International Baccalaureate

Extended essay cover

Candidates must complete this page and then give this cover and their final version of the extended essay to their supervisor.

Candidate session number	
Candidate name	
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Examination session (May or November)	

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: English B group 2

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.) cat 2.

Title of the extended essay: The depiction of the skinhead subculture and rise of white power in 80's UK based on the movie "This is England"

This is the title- the RQ should then come in the introduction

The subject and category is noted, but should be precisely stated as cat. 2b

Candidate's declaration

This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

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Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

had a clear idea and focused well already from the start. She is pleased with the fact that she was well planned, making her work with the extended essay less stressful.
There were some problems finding good, relevant sources, but succeeded in doing so quite early on.
She learnt new facts about the subject but also how to write an essay in an academic way.
She worked independently and in a focused manner all the way.

positive comments on planning and independence may influence criterion K to some degree- a good relationship with the supervisor is important.

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent 5 hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisors should spend between 3 and 5 hours supporting the candidate- this includes the viva voce. The supervisor is limited in both time and responsibility for the content of the EE. This is the student's paper.

Extended Essay

English B

Candidate name:

Candidate number:

Session:

Word Count: 3603

The word count is acceptable

The depiction of the skinhead subculture and rise of white power in 80's UK based on the movie *This is England*

The year and distributor should be included for a film

Abstract

The people of the skinhead subculture are often seen as teenagers participating in racial movements and being violent, making a fuss in society. *This is England* is a movie which portrays this culture, but seen by a lost and lonely twelve year old boy's eyes and showing the two different kinds of skinheads – the friendly and the violent – making a balanced observation of the teenagers known for such vandalism and violence.

film as an artifact comes across- this could be clearer however

This extended essay is discussing the research question; **the depiction of the skinhead subculture and the rise of white power in 80's UK based on the movie *This is England***, directed by Shane Meadows (2006) as an important and rightful view on the skinheads during the 80's. The focus will be on how the skinheads are portrayed in the movie and to what extent the general view of skinheads is correct.

Meaning?

By watching and going into depth in the movie, as well as reading internet sources and books, this essay provides a comprehensive discussion and analysis on the subject targeted. As a result, it is concluded and shown that the skinheads were not necessarily violent, but the fact that media only paid attention to them when they were up to trouble made the general view very skewed and unfair to the skinheads.

RQ not phrased as a question, but the topic is clear.

The method or scope of the EE is not entirely clear here, but there is some sense of an approach. The RQ and conclusions are much clearer so there is enough for full marks for all 3 requirements.

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Not particularly detailed but adequate. Simply labeling Intro/ Body/Conclusion is not at all helpful and should be avoided.

Introduction

This is England is a movie from 2006 and takes place in England 1983, in the middle of the skinhead and punk rock era. One gets to follow the twelve year old boy Shaun, who lives a rather difficult life with a deceased father and being bullied in school, when a skinhead gang led by the kind and loving Woody, takes Shaun under their wings. When Woody's friend Combo, who is a national front activist, is let out of prison, one gets to see the drastic conversion of the skinhead boys and the movie takes turn into a darker, more violent nature.

Brief plot sum is OK -Brief is best.

This essay is going to confer the movie *This is England*, directed by Shane Meadows (2006) and its relation to the skinhead subculture, hence the research question reads as follows: **the depiction of the skinhead subculture and rise of white power in 80's UK based on the movie *This is England*** and together with facts analyze and come to a conclusion on how the skinhead subculture, which at first were people whose main goal was to accept everyone, no matter race or anything else, became known ferocious Nazis.

RQ is included in the introduction

The question which is about to be discussed is of vital matter, since many associate the violent way with the so called skinheads, without knowing how they started out more as a friendly brotherhood, seeking peace among all people, disregarding the differences. *This is England* is as movie that portrays skinheads both ways, not as a whole culture, but as different individuals in a society that have wronged them. It is important to know that there were two types of skinheads, similar to how it always is two different kinds of entities in each culture – the extremists and those that stand in the background, those that are like any other person. There is little research shown on the early skinheads that started as all-accepting people and rather much research on the skinheads that were national socialists. Therefore the research question which will be discussed in this essay is important because of the little acknowledgement there is about it.

This paragraph is not very clear so it is hard to make out just what the context of the question is and why it is significant. There is no mention of the film as a cultural artifact and how it is related to the culture. 1 mark acknowledges the attempt to show these elements, though not clearly.

The era of skinheads

The skinhead subculture emerged in the early 1960's due to that after the war the economy got more and more stabilized and the splits between the classes in society got bigger and more noticeable than they had been before.

The skinhead groups were mostly made up by the younger people of the worker class who were often nonpolitical and who shared the same taste in music, which typically were reggae and the so called "Ska-music". They embraced the skinhead look at reggae clubs in London and it soon spread to both black and white kids all over England, to other countries in Europe as well as the USA[1]. They often came from areas which suffered from high unemployment and these teenagers felt like society had betrayed them, so they developed their own little society together as people with the same minds. It started out as a group of people who shared the same taste in music, fashion and lifestyle, rather than race or political view and their main interests seemed to be only to forgather as a united group rather than exert mischiefs and harassing immigrants.

Give source for paraphrase - Is some of this quoted material?

How do you know how they felt? When making assertions, you need support.

The skins during the sixties are called the first wave of skinheads, while the second wave of skinheads, who are the ones that are most famous, came during the 80's, in which time this movie is taking its place.

This wave was of course similar to the first one, teenagers wanting to be different, but not being alone, so they were simply different together, wanting to find their own place in society. The taste in music of these skins changed from reggae to punk, which popularity had its peak in the 80's. These teenagers felt as the first wave of skins – abandoned by society and this made them naturally not having a fixed point in which they believed in, and when the national fronts started in the 80's, the skinheads were vulnerable to its opinions[2]. Also, the skinheads were often not content with how the society was and that was also a contributing fact to why they embraced the national socialistic ways. Those that were living a good life and being content have no reason to blame anything on anyone and therefore they are usually not supporters of radical movements such as the Nazis. But the skinhead teenagers were not content and when the Nationalist socialists came and blamed it on the immigration, since there actually was a lot of immigration to England during that time,

This point is not terribly clear. Is this justifying ideology?

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[1] Timothy S, Brown. (2004). "Subcultures, pop music and politics: skinheads and "Nazi rock" in England and Germany". Journal of Social History.

[2] Jerome, Monohan, Film Education, *Film Education*, accessed 31/5 – 13. http://www.filmeducation.org/pdf/film/ThisIsEngland.pdf

Looks like good footnote form.

especially from south west Asia, they seemed to find some kind of comfort in that it was somebody's fault that they were not happy. What went wrong was that some skinheads turned violent and many immigrants were forced to live on the countryside in order to avoid attacks[3]. In *This is England* the immigrants that are mentioned are those from India and Pakistan.

In the same way as the skinheads in the movie changes, the general opinion about skinheads also changes with time when violence enters the picture. The first wave of skinheads that seemingly were harmless were not more noticed in society and media that any other cultural group, but when the national socialists came along everything escalated and soon they were acknowledged by the media and the society which made that the only skinheads remembered were the ones that were violent racists[4].

The director of *This is England*, Shane Meadows, is himself a former skinhead during the 80's, but well aware of how it was during the 60's skinhead era and he therefore felt that it was important to portray both sides of the skinheads, the way he had experienced it. In fact, he himself says that Shaun is supposed to be his alter-ego and the movie being autobiographic[5].

Normally biography is not appropriate, but here it may work because of the director's bias.

The skinheads involved with the movement of racial violent actions also included black skinheads and the hate was against south Asian immigrants and the violent acts made against these people is known as "Paki bashing" in common slang. There were also violence against homosexuals and hippies, though the violence affected the black people too after a while. But ever since the beginning of the skinheads, in the late 50's, there have been anti-racist movements among the subculture which have been very popular, among them SHARP – Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice[6].

Since skinheads had never before made so much noise in society, so when the violence started with the National Front and the British Movement, this was all people got to see through media, the violent, racist skinheads and it did not take long until skinheads were directly associated with Neo-Nazism and racism, an image that have stayed ever since as the general view of skinheads, which is not entirely correct. There were violence among the

There has been little evidence presented to the contrary

[3] Jerome, Monohan, Film Education, *Film Education*, accessed 31/5 – 13. http://www.filmeducation.org/pdf/film/ThisIsEngland.pdf
[4] Osgerby, 1998, page 65
[5] Film4, *Film 4*, accessed 31/10- 13. http://www.film4.com/special-features/interviews/shane-meadows-on-this-is-england
[6] George, Marshall, *Skinhead Nation* (ST Publishing, 1996)

skinheads, but they were all different individuals[7] and that is something that *This is England* shows in a very good way. By applying a vulnerable character which seems a lot as a victim, Shaun, the watcher get a different kind of perspective and understanding of the subculture during the 80's. *This is England* is a story told by a young boy, with a harsh social life, wanting to find a fixed point to hold on to as a stable place in his life and this point becomes by chance the skinheads. That he gets drawn in by a man like Combo is in a sense nothing that he himself choose, rather he finds Combo more stable than Woody, that somehow Shaun thinks that Combo is the one who will get him strong and able to fight back to whomever might mock with him. This delivers an understanding of the "weakness" of the skinheads becoming Neo-Nazis, as well as the watcher being able to see the kind and loving skinheads in Woody and his friends.

Intertesting information but the organization of this section is not clear. It is difficult to see how the movie reflects this "era". Movies may make social commentary (as artifacts) but a movie is not history. It is fiction and based on a director/writer's view.

The movie

The friendly way of skinheads is mostly portrayed in the beginning of the movie and is shown to a large extent in Woody, who is the first one to accept Shaun into their gang and making Shaun feel like he is one of them. Woody does not seem to have any specific political views, or at least that is not something that he talks about. Rather, politics seems unimportant for the gang and the only thing they care about is having a good time. ?

The first thing the girls and boys in the gang does is to make Shaun buy jeans and Doc Marten boots, which were two signature pieces of clothing for the skinheads by that time, then they cut his hair and give him a plaid shirt to complete the skinhead look for Shaun[8]. Their kindness is shown clearly and one understands that the makers of the movie want the person who is watching it to sympathize with the skinheads starting to take care of Shaun while no one else seems to, apart from his mother. They are shown as regular, kind young people that take care of someone that is younger and in need of friends. This is also shown by Shaun's mother saying to all of them that even though she does not approve of her son's newly cut hair, she has nothing to say about his clothes since he seems to like them. She also says that she trusts that they will take good care of him and appreciates that they took care of the boys bullying Shaun and giving him a bad time at school. Even though adults

[7] Tom, Geoghegan, BBC News, *BBC News*, published 12/4 – 07. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/6546617.stm

[8] *This is England*, directed by Shane Meadows (2006; London: Optimum Releasing, 2008.), DVD

seems to have been those that frowned upon the skins the most, Cynthia is sympathizing with them probably as much as she would have done with any other group in their age.

Once again it is shown that the skinheads were trustworthy and as kind as any other person and should not be judged. Woody and the others are as polite as what is expected of them to Shaun's mother Cynthia and she leaves the group, trusting that they won't be up to bad things.

weak support for skinhead' being friendly and trustworthy.Is there any dialogue from the movie to support this?

The group, together with Shaun, is having a good time and Shaun seems to feel better about himself and also in general. While starting out in the movie being bullied as well as raising hell in school by getting into fights with the bullies, his personality calms down during the time with Woody and his friends. He changes appearance to a happy child and even though everyone in the group is older than Shaun, they respect him and treat him as one of their own, Woody is much like an older brother to Shaun. The gang also shows respect to everyone else and is as kind as anyone else. They do not show any signs of racism either and the only black person in the gang, Milky, is Woody's best friend and is as accepted as anyone in their group.

Is there evidence to support this? Always support assertions with text.

Nonetheless, this happiness and compassionate atmosphere in the movie swiftly changes when Woody's old friend Combo comes back from prison[9]. Even though he is quite skeptical to young Shaun he accepts him as well and Shaun is respecting him, since he is older and Woody's friend. Woody at first is be happy to see Combo and welcomes him dearly by hugging him and explaining to the others in the room that without Combo, he as well would have been in prison. No one in the room appears to have anything against Combo being there and Combo at last sits down to tell a story about his time in prison. Everything is fine until Combo starts to show racial features in his story and expresses how much he hates "those fucking niggers"[10] and the mood sinks to somehow awkward and uncomfortable while everyone stops to smile and starts to turn in their seats. Combo also insults Milky, who clearly takes offense. It is supposed that the director, Shane Meadows, has in his intentions to make the watcher see that the group does not approve of the racist opinions of Combo, though they not say anything since he is an old friend. It also shows that Combo got his racist views in prison, a place where he most probably felt even more betrayed by society and also got in contact with people to who he was vulnerable.

Very descriptive section; mostly narrative retelling- this is not analysis.

[9] *This is England*, directed by Shane Meadows (2006; London: Optimum Releasing, 2008.), DVD
[10] *This is England*, directed by Shane Meadows (2006; London: Optimum Releasing, 2008.), DVD

The day after this night, members of the gang are starting to see some differences amongst themselves. Some of them are asking themselves if Combo did not have a point when he blamed the immigrants and some of them, among them Woody and his girlfriend Lol, are not agreeing at all and are wondering what happened to Combo while he was gone.

Combo portrays the National socialistic skinheads, the most seen and common image of the subculture, but it is a very biased view. Combo and his few supporters are just a very small part and in the end one never forget about Woody's kindness, Pukey's rough acceptance or Milky holding his arm around Shaun.

The connection to the RQ is not very clear. The cultural aspect of how skin-heads are depicted is very general at best.

The turning point

When Combo invites them all over to his apartment, what was previously mentioned is a fact. He holds a small speech about how England and the Englishmen have been oppressed from all immigrants coming into England and explains how three and a half million Englishmen are unemployed, while "those fucking Pakis"[11] take their jobs. Combo also expresses his hate for Margaret Thatcher, who at the time is ruling the country more or less, and how she sends out English, strong, proud men into useless wars, for the only reason that England can stick its flag into the ground and claim that "this is England"[12]. Here the clear political standing of Combo is shown, as he being a right wing supporter and explaining how Thatcher glorifies the war.

Combo also mentions the Falkland War, which was the war in which Shaun's father died in and this makes Shaun throw a fit and starts to aim punches at Combo who easily blocks them. When Shaun screams that his father died in the war, Combo immediately shows compassion for Shaun and comforts him, though he says that the war was unnecessary and that Shaun's father did not have to die in it. This seems to reach out to Shaun and when Combo explains that either they go with him and fight, or they leave and never come back, Shaun chooses to go with Combo, to Woody's discontent that is concerned over what Combo can make him think or do.

How is this a turning point? How is it related to the RQ? Part of the problem is the narrative approach.

[11] *This is England*, directed by Shane Meadows (2006; London: Optimum Releasing, 2008.), DVD
[12] *This is England*, directed by Shane Meadows (2006; London: Optimum Releasing, 2008.), DVD

Shaun goes along with Combo together with Pukey and Gadget, the youngest in the gang. The youngest skins were those that often turned to Nazis and/or racists, since some of the older ones already had views that they believed in. This is the turning point in the movie and the makers of the movie now portray the version of the skinheads which is generally more known than the friendly one. Combo is the symbol of the anger, racism and violent way of a skinhead and this is shown repeatedly throughout the movie.

The racist violence

Combo and his followers rob the local store with a Pakistanian owner and Shaun smiles while Combo points a knife to the Pakistanian owner's throat, which makes you think that once again Shaun has changed as a child, even though he maybe do not know it himself. It is shown that the younger ones are easier to bend, which is shown in Gadget and Shaun, who are the youngest ones among the skinheads. Pukey is also young, but when he realize what Combo really stand for he goes back to Woody[13].

point is unclear

Shaun seems to enjoy the troubles they do, but most of all one can think that what Shaun actually likes about it is the power that he possess when he is among people who are powerful, which in this case is Combo and Banjo. Since Shaun have been bullied at school and had a rough time with his father dying in war, one can think that it is not that surprising that he feels good when he stands over other people and not being at the bottom as he have been before. This most likely goes for many of the skins that turned to racism and Nazism, they were people who had been at the bottom of society and in their own lives and then they found someone to blame and to harass, to be better than, which increases their self-esteem and somehow makes them feel better.

Shaun is also encouraged since Combo over and over tells Shaun that he will never let him down and Combo takes the place as Shaun's bigger brother, the place that Woody seemed to have in the beginning of the movie. Since Shaun is so young, one can understand that he is quite naïve and it is easy for Combo to bend him to his will by only using promising words. Shaun is constantly searching for Combo's approval and Combo is

continued retelling with unclear purpose not really addressing the question.

[13] *This is England*, directed by Shane Meadows (2006; London: Optimum Releasing, 2008.), DVD

treating Shaun as his favorite as well, which encourages Shaun even more and makes him blind for the terrible actions that Combo does.

What Shaun is searching for in the movie and what many teenagers most likely was searching for as skinheads is approval and somewhere to belong. Teenagers found it in different places and some got in the wrong circles, together with racism, violence and crimes. This was maybe not what they had intended from the beginning, but when they had got to that point it might have been difficult to go back.

This is an interesting point, but again, not clearly related to the RQ

The change and the relapse

When the supporters of Combo along with Milky one evening are at Combo's apartment one almost thinks that Combo has changed his mind about Milky and finally is accepting him as an equal. Smell and Gadget leaves and the atmosphere changes. Combo talks a lot with Milky and one thinks at first that they are getting along, but suddenly Combo is being his "real" self again. He starts to shout at Milky, telling him that Milky is one of them, one of the "niggers"[14]. Milky only smiles, which seems to provoke Combo and Shaun desperately tells Milky to stop smiling, but Combo has already snapped.

A fight breaks out and Shaun cries that Combo should stop, but Combo tells him to leave. As Shaun sits alone by the stairs outside the apartment, crying and hearing how Combo keeps hitting Milky one sees how he realizes that he made a huge mistake leaving Woody and following Combo. He goes back in and Combo is crying desperately, like he didn't know what he was doing, which makes the watcher actually find some sympathy in Combo – though to not that big of an extent. It makes you think that he has gone mad, that he is the exception from skinheads being friendly and loving as Woody and his friends, that somehow Combo has changed because of things that he himself has experienced in prison, rather than values that he have had from the beginning.

Narrative- so what is the film really trying to say about skinhead sub-culture

[14] *This is England*, directed by Shane Meadows (2006; London: Optimum Releasing, 2008.), DVD

Conclusion

The movie portrays both sides of the skinheads, those who just were people thinking in the same way and happening to enjoy the same kind of activities and music and those that had a strong left-wing political view, engaging in violent racial actions. *This is England* is an objective view of the subculture in 80's UK as a way of cleaning the reputation of the skinheads, a way to get rid of the prejudices and making people watching the movie understand that the skinheads were also ordinary people and just like the teenagers today – wanting to find their place in society together.

This was not clearly shown

The skinhead era actually seems to have been just like any other teenage trend, maybe just more influenced by politics and class in society, whilst today's teenage trends almost only involves clothing and perhaps music. Shaun is an average boy, living alone with his mother and being bullied in school and he by chance finds friends in the skinheads and then accidentally follows a Nazi, but Shaun is not evil because of that. He is a lost boy who society and its people have betrayed, a boy that has always been at the bottom and when he finds power, he realizes that it is something that he has wanted his whole life – strength and power.

Skinheads were teenagers and young adults, wanting a place to belong and some of them got wrong. The main problem is that the media was never taking notice of the friendly teenagers that liked to be in reggae bars or on punk rock concerts, having a good time. The only ones they paid attention to were the violent Neo-Nazi skinheads, the teenagers in punk rock clothes that were rampaging and causing trouble for immigrants and all other kinds of people.

weak

Hence, it can easily be said that this essay which has been written has answered the research question by saying that **the depiction of the skinhead subculture and rise of white power in 80's UK based on the movie *This is England*** is a balanced view that shows both kinds of skinheads in an efficient way. It does not show a whole subculture, but individuals that are different but still so much alike, individuals belonging to the same group but with different minds and personalities and therefore showing that the skinheads were all different in their opinions and ways of being skinheads. But what they had in common was something important – they were young people, being abandoned by their own society and found happiness in each other.

This conclusion is fairly consistent with what is presented in the essay even though many of the points were not supported. Nonetheless, for criterion H, the conclusion is adequate for 2 marks.

Bibliography

Brown, Timothy S. (2004). "Subcultures, pop music and politics: skinheads and "Nazi rock" in England and Germany". Journal of Social History.

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Osgerby, 1998

Film4, *Film 4*, accessed 31/10- 13. http://www.film4.com/special-features/interviews/shane-meadows-on-this-is-england

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Geoghegan, Tom, BBC News, *BBC News*, published 12/4 – 07. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/6546617.stm

This is England, directed by Shane Meadows (2006; London: Optimum Releasing, 2008.), DVD

When working with film, it is best to have a copy of the screen play to use for accurate quotation for support. If not, then using quotes from the movie must be recorded and may become a tedious process. Without text, it is easy to fall into descriptive narrative and to forgo analysis altogether or present only indirect evidence as in this essay. The reference style when used is fine, but lack of quotations distracts form the argument.
This essay, despite a potentially interesting topic, is quite narrative in style, lacks textual support, and is not always clear in its purpose.
What was needed here was a look not at plot and individual characters alone, but what those characters represented within the skinhead culture and how that in turn reflected English cultural dynamics at the time.
There is an attempt to present an argument, but it is not effective.
The knowledge exhibited remains rather superficial and is based on plot more than anything else.