

Where the Crawdads Sing Film Analysis: The Revelation of Self-Resilience

Dora Ledée

Angelo State University

Where the Crawdads Sing Film Analysis: The Revelation of Self-Resilience

The contemporary full-length film I chose to analyze is *Where the Crawdads Sing*. Released in 2022, this film was based on a novel with the same title written by Delia Owens. It has a captivating plot that explores the workings of the human spirit of a young woman, Kya Clark, overcoming hardship. She begins to appreciate and learn about the natural world around her as she navigates negative judgment. This film captures the narrative of her resilience throughout life, the complexities she faced along the way, and the connection she made with nature. I chose this movie for my film analysis because of the captivating and evocative narrative that demonstrates different themes. Kya's indomitable spirit continues to grow throughout the film as she faces different life challenges hurled at her as she overcomes adversity. Having read the book during quarantine in 2020, I was interested in how the adaptation will portray her emotional journey, the marsh, and the characters to life. Also, its powerful plot conjures different emotions toward the protagonist and the characters she interacts with. It captures the story of her resilience throughout life, the complexities she faced along the way, and the connection she made with nature. This contemporary film brings the literary work to life and offers a different perspective on the themes in the story.

The central theme of *Where the Crawdads Sing* is self-reliance, revolving around the unbreakable resilience of an isolated girl who faces prejudice from the community. At a young age, Kya was abandoned by her family and grew up isolated from society in a home in the middle of the marsh, causing her to face prejudice. She grew up lonely and abandoned, shaping her strength and determination to survive in a society that rejected her. The negative stigma played a significant role in shaping Kya's mentality. Because she learns to fend for herself in the marsh, the community calls her "Marsh Girl," believing she is a wild animal. Driven by

preconceived notions and ignorance, they viewed her with suspicion and disregard while treating her as an outcast and spreading rumors about her appearance and character. Her endurance toward discrimination and prejudice she receives emphasizes the reality of social norms and how isolation impacts a community's perception. Kya also forms trust while building connections with individuals who do not hold negative prejudice, emphasizing the impact of positive human interaction.

One scene in the movie illustrates the concept of classism. When Kya attends school for the first time, she experiences discrimination and humiliation. Because of living in poverty, she faced instant discrimination and humiliation in the classroom on the first day of school. Her appearance and clothes that do not fit her properly are significantly different from the clean attire of her peers, leaving her at a disadvantage. Kya is hesitant to go but encouraged because they provide warm lunches daily. Blaine & Brenchley (2021) defines classism as the “negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discriminatory behavior toward poor people” (p.86). As she entered the classroom, she was met with mocking glances and negative comments from her classmates. The differences in economic backgrounds and attitudes define the indication of classism. Her classmates from more privileged families exemplify societal prejudices that disregard Kya because of her low socio-economic status. Classism amplifies Kya's low social standing, setting her apart and becoming a source of disdain. The perception of moral exclusion highlights social issues that contribute to inequality when individuals are observed as morally inferior (Blaine & Brenchley, 2021, p.31). Kya's economic status leads to exclusion from her classmates, dehumanizing her with negative stereotypes and reinforcing the divide between themselves and her. This scene illustrates the inherent classism existing in the community, emphasizing the disparities leading to the division she felt. She struggled to fit into the school environment and

faced societal challenges throughout the film, revealing the harsh reality of discrimination. A different scene based in a courtroom demonstrates stigma involving a mismatched identity. Though Kya was referred to as “Marsh Girl” throughout the film, during the courtroom scenes, she was described as having characteristics like a wolf, a missing link between ape and man, and glowing eyes. These actions revealed stereotypes the community constructed that Kya faced based on her isolated upbringing and differences. When she is labeled as “Marsh Girl,” the concept of virtual identity becomes unmistakable. Blaine & Brenchley (2021) describes virtual identity as “the *you* other people believe you to be” (p199). This concept explains the judgment she receives because the community perceives her intelligence, character, and surroundings. Virtual identity emphasized the dehumanizing and distancing Kya felt from the community, contributing to her outsider status. Also, when Kya is labeled as part wolf and the missing link between ape and man, virtual identity is emphasized even more. It reinforces the idea that Kya is not as progressed or civilized as her peers. Psychology research history declares identity as fundamentally shaped by social factors. (Blaine & Brenchley, 2021, p.199). The labels further disregard her by highlighting that her upbringing and lifestyle differ significantly. The courtroom scenes best illustrate the concept by highlighting the harmful consequences based on preconceived notions, biases, and stereotypes. Kya’s continuing struggle to be viewed beyond these perceived identities becomes apparent throughout the film, stressing the community’s tendency to dehumanize and marginalize her because she deviates from the social norm. In conclusion, the film *Where the Crawdads Sing* effectively portrays a captivating narrative that explores the theme of self-reliance, prejudice, and the impact of societal norms on Kya’s identity. The significant theme of self-reliance is highlighted in her indomitable spirit as she faces discrimination and overcomes adversity. The film portrays the negative reality of classism,

displaying prejudices faced by Kya because of her economic status. Furthermore, the courtroom scenes emphasize the concept of virtual identity, revealing the community's building stereotypes and biased views about Kya. Overall, *Where the Crawdads Sing* explores societal biases, resilience, and the lasting strength of Kya navigating a world that misunderstood and marginalized her.

References

Blaine, B. E., & Brenchley, K. J. M. (2021). *Understanding the psychology of diversity* (4th ed.).

Sage Publishing.

Newman, O. (Director). (2022). *Where the Crawdads Sing*. [Film]. Hello Sunshine, 3000

Pictures.