13 Hours is an incredibly powerful film filled with stories of both hardship and bravery during the Benghazi attacks on United States soldiers. This tragedy and all of its horror are effectively told through visual imagery in the film. Viewers can relate more to the characters due to the realistic-looking settings, and sad scenes feel even more dramatic because of this as well. Neutral tones and lighting also add a melancholic, yet dramatic effect. In Michael Bay’s 13 Hours, cinematography is consistently used to enhance the story through use of color, lighting and camera angles; without these powerful visual elements, the film would not do the Benghazi story justice.

Color is one of the most important aspects of Bay’s film. According to Film History, “the problem with earlier animation was that it only manipulated the first two elements - position and size - but ignored changing shapes and colours. As a result, depth, volume and rhythmic cues had previously been minimised or overlooked entirely” (Higgins 79). Modern film, however, uses these elements symbolically, making for a better viewing experience. Dark, golden tones are consistently seen in daylight scenes in 13 Hours; this creates the illusion that is incredibly dreary and hot outside, even when it may appear to be a normal sunny day. These tones cause viewers to sympathize with the characters when they see these depressing tones, even if it is just subconsciously. One scene in particular that clearly represents this concept is the moment when
Jack and his fellow soldiers are in their base, playing video games, reading and doing other simple tasks. Even though this could be considered a happy scene during an unfortunate circumstance, the deep golden tones make the scene look depressing.

Lighting also adds to the mood of *13 Hours*. Scenes that take place during the night are incredibly dark, whereas most films add some natural light during scenes like these. This adds suspense, particularly in bombing and fire scenes toward the middle of the film. Daytime scenes, again, appear quite dim and subtle rather than bright and exciting. All of these contribute to the overall mood of the movie, which is dread and fear. *Columbia University Press* states, that lighting in a film “enhances the glamour, clarifies the action, and intensifies the mood” (Keating 10). *13 Hours* certainly uses this element quite well.

The final impressive element of cinematography in *13 Hours* is camera angles. Seeing close-ups of soldiers in panics, men crawling to hide and guns firing constantly make the film realistic and terrifying for all viewers. It puts the viewer in a, “What would I do?” predicament. Being told about fearful situations is difficult, but seeing it in a person’s face is far more terrifying. *13 Hours* knows how to show true hardships up close.

Cinematography in *13 Hours* truly enhances the film’s qualities. Color, lighting and camera angles all contribute to a wonderful representation of the unfortunate Benghazi attacks. All of these elements add a sense of fear and dreariness to the film. Without these crucial parts of the film, the Benghazi attacks may not be seen as the tragic acts they were. It is unfortunate what happened to so many people, but it is important that their stories are told and in such an impressive manner.
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