American Beauty

* Metaphors

Lester is looking out the window of his house at his wife, and the blinds on the window represent jail cell bars, he is depicted as being in jail because his life, at this point, is so empty and missing substance.

The roses not only symbolize beauty, but also a social barrier between Lester and Angela and that things are not what they seem in the metaphoric dream scenes.

Angela is a perfect visualization of the American Dream, the Americana Reality is shown when Angela's insecurity and is revealed.

* Lighting/film techniques

A green and somber soft light is used in the scene where Ricky gets hit by his father; this makes the mood of the scene feel not dangerous and fearful, but melancholic and depressing.

In Lester's monologue about the beauty of life he ends with “You have no idea what I'm talking about, I'm sure. But don't worry...” and then the screen fades to black. “You will someday.” This is a very subtle technique used to symbolise death, which is more effective than showing a gravestone.

When Carolyn is going to kill Lester she breathes heavily, clutches her bag, there is a thunderstorm and sad music is playing helps create mood (depressing and angry).

When Buddy gets out of Carolyn’s car after they realize what a mistake the affair was, Carolyn screams at the top of her lungs, the camera rises in the air above her car while spinning quickly. This is a foreshadowing of things to come, as everything goes wrong after this point.

* Characterization

All of the characters do a great job of representing many types of people. For example, Angela is a prime example of a teenage girl arrogant about her looks, Ricky is an introverted only child, and Jane is a typical teenager.

There are a few examples of power in the movie. Angela has power over Lester, because she knows he is very attracted to her. Frank Fitts has power over his son, and this shows when he beats him. Frank also gains power over Lester and the rest of his family when Frank murders Lester. Lester has power over Carolyn when he reminds her that he supported her when she got her license.

Situations the characters are going through are very realistic e.g. quitting, relationship tension, new love, homophobia.

* Themes

The beauty of life in general, death, self-awareness, power, love, mid-life crises, bureaucracy corruption, pedophilia, homophobia, adultery, spouse abuse, child abuse, teen-age troubles, and the American predispositions to materialism, physical attraction/ shallowness, and youthfulness.

Materialism is evident in the scene where Lester nearly spills beer and the couch and Carolyn's obsession with materialism shows. "this isn't life. This is just stuff . And it's become more important to you than living"

* Quotes

“And in a way, I'm dead already... Both my wife and daughter think I'm this gigantic loser, and... they're right.” colloquial language