The Shawshank Redemption

WATER

* Washed with water (fire hose)when they get there – washed everything away that they were
* Washes his old free life away, reborn into prison (unnatural hose, force of water, man made)
* Then cleansed of prison life by river, reborn into free world (natural water) shows that he did not let the prison mentally get the better of him. Represents a fresh clean start and that he can forget his past
* “Andy crawled through a river of shit and came out clean on the other side”
* The blue ocean – symbolises no boundaries, ultimate freedom. “I hope the Pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams” – bright blue-hope-light.
* No memory. Able to forget the wrong done to him in his past and start again.
* The Pacific seems like a miracle after decades in prison, gives a feeling that we should be glad for our freedom. These prisoners who are freed treat everything as if it is precious because they had it taken away from them.

BIBLE/BIBLICAL QUOTES

* The bible is used in the movie to show irony. The quotes used often have two meanings, creating irony and intelligent thought.
* “watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh”
* The bible is used to hide Andy’s rock hammer. His freedom is within the bible. “salvation lies within”
* Also Warden Norton hides his safe behind a quote from the bible. “His judgement cometh and that right soon” this emphasises how hypocritical and corrupt the warden is by offering a strong contrast between him and the ideas of the bible. Makes him more evil because he thinks he follows these ideas but we know that he is the opposite. IRONY – he did not expect to be judged
* When Andy quotes “the master of the house” to the warden, the warden thinks that Andy is referring to him as a master and as god. And the warden does think of himself as a god. “I am the light of the world”

COMPASS

* Journeys, Red uses the compass to find the tree Andy wants him to find.
* Andy acts as a ‘compass’ for Red as he is giving him direction and hope for his life
* Compass for Red not only shows physical direction to the box and money but also guides his soul to a new life. It is sitting next to the guns, and he could have chosen the gun instead/ chosen to give up his life and gone down the same path as Brooks.
* The desire to go somewhere and actually find an aim in life instead of wandering around lost: “get busy living or get busy dying” - Red gets busy living

ROADS

* Freedom of travelling, no confined space. Panoramic shots of Andy in car on road, also bus and truck , colour road ahead
* The future is ahead, the past is behind. Moving forward on a road represents moving forward into the future
* Road represents the journey Red has to make, the start of his new life act.
* Knowledge that a journey is ahead but not knowing where it is going

CARS/BUSES

* The bus gets Red over the border to Mexico.
* White prison bus confining - It is a means of getting to the prison.
* Police car a parallel in the movie. –go to find Andy, then we see in a similar shot, the police cars coming back to get the warden.
* Red had his arm halfway out of the bus when he is on his way to Mexico, which symbolises how it is giving him freedom. He isn’t confined to tiny spaces anymore, and he isn’t scared anymore.
* Vehicles not associated with the prison and jail are always red-a lively hopeful colour, full of life. Prison cars are dull- coloured or neutral white

ROPE

* Represents life and death. Freedom and imprisonment. It is both used to end a life and to help rebuild one when Andy escapes. Symbolises the choice they need to make. “Get busy living or get busy dying” only they themselves decide how to use the rope.
* Symbolises the subconscious feeling of despair/wanting to commit suicide. We think Andy will hang himself when we first see him with the rope.
* It symbolises escape-Brooks “escapes” through death, but Andy escapes through life.

MUSIC

* Music symbolises passion. Andy’s many loves-helps him still feel a little free.
* A mental/emotional freedom or escape from the conformity of the prison.
* When Andy plays the music over loud speaker it gives prisoners a sense of freedom-if only for a short time.
* One thing the prison can’t take from Andy is music. Andy’s inner strength.
* Shows the change in time, creates intensity and tension in scenes.

BIRDS

* Birds raised and bred in captivity like any animal, are not equipped to deal with the real world and it often takes them a long time to adjust. While it seems the right thing to do to release a captive bird it may indeed be a cruel thing as they may not know how to survive. This is shown precisely through the incident with Brooks being released. Like a captured bird he is lost and isolated.
* At the end of the movie as the camera pans out you can see a bird flying in the midground. This is to show the freedom that both the characters finally have. For Red this is more of a mental freedom, than physical.
* Birds can be caged but it’s not right or natural, they always yearn for freedom, like Andy.
* The freedom of birds is shown throughout the movie; Red describes the music as soaring and making them feel like free men.
* Freedom. When Andy plays music over the speakers the voices soared and made the walls of the prison dissolve for a small amount of time freeing all of the prisoners from the walls in their minds. Red uses bird analogy to describe the music.
* “Birds aren’t meant to be caged, their feathers are just too bright, and when they fly away, the part of you that knows it was a sin to lock them up does rejoice.” Red

CHESS

* The chess symbolises Andy’s intelligence, and his need to use his brain/ or to have intelligent stimulation. It is one of his projects while in jail.
* Chess is a mind game. Whilst in jail Andy has to use his intelligence to get out of tricky situations.
* Symbolises the planned demise of Warden Norton. Like Andy is in a real chess game.
* Stops him from going insane. Strategy game helps him think about his strategy for escape.
* Keeps him distracted gives him a sense of normality.
* Andy’s freedom is his brain-chess. Shaping rocks-shaping the plan for his escape by digging through the rock.
* Andy wouldn’t have found his way of escape if he had not wanted to shape chess pieces, it was because of his love of chess that he got the rock hammer and then he found a way of escape through that. Digging the hole.

GUNS

* Guns represent violence and murder. Guns make the guards feel in control. Without them they are nothing. Warden and Hadley hide behind guns as they use them to cruelly murder. Contrast of Andy at beginning if movie loading his bullets to warden at end loading his bullets to kill himself.
* There are a lot of guns in this movie. Almost in every scene.
* Guns symbolise power and control. Guards
* Killing of Tommy, the gun sounds are amplified-which also symbolises shock and horror and violence.
* Guns are a show of ownership over the lives of the prisoners. They can make life of death.
* There is a repetition/parallel used in the guns from Andy putting bullets in his gun and warden Norton doing the same. But Andy chooses life while the warden chooses death (shows their personality differences)

WALLS/BARS/CELLS

* Entrapment/imprisonment
* Mindset-institutionalisation
* If you let the bars/cells/walls to get to you, you will never be free, even if you are physically
* Alone
* Use of bars and walls to frame the image/pictures
* Bars in front of someone-showing someone who is trapped mentally )brooks)
* Bars behind, symbol that he is not trapped, he is leaving the prison behind him (red)
* When they are marched into the prison and stand in a line, the shadows represent bars. Shown as shadows on ground. There are also bars behind them in the background.
* Represents emptiness and blackness. Cells are blank/lifeless. Prisoner’s lives have been stripped from them. Bars symbolise how some prisoners let the prison life get to them mentally and they are trapped.
* Prisoners regarded as dangerous animals=needing to be locked up in a cage, taking away their agency as human beings.
* No freedom. Walls are big and intimidating-take over your whole life
* The walls are dull and grey and therefore symbolising the lack of freedom and hope.
* Lack of identity.
* “These walls are funny. First you hate them. Then you get used to ‘em. Then after a while you come to depend on ‘em. That is institutionalized.

SKY/SPACE/FIELDS/BEACH/SEA

* Represents freedom and not being confined.
* Scenery seems to go on forever, representing no boundaries-freedom.
* Shows free range
* In the rooftop scene, you can see the space and fields behind them. The sky is blue which a contrast to normal is as usually the sky is grey and dull and the space is confined.
* In the prison the skies and grass are dull and grey.
* The blue ocean – symbolises no boundaries, ultimate freedom. “I hope the pacific is as blue as it has been in my dreams” – bright blue-hope-light. Ultimate freedom, no boundaries.
* The fields where red is looking for the brick wall symbolise his freedom.
* Represents hopes and dreams of what Andy can escape to after being trapped in prison.
* “a free man at the start of a long journey whose conclusion is uncertain”
* Represents new life, happiness and new beginnings.

Library-freedom through education

Red saved from hopelessness

Birds-music connected. Music soaring.

SOME CONTRASTS

Walls bars cells ------🡪 sky space fields beach sea

Guns-------------🡪 chess