices’.

Motifs

* Social Media: eHarmony
  + The connections people make online have, in some way, replaced real life connections. Walter’s reliance on this prevents him from making a close connection with Cheryl in real life. His misunderstanding when he visits her house and sees her ex-husband could be prevented by real life communication but Walter is too timid and remains silent instead.
  + The more Walter travels the more interesting and successful his eHarmony profile becomes – it becomes a way for the audience to measure his transformation.
* Photographs
  + Photographs are records of things we’ve seen and experienced, and they allow for others to see and experience these things in a second-hand way.
  + As the person in charge of developing photographs at Life magazine, Walter experiences all of Sean O’Connell’s adventures without actually going anywhere. He is the antithesis of Sean in every way – something that is exemplified further when Sean reveals that he doesn’t always take photographs of the amazing things he sees; he’d rather experience them.
  + When Walter moves on from Life magazine, he is also saying goodbye to his previous way of life – he is no longer passive and has now become an active participant in the world.