

„White Masculinity and Racism“

A) Monologischer Teil

Erste Aufgabe

- the Hmong people are presented in a way that represents two stereotypical extremes of Asian Americans: on the one hand: passive, docile people who are incapable of managing their own lives or standing up for themselves and thus desperately need help (ll. 3-12; ll. 15-16); on the other hand: the gang represents the stereotypical image of the “yellow peril” – Asian Americans as depraved criminals (ll. 16-19)
- there are no positive representations; the presented negative stereotypes actually support a discriminatory attitude towards this ethnic group (ll. 19-20)
- Walt on the other hand is depicted as a white saviour who is able to protect the community against their own people; as such, the character of Walt supports male dominance and very traditional gender roles as a positive stereotype of the white American

Zweite Aufgabe

individuelle Schülerantworten, mögliche Aspekte:

- on the one hand: it is actually true that there are very few representations of Asian Americans in the film beyond the stereotypes that the authors mention; it is also true that Walt's dominant, violent and machoistic behaviour is presented in a rather positive way (self-reliance, strength, heroism) [+Beispiele aus dem Film]
- on the other hand: the author ignores the fact that Walt undergoes a development in the film; not only does he overcome his loneliness but also some of his prejudices and bias (even if he cannot admit to that and on the outside still seems to be his old self); he opens up to a new world/ culture and tries to support this community (within the boundaries of a set of values that remains questionable until the end); thus, he actually makes an effort at trying to establish a sense of belonging in a world that so far has been alien and threatening to him without giving up on his old self completely [+Beispiele aus dem Film]

B) Dialogischer Teil

Erweiterung des Umfelds der Aufgabe

Der erste Impuls soll der Tatsache Rechnung tragen, das TMK in der Unterrichtseinheit eine große Rolle gespielt hat und ebenfalls Bestandteil der mündlichen Prüfung sein sollte.

Der zweite Impuls soll beispielhaft zeigen, wie weitere soziokulturelle Themen des Bildungsplans an die Thematik des Textes angeknüpft werden können (*immigration, acculturation vs. parallel societies, racial equality, gun control, ...*).

1. *Walt as the heroic saviour or the isolated old man? Give examples of how cinematic devices are employed in Gran Torino to support either view.*

- heroic saviour: in the final scene, Walt is shot and falls to the ground; his posture reminds the viewer of Jesus on the cross (his arms spread); this effect is enhanced by the fact that he is filmed from above (bird's eye view); the camera is moving further and further away from him, thus maybe even suggesting that his soul is rising up to the sky; therefore, Walt's last moment in the film clearly has religious connotations, emphasising the heroic sacrifice Walt has made (martyr?)
- grumpy old man: again and again he is presented as a grumpy old man stuck in his habits and locked up in a world of his own; a world that is determined by loneliness (Walt alone on the porch, drinking beer, just staring out into the neighbourhood) and boring routines (Walt mowing the lawn; bird's eye view – presenting Walt as a tiny figure in his fort)
- all in all: both presentations of Walt are important in the film and they do not contradict each other: Walt definitely is a grumpy, stuck-up old man who doesn't seem to have developed a sense of belonging and who has great difficulties opening up to people; however, once he has taken a liking to Thao and his family, he supports them in every way he can; the fact that Walt sacrifices his life for Thao in the end shows a truly heroic side of him; it also shows how a true sense of belonging can change a person

2. *Gran Torino deals with the problem of racism/ racial stereotyping. Comment on whether you think this is still a major issue in the USA today.*

individuelle Schülerantworten; mögliche Aspekte:

- racism and racial stereotyping have always been major issues in the USA, especially with regard to black people
- after the abolition of slavery, black people were still exposed to violence, lynching, discrimination and segregation
- the Civil Rights Movement fought against this; and although they achieved a lot, racism, especially against black people, it still is a major issue
- subtle forms of racism [*Beispiele aus dem Unterricht*]
- racist demonstrations/ open violence [*Beispiele aus dem Unterricht*]
- racism among the police/ police violence [*Beispiele aus dem Unterricht*]

- ...
- therefore, new movements, like #blacklivesmatter, still have to fight for black peoples' rights; Obama becoming the first black president of the USA has not really changed anything about that
- ...