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<div align="center">Visual Analysis</div>

I chose to analyze the Omaha Beach Scene from the movie *Saving Private Ryan*. This scene may be found here: https://youtu.be/hdBEyitJ7Qc. The movie as a whole would be great to analyze, but I figured this scene is a very pivotal part in the movie and has a lot of interesting characteristics.

Personal perspective – This scene is very realistic and keeps me engaged the entire time. The combination of the cinematography and sound effects make me feel like I'm actually on the beach with the soldiers. It is very intense and probably the most realistic depiction of D-Day in a war movie. Overall, it is very well done and I definitely recommend the movie as a whole.

Historical perspective – The movie *Saving Private Ryan* takes place in June of 1944 during World War II. This scene in particular, the Omaha Beach Assault, took place on June 6th, 1944, on the northern beaches of Normandy, France. More than 156,000 American, British, and Canadian troops attacked the shores and cliffs. The original D-Day attack on Normandy was scheduled for June 5th by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, but inclement weather caused the attacked to be delayed until June 6th. The term "D-Day" was used as a placeholder for the date of a mission and didn't actually stand for anything specifically. On June 6th, Eisenhower said to

the troops, "You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you" (History.com).

Operation Overlord involved an attack on five sections of the beachfront: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Sword, and Juno. The Americans attacked on the Utah and Omaha beaches, the British on the Gold and Juno beaches, and the Canadians on Sword. Approximately 5,000 ships and landing craft brought troops and supplies to the beaches while 11,000 aircraft provided support. Omaha Beach had the toughest fighting because the bombing passes the Allies made were mostly unsuccessful. A lot of the soldiers were mowed down by German heavy machine guns before they could even get out of the landing crafts. Some of them would jump off the sides of the boats to escape being shot, but many of them drowned from the weight of their gear. If they were able to get onto the beach, the soldiers were met with a copious number of German defenses. The defenses started at the low tide part of the beach with log posts that had mines attached to them. Next were hedgehogs, five-foot-tall steel beams welded together at different angles to create a spike-like structure. Further up the shore were Belgian gates, seven-feet-seven-inch-tall steel frames. The Belgian gates were followed by more log posts and log ramps with mines attached. If the Allies were able to breach through the mines, they were met at the sand dunes with concertina wire, a type of barbed wire with razor-like edges. The last line of defense for the Germans were bunkers on top of cliffs that were 100-200 feet tall. It was in these bunkers where the Germans took out a majority of the soldiers in the landing crafts. According to History.com, "around 2,400 American troops were killed, wounded or unaccounted for after the fighting at Omaha Beach."

Saving Private Ryan is based on the real-life story of a mission assigned by the U.S. War Department to bring home Private First Class Frederick "Fritz" Niland, the last living brother in

the Ryan family that served in World War II. The U.S. War Department had enacted a "sole-survivor policy" which was designed to protect the last living family member from continuing to serve in active military duty. The act was originally created after the five Sullivan brothers, George, Francis, Joseph, Madison, and Albert, who served together on the *USS Juneau*, were killed when their ship was sunk by the Japanese during the Battle of Guadalcanal. Captain John H. Miller was initially tasked with leading a platoon of soldiers into Normandy on D-Day and a few days later received orders to search for and bring home Private Niland. Captain Miller and his platoon eventually found Private Niland and brought him home to his mother. The character Private James Francis Ryan is based off Private Frederick Niland.

Technical perspective – In order for the actors to be ready for the types of conditions that were involved in making a war movie, a senior military advisor, Captain Dale Dye, USMC (Ret), was brought in to train the actors in a "boot camp." "They had the total of 10 days training, of which six days were spent under canvas in the field in typical British weather: pouring rain and cold and chilly. And it was very rugged on them, very tough. Sometimes we had night exercises, they slept very little, they ate twice a day, British rations, if they didn't upset me that day. And they went through a very grueling and rigorous weapons handling curriculum, the business of infantry tactics, the business of what it's like to live with this sort of thing." (DVDXtras, 20:10). Tom Hanks described this training well. "You have to understand, we are, essentially, playing guys who are tired, and miserable, and who would want to go home, [and] of whom great physical things are being demanded of constantly. And we couldn't have done that without having gone through something like Dale Dye put us through" (DVDXtras, 17:09).

In terms of the cinematography, the Omaha Beach Scene was shot in a documentary style as to make the audience feel like they were with the cameraman recording what he saw on the

beach. There were virtually no locked off shots and the shots following the actors were handheld.

The filmmakers used 45 or 90 degree shutter speeds to limit motion blur, thus making the action

more realistic by making the explosions very crisp. In post-production, the film was desaturated

to be more accurate to what the actual documentaries made during World War II looked like.

There were numerous special effects in this scene. For the gun effects, "Spielberg had his

effects crew trick out the guns...so that when the actors fired blanks, a signal would be sent to the

squib pack on another actor. So, pulling the trigger would both fire a blank and set off the squib

on the other target with distance taken into consideration" (CineFix - IGN Movies and TV, 6:19).

For the sequence with the flamethrower exploding, the sfx crew put explosives in the

flamethrower pack so it would shoot out flames. The actors around the flamethrower were

covered in a special kind of gel so they would catch fire. They also had a propane gas sprayer

that would shoot at the flamethrower guy to make the flames from the explosion bigger and catch

more people on fire. For the shots where you see soldiers with limbs cut off, the soldiers were

played by amputees.

The filmmakers made the choice to not have any music in the background as to make the

audience feel as if they were in the moment with the soldiers as opposed to realizing they were

watching a movie. The sound designer for *Saving Private Ryan*, Gary Rydstrom, commented on

this. "I especially appreciate Steven Spielberg's and John Williams' choice not to put music in

the battle scenes. That allowed those scenes to be more visceral. Anytime you put music in, even

the most beautiful music, it makes the audience realize from moment to moment they're

watching a movie. And what I think that opening battle scene especially does is pull you in and

have you experience battle in a very direct way" (CineFix - IGN Movies and TV, 1:09:37). The

sounds for the bullets underwater were made from a recording of a flyfishing line being lifted out

of the water. For the part where Tom Hanks' character becomes shell shocked, a recording of the sea was played through speakers and re-recording through a long tube. Gary Rydstrom explained how he created it. "I was trying to imagine what it would be like to hear only the sound of yourself...I recorded ocean sounds, played them over a speaker, and then recorded them with a microphone through a long tube. And it would make this resonant seashell sound" (CineFix - IGN Movies and TV, 1:13:45).

Ethical perspective – Was this scene from *Saving Private Ryan* ethical? I believe it was for a few reasons. Even though it is very violent, it accurately depicts the horrors of war and what the soldiers actually went through. The whole reason the soldiers were fighting in the first place was to eliminate the Nazis. The Nazis were a communist government that were racist against anyone who wasn't of the Arian Race. They also killed innocent people. The Catechism of the Catholic Church has some good information on what constitutes a "just war." Paragraph 2309 lays out the criteria for the use of military force. It includes the following: "the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain; all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; there must be serious prospects of success; the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated" (CCC, para. 2309). Every one of these things was true and therefore, the Allies were just in fighting against the Nazis.

Cultural perspective – What do the story and symbolism in this scene from *Saving Private Ryan* say about current cultural events? Reflecting on this scene, one may come to appreciate their country more for the ultimate sacrifices the soldiers made to give people the freedom they have today. The D-Day assault was the most pivotal point in World War II and about 2,400 American troops died trying to secure Omaha Beach.

Critical perspective – Similar to personal perspective, critical perspective talks about lessons that a person can take away. I believe a person can take away a lot from this scene, and really, from this entire movie. The Omaha Beach Scene is known to be the most historically accurate depiction of the D-Day assault. The cinematography and sound effects submerse the viewer into the scene and make them feel like they are actually there. After watching this scene (and the rest of the movie), a person can have a better respect for their country and what brought them the freedom they have today. Laying down one's life for one's country is the best thing a person can do to show how much they care about freedom.

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