

Terminator 2: Judgment Day Film Summary

Terminator 2: Judgment Day by James Cameron

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Context

James Cameron's movie, *The Terminator* was a low-budget science fiction film that became a box office hit grossing \$38 million and led to subsequent successes for the two sequels. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was almost unknown at the time, became a major superstar overnight. His line, "I'll be back" became a popular phrase with almost everyone from children to adults.

The Terminator played upon the fears surfacing among audiences as machines began to take over more jobs traditionally completed by humans. After the first *Terminator* film, people worried that machines would eventually take over all jobs. Cameron continued to play on these fears, leaving nagging questions with the second film.

The Terminator seeks to answer the question, "What would happen if machines began to act like humans?" We see in the film, if machines acted like humans, they would do the same things humans do - except emotions. Humans fight each other, strive to have power, and kill one another. However, there are times when humans work together and treat each other with kindness and love. Machines do not have that capability. We do see a change when "The Terminator" is reprogrammed to feel and have emotions.

Like *The Terminator* and *The Terminator 2: Judgment Day* examines the power of choice versus the possibility of predetermination. Do things happen because they must happen? Is there destiny or do our choices determine our future? Cameron, once again, explores these questions and attempts to answer the questions. The answers remain primarily in the eyes of the beholder. At times, this film and the following films seem to contradict one another. It is left for the viewers to determine what they believe.

Terminator 2: Judgment Day won Academy Awards for Best Effects, Sound Effects Editing for Gary Rydstrom and Gloria S. Borders. Best Effects, Visual Effects for Dennis Muren, Stan Winston, Gene Warren Jr., and Robert Skotak; Best Makeup for Stan Winston and Jeff Dawn; and Best Sound for Tom Johnson, Gary Rydstrom, Gary Summers, and Lee Orloff. The film was also nominated for awards for Best Cinematography for Adam Greenberg and Best Film Editing for Conrad Buff IV, Mark Goldblatt, and Richard A. Harris.

Summary and Analysis

The film takes place in Los Angeles in 2029 A.D. Many humans have died in the war fought against the machines. The day human lost this war is known as "Judgment Day." The remaining humans fight the machines as the two terminators are sent back to kill John Connor, the leader of "the resistance." The first Terminator was stopped when it tried to kill Sarah in the first movie. The second Terminator was sent back to kill John as a child; "the resistance" hoped its person would reach John first.

We watch electrical bolts transfer between two eighteen-wheeler; at this point, the Terminator returns. When he enters nude, he gets some looks from the ladies, and demands clothes and a motorcycle from one of the men. The Terminator takes the man's clothes by force and leaves on the motorcycle. On another side of town, a policeman notices an electrical disturbance and sees where a section of fence has been burned. A naked man comes up behind him, kills him, and steals his clothes and car. The man then uses the police computer to find information on John Connor.

John Connor is living with his foster parents whom he dislikes and disobeys. Sarah is locked up in a mental institution because of her beliefs about the Terminator. The nurses try to give Sarah medicine, and when she refuses, they beat and shock her before forcing the drugs down her throat. The man dressed as the officer talks to John's foster parents and asks for a picture of John. In the meantime, John is using stolen credit cards at an ATM so that he can help his mom. John tells his friend that his mom is "crazy;" she tried to blow up a computer factory and was shot and arrested. The Terminator sees the boys and follows them.

Sarah huddles on her bed before she is visited by Kyle in her dream. He tells her that their son is now the target, that she must be strong and protect him. He leaves and she runs down the hall after him. Outside she sees a playground full of children before she wakes up. She is reevaluated. She tells the doctor that she is better now, and is looking forward to being able to have visitors.

Sarah reveals that she doesn't believe the company was involved in a coverup.. The people at the company are talking about "it," which seems to be the Terminator's missing hand. The doctor refuses to move Sarah or let her see her son. She attacks him.

The Terminator and the cop follow John to an arcade. John's friend warns him that a cop is looking for him. The cop spots him and follows him, and so does the Terminator. The Terminator pulls a gun and aims at John's head before telling him to get down and shoots the cop, the new T-1000 model. The two fight. but John gets away and downstairs to his bike. The T-1000 follows him through the streets until the Terminator follows as well. The T-1000 hijacks an eighteen-wheeler and runs it off a bridge to follow John. The Terminator finally catches up, pulls John onto his bike, and stops the T-1000. Out of the truck's fire, we see the T-1000 returning.



John and the Terminator stop so that John can ask questions.. At the site of the crash, the T-1000 takes a cop car and goes to find John. The Terminator tells John that they have to get out of the city as quickly as possible. John calls his foster parents to warn them. His mom is being really nice, and the dog is barking - these are two unusual things. When she calls the dog by the wrong name, the Terminator hangs up. The T-1000, in disguise, kills the foster father and leaves the house.

The Terminator explains that the T-1000 can imitate anything it touches. At the house, the T-1000 kills the dog named Max In the hospital; Sarah is shown photographs of the Terminator from the first time they met. She simply stares off into space as the police question her. As she sits there, she sneakily takes a paper clip.

John tells the Terminator that his mom "shacked up" with anyone so that she could teach him to be a great military leader. He's upset that no one, including himself, believed all that she said. John wants to save his mom from being killed by the T-1000.

John discovers that the Terminator has to do whatever he says. Two guys bother them, and John has the Terminator beat them up. John then orders the Terminator to help him get his mom. In the meantime, the T-1000 is on his way into the center to find Sarah. In her room, Sarah seems totally out of it. After the nurse is gone, she spits a paper clip out of her mouth and uses it to free herself. Downstairs, the T-1000 hides when the real cops leave as Sarah breaks out of her room.

The T-1000 comes to life on the floor, copies, kills the security guard, then heads upstairs. Sarah attacks the nurse with the broken end of a broom. Sarah avoids the T-1000 disguised as the security guard as she tries to escape. After beating a nurse and putting poison in a needle, Sarah carries the doctor downstairs and demands to be released. The Terminator harms the guard at the gate, and they enter to find Sarah.

Sarah runs through the building but finds herself trapped. She falls to the floor when she sees the Terminator. She runs the other way as the nurses catch her. The Terminator beats them up and protects her, and John reassures her that the Terminator is now the good guy.

The T-1000 follows them as the Terminator shoots to protect them. The T-1000 follows them by jumping on the top of the elevator, but they make it safely down and steal the security car. As they drive away, the T-1000 continues to chase them. Sarah tells John that he can't risk himself for anything even her.

When the police arrive at the hospital, the T-1000 steals a motorcycle. The three stop at an auto garage, and Sarah pulls the bullets out of the Terminator. John wants the Terminator to be more human, so they reset the switch for him to be able to learn new things. Sarah doesn't want to put the Terminator back together, but John wants her to do what he says. Finally, she agrees. The Terminator stands guard as they rest, and they leave early the next morning.

As they drive, John teaches the Terminator how to talk like a normal person. They stop for food after the engine overheats. Watching two little boys fight, John realizes that



people may not make it because they will destroy themselves. Sarah asks the Terminator how SkyNet was built. He says that the man in charge is named Miles, the Director of Special Projects at CyberNet. After creating major military devices, they create SkyNet that becomes self-aware and fights back. Sarah plans to find Miles.

Miles is at his beach home over the weekend, and his wife can't get him to stop working. He explains to his wife how close he is to finding the solution. The Terminator and Sarah pull up to a trailer in the middle of nowhere as a man greets them. They find supplies and weapons so that they can prepare.

Sarah tells Enrique that he needs to leave now as well. Sarah watches the Terminator and John play and Enrique and his children. She begins to cry, then falls asleep. She dreams about when John is young at a playground as a nuclear explosion occurs. She wakes up. Sarah throws another gun in the station wagon and takes off by herself. John realizes that Sarah plans to change the future by killing Miles. The two decide to follow her.

On their drive, John tries to teach the Terminator about feelings. Sarah gets ready to kill Miles, but just as she begins to shoot, Miles turns to look at his son. Miles sends his wife and son running as Sarah hurries inside. Miles runs to his son, and the wife gets on the floor. Sarah holds them all at gunpoint and tells Miles that everything is his fault. However, she can't pull the trigger again. Instead, she falls to the floor and cries. The Terminator and John drive up, and John takes over and calms his mom.

John takes Danny, Miles's son, upstairs so that the Terminator can show Miles and his what he is. The couple is terrified, and the Terminator explains everything about the future to them. Miles wants to quit CyberNet, but Sarah tells him that is not good enough. They ask him to destroy the CPU chip from the first Terminator that is housed at CyberNet.

At the building, the guards sound an alert so that Miles's card doesn't work. The Terminator blows open the door. Wearing gas masks to protect themselves, they are put out the fire. The T-1000 checks Miles's house, but he hears on the radio that Sarah is at the CyberDyne building. They destroy everything and, in the meantime, the police arrive. John breaks into a vault so that he can get a key to the chip's location. When he goes to tell the others, he sees the police.

The Terminator breaks out a huge window and kills all the police surrounding the building. Miles and John get the hand and the chip before leaving the building. Finally, the SWAT team comes in, and Miles is shot with the detonator in hand while Sarah is under fire. The Terminator breaks through the wall to save Sarah, and then Miles detonates the bombs. The Terminator, Sarah, and John make it downstairs, and the T-1000 arrives. The Terminator faces the SWAT team and the police outside while the T-1000 drives in the back way. The Terminator steals the SWAT van and drives it inside to save Sarah and John.



The three drive away, but the T-1000 drives his motorcycle out of a window and hijacks the helicopter. Sarah shoots back at the helicopter as the Terminator drives. Finally, the helicopter and the van crash, but everyone escapes safely except Sarah is injured. The T-1000 hijacks an eighteen-wheeler while the other three take a small truck. They are chased by the T-1000 until the eighteen-wheeler finally crashes, and they drive into a factory. Fires start and gases are released that cause the T-1000 to freeze and break into pieces. The Terminator says, "Hasta la vista, baby" just as John taught him (after he shoots the T-1000 into a million pieces).

As they watch, the T-1000 comes back to life, and the three run away. The Terminator sends Sarah and John ahead as he tries to put an end to the T-1000. Finally, the T-1000 traps the Terminator's arm in a machine and goes after the others. Rather than give up, the Terminator cuts off his hand.. Sarah and John are cornered by the T-1000 as Sarah sends John downstairs.

John wants Sarah to follow, but she can't. Instead, she begins shooting at the T-1000. He quickly stabs her and tells her to call to John. Then, the Terminator walks up behind him and attacks. The two fight until the Terminator is almost destroyed, but he still tries to get to a gun to destroy the T-1000. Finally, the T-1000 kills him. Sarah reaches for her gun while the Terminator revives and gets his gun.

John hears Sarah calling him, but from behind the Sarah he sees, the "real Sarah" appears and shoots the T-1000. After she runs out of bullets, the T-1000 heals itself, and John tries to pull her out of the way. The Terminator appears on a pulley and shoots the T-1000 that is finally destroyed when it falls into a vat of hot liquid.

John runs to the Terminator, who while falling apart, says, "I need a vacation." The Terminator tells John to throw in the old hand and the chip to melt as well. Then, the Terminator says that the last chip, in himself, must be destroyed as well. Since he can't self-terminate, the Terminator hands Sarah the device to lower him into the vat. John screams in protest, but the Terminator refuses to stay, even when John orders him. The Terminator hugs John and shakes Sarah's hand. She then lowers him into the vat as they both cry.

We, finally, see the road passing as they travel toward the future. Sarah, as the narrator, hopes that since a Terminator, a machine, could see the value of human life then, maybe, humans can too.



Characters

The Terminator, played by Arnold Schwarzenegger

Description

The Terminator returns, not as a bad guy, but a good guy. The rebels from the future have programmed an older Terminator, the same type that came in the earlier movie, to return and save John and Sarah. The Terminator must obey John, and together they plan to save Sarah and destroy Miles's research.

The Terminator is still just a machine and is focused entirely on his mission. He must obey John, but he continues to push for the completion of the mission. The Terminator is still as indestructible as before, and he also has the ability to recognize the T-1000 even when the T-1000 is disguised.

John rewires the Terminator so that he can think for himself during one portion of the film. The Terminator can then experience emotions - to some extent. As the film ends, the Terminator realizes that he is a liability for John and Sarah. He cannot self-terminate due to his programming, so he forces them to destroy him in order that he can save them and the rest of the world.

Analysis

The Terminator is, at first, a scary person to see. Given the reputation of the previous Terminator, viewers, at first, expect him to try to kill John and Sarah. We quickly learn, however, that he has been reprogrammed and sent back by the rebels to save them and destroy Miles's work.

Since the Terminator is still just a machine, he cannot understand good and evil or the effects of his actions. He injures and kills several people as he tries to find John and save Sarah. John tries to explain to him that he cannot harm people, and the Terminator seems to finally understand.

After a time, John decides to reprogram the Terminator so that he can think and experience emotions. The Terminator can suddenly understand a part of being human. He becomes more selfless, and when he finally realizes that the world will only be safe if he is terminated, he begs John and Sarah to terminate him in order to save themselves and those of the future.



Sarah Connor, played by Linda Hamilton

Description

Sarah Connor is in a mental institution when the film begins. After she attacks CyberNet, she claims that the company is covering up valuable information that would help save humanity. Since those claims do sound completely insane, she is quickly placed in the hospital, and John is put into foster care.

Sarah remains true to her convictions until she realizes, that unless she gets out, she will never see John again. She then tries to pretend that she never believed her story so that Dr. Silberman will release her. When he insults her and refuses to let her leave, she attacks him and ensures that she will not be released.

When John and the Terminator come to rescue Sarah, she is terrified that she is going to be killed. John must comfort her and explain the situation. Sarah then gets back into gear and becomes the leader of the family. She plans to destroy CyberNet and Miles so that the research will end before the machines take over the world.

Analysis

Sarah is a woman of many convictions. After the love of her life is murdered by the Terminator while he tries to protect her, Sarah becomes obsessed with saving John and the world before it is too late. Sarah's convictions cause her some trouble after she is arrested and institutionalized for her crazy beliefs.

While trapped in the hospital, Sarah realizes that the electrical problems are caused by a retuning Terminator. She becomes extremely motivated to try to get out of the hospital. Although she tries to lie to the doctor about her "delusions," she cannot help but become angry when he refuses to release her. Sarah loses her temper and is put back in her room indefinitely.

Once released by John and the Terminator, Sarah becomes obsessed with stopping the CyberNet research for good. She leads John and the Terminator to Miles who is in charge of the research on the chip and hand that were found after the original Terminator was destroyed. As they fight for their lives and their future, Sarah remains strong for her son.

John Connor, played by Edward Furlong

Description

John Connor is a young boy when the film begins. He is living in foster care since his mother has been put in a mental institution for believing that a company is involved in a cover-up and that machines will eventually destroy the world.



Although John does not necessarily believe his mother, he does spend his time stealing from ATM machines so that he can eventually save her. John is trying to enjoy his life when the Terminator suddenly comes into the picture. After the Terminator convinces John that he is the good guy, the two begin working together to save both Sarah and John from the T-1000.

Without Sarah, John becomes a leader as they try to avoid the T-1000 and save Sarah. Although John at first gives the Terminator a hard time, he eventually becomes more mature about his role. After they save Sarah, the three work together to destroy CyberNet.

Analysis

John matures from a boy to man throughout *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. When we first see John, he is stealing from ATM machines in a desperate attempt to get his mother out of the mental institution. By the end of the film, John is bravely leading his mother and the Terminator through burning buildings as they try to stop a future war.

John begins to show true maturity as he and the Terminator fight to free Sarah from the mental hospital. While they are in the desert soon after, John leads the way as they try to choose appropriate weapons for destroying CyberNet. John bravely fights his way through CyberNet with Miles so that they can stop the research once and for all.

T-1000, played by Robert Patrick

Description

The T-1000 is the newest model of the Terminator that the machines have created. Unlike the original terminator, the T-1000 is even more difficult to destroy. The T-1000 can also change form and take on the form and voice of anyone it touches.

With the advent of the T-1000, John and Sarah are in even more trouble than they were in the past. At least with the original Terminator, he had to stay in one form, but with this new machine, the enemy can take any form. The T-1000 is extremely deadly and will not stop until it kills both John and Sarah.

Analysis

The T-1000 has no emotion. It is simply a machine that has been sent back in time and is programmed to kill Sarah and John - no matter what the cost. The T-1000 is methodical and without emotion. His logic is only focused on killing John and Sarah. Using the police computers, the T-1000 is easily able to find where Sarah is being kept. He first kills a policeman and then continues taking that man's form as long as he needs it to move around freely.



The T-1000 cannot understand the consequences of his actions since he has no emotions. Young or old, the T-1000 kills people in order to get to his final victims - John and Sarah. The T-1000 kills John's foster parents simply because he believes that by portraying them, he can find out John's location more easily. As a machine, the T-1000 has no concept of good and evil; instead, he only focuses on the goals of his mission that have been programmed into him.

Dr. Miles Bennett Dyson, played by Joe Morton

Description

Dr. Miles Bennett Dyson is a brilliant scientist. He is working to create robots and machines using a chip and a hand that were found in an accident. These pieces are from the original Terminator, but his superiors never told him where or under what circumstances the pieces were found.

Miles has no idea of the dangers involved in his work, and he simply continues with the hopes of improving technology. After Sarah and the Terminator explain the end results of his experiments, Miles is horrified and agrees to help them destroy the pieces and all his work.

Analysis

Miles is a kind man who spends most of his time focused on his work. After seeing the hand and the chip from the original Terminator, he has become obsessed with the possibilities implicated by these technological advancements. Miles begins to neglect his family in favor of learning more about the technology.

When Miles finds out about the future destruction caused by his work, he regains the viewer's respect by being appalled. He is willing to risk and eventually lose his life in order to try to protect his family and the world from a future of war and destruction. Miles dies in the process, but gives the ultimate sacrifice.

Tarissa Dyson, played by S. Epatha Merkerson

Description

Tarissa Dyson is Dr. Miles Bennett Dyson's wife. She respects his work, but becomes frustrated when he spends all his time working. When Sarah and the Terminator arrive, Tarissa is at home, and she is terrified to learn about the end results of Miles's work.



Analysis

Tarissa is a kind woman who supports her husband while simultaneously trying to convince him to work fewer hours. She loves her husband and son and expresses honest horror at the possibilities of Miles's work on the future.

Dr. Peter Silberman, played by Earl Boen

Description

Dr. Peter Silberman is the doctor who is treating Sarah in the mental hospital. He does not believe any of her stories about Kyle or the coming war. Rather than helping Sarah, Silberman seems to spend most of his time making fun of her.

Analysis

Silberman is a rude, arrogant man who refuses to believe anything beyond what he can see. He refuses to believe Sarah's story, and he taunts her as she tries to ignore his rude manner. After he makes life difficult for her once again, Sarah attacks him, and Silberman, a coward, hurries to hide from her.

Enrique Salceda, played by Castulo Guerra

Description

Enrique is Sarah's friend who lives in the middle of the desert. He is hoarding weapons underground, and he helps her prepare to destroy CyberNet.

Analysis

Enrique is a welcome comic relief during a stressful time. He causes both John and Sarah to laugh and gives them a place to rest before they set off on their mission.

Tim, played by Danny Cooksey

Description

Tim is John's young friend. Together, they rob bank accounts by using ATM machines. The two young men get into a lot of trouble together, but Tim wants to help John save his mother.



Analysis

Tim may not be the best influence on John, but the relationship works both ways. Tim kindly tries to help John "raise" the money to get Sarah out of the mental institution.

Todd Voight, played by Xander Berkeley

Description

Todd Voight is John's foster father. After Sarah is put in the mental institution, Todd and Janelle take over John's care. Todd is a lazy bum who cares little for John or his wife, Janelle.

Analysis

Todd is the stereotypical lazy bum who spends most of his time on the couch rather than helping out at home. He seems to care mostly about the money they make on caring for John rather than about John.

Janelle Voight, played by Jenette Goldstein

Description

Janelle Voight is John's foster mother. She and her husband, Todd, care for John after Sarah is put in the mental institution. When John calls them, he realizes that he is talking to the T-1000 when Janelle is actually nice to him on the phone.

Analysis

Janelle is a frazzled, irritable woman who serves John far less than his own mother would. She is mean to John, and she looks down on his "crazy" mother.



Themes

Changing History

When most people think of history, they think of something that has already been determined in the past. History cannot be changed, and everything is set before we are even born. This is the way many people look at history. In *The Terminator* and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, the characters, writers, and director explore the idea of changing history.

Both the Terminator and the T-1000 are returning from the future so that they can try to change the course of history both for good and for evil. Additionally, Sarah and John are trying to keep the future from actually happening. Sarah attacks one of the buildings of the CyberDyne Company in an effort to stop their research before the future happens. She is put in a mental institution for her efforts, but she tries her best to keep the future and the present from becoming history, as she knows it to be.

If history can change, then these films explore what should happen to make that possible. They also explore the idea that every person makes a difference in the way history plays out. With history being flexible and the future still possible to change, then everyone is constantly creating history and simultaneously changing the future.

Power of Choice

Every person has choices to make in their lives. Most, however, never consider the way their choices will affect other people and possibly the world. This film explores the idea that every choice creates many other choices that eventually form the future not only for one person but sometimes for the whole world as well.

Sarah's choice to continue fighting after Kyle dies and to raise her son with the knowledge of her future changes not only their lives but also the lives of the entire world. The two try to stop a coming war that without their efforts would be inevitable. Although many of the choices are difficult and dangerous, Sarah and John are willing to make them so that they can change their futures and those of others.

Viewers are reminded that their choices may also be changing the world. One choice at a time, everyone is deciding the future and creating the past. Although the film also discusses the ability to change history after it has been created, viewers realize that nothing is certain; thus, every choice should be considered a life changing choice.

Courage

Courage is a recurring theme in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. In order to make the difficult decisions to try to change the future and the past, Sarah and John must be

courageous. Although the Terminator and the T-1000 are also working to change the course of history, they cannot experience fear since they are machines; they simply do as they are programmed.

Sarah's first courageous step is the one that got her put in the mental institution: she attacked CyberDyne to try to destroy the research being conducted there. Although Sarah knows little about what the future holds, she acts on what she knows in an effort to stop the war of the future.

Miles also shows courage as he seeks to help destroy his own research. Miles is the primary person who researches the chip and the hand from the previous Terminator, and he is the one who creates the technology needed for the machines to eventually take over. When he discovers the possibilities the future holds because of his research, Miles quickly works with Sarah and John to put the series of events to an end.

Style and Cinematography

After the success of *The Terminator*, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* had the funds to create amazing special effects. Using computer technology and special costumes, both the Terminator and the T-1000 look completely realistic. When the T-1000 becomes a machine rather than taking the disguise of a person, the effects are especially impressive. The Terminator seems less impressive with the invention of the T-1000, but both seem fairly realistic.

Few scenes of the future are shown in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, but those that are included are impressive. We see spots from the past that are now completely destroyed and turned into piles of rubble. Additionally, the machines and research tools being used at CyberNet were very high tech for the time in which the movie was filmed.

Compared to the action scenes in *The Terminator*, these simply blew the audience away. Not only are cars and trucks used to chase Sarah, John, and the Terminator, but the T-1000 also uses a helicopter. The effects are impressive, and every man in the nation loved seeing all the explosions.



Motifs

Time Travel

Time travel is commonly used to tell stories and show themes. Every story comes from a past, and this story combines both the past and the future to create the present. We learn that people and events are all intimately connected by the past, present and future.. The time travel device helps frame the story and allows viewers to put everything into perspective.

The Terminator and the T-1000 have returned from the future to try to find John and Sarah. The Terminator is the same as the previous model that attacked Sarah. We see that with time, new developments can be made, and the rebels have figured out how to rewire the older models so that they can be used for good rather than evil.

Exact events, even objects and places are determined directly by those things that happened in the past. For example, the development of the technologies for CyberNet are being created based on remnants that CyberDyne found of the original Terminator. The future determined a past that is now affecting the present and the future.

Battles

During the film, numerous chase scenes and battles help show different parts of the plan to save the world. The first battle we see is the battle that the rebels are engaging in against the machines in the future. Their battle continues as they send the Terminator back in time to fight the T-1000.

We also see that Sarah is battling for her life and that of her son as she fought to destroy CyberDyne before being put into the mental institution. In spite of Kyle's death or perhaps because of it, Sarah is now dedicated to protecting her family from future destruction.

Other battles take place as John, Sarah, and the Terminator try to outwit the tricky T-1000. They run from him many times as they try to stay alive to find Miles and destroy his research. One of the final battles is the one that Miles participates in, when they all work together to destroy his research and the CyberDyne building. Finally, the three remaining fight the T-1000 for the final time before it is destroyed.

Mental Hospital

Sarah's stay in the mental hospital helps give a realistic touch to the whole film. Although viewers rightly feel that Sarah's captivity in the hospital is unjust, they can also relate to the reaction by the doctor and others toward her claims that she is fighting to keep machines from taking over the world in the future.

Sarah's stay adds validity to the film as viewers watch others treat her as skeptically as we might treat people who claimed to have known time travelers and know the future of the world. Additionally, we see that her claims come true in the mental hospital as well when other people also see the Terminator and the T-1000 in action.



Symbols

Dog

John's foster parents, Todd and Janelle Voight, have a dog that lives outside. When we first see their home, we pay little attention to the dog, but its bark comes back to haunt us later. The dog symbolizes the sense animals have that something is wrong. Although humans may not always realize things, the animals seem to have an extra sense.

When the T-1000 transforms into Janelle Voight, he does so just before John calls. John convinces the Terminator to allow him to call them so that he can warn them that they are in danger. When Janelle begins to be very nice to John, he quickly realizes that something is not quite right. Once he hears the dog barking furiously in the background, he realizes the truth that Janelle is dead and he is talking to the T-1000.

The dog can also symbolize the warning signals that help save John and Sarah. Throughout the film, they are saved over and over again by warning signals from the Terminator, from the dog, and from other people. Although they are being hunted, they can trust others to help them even when they don't intend to help.

Chip

In the CyberDyne building, Miles and the other researchers are trying to discover the origin and workings of a chip found from the previous Terminator. Miles plans to use the information he finds to recreate whatever machine first used the chip. Miles's research will eventually be the foundation for the creation of CyberNet and the beginning and end of human life on earth, as we know it.

The chip symbolizes the time when the progress of technology has gone too far. Although Miles's research seems harmless at the time, the repercussions of his discoveries have terrible, far-reaching consequences. The chip is not evil in itself, but in the wrong hands, it can destroy the world.

As viewers watch, they are reminded that even good things can become bad when used by the wrong people. Additionally, the consequences of pursuing technology to its limits can be death and destruction. As our culture becomes far more reliant on technology, viewers are reminded to try to keep technology and progress under control.

The Terminator

Both the Terminator and the T-1000 are machines that use a basic type of logic to hunt and kill those they are sent to terminate. There are no feelings or emotions involved in their decisions. Instead, they simply complete their duties no matter what the cost to themselves or humans.



Although the Terminator cannot really experience feelings at any point, John does reprogram him so that he can learn new things. Thus, the Terminator becomes a little more human. One of the greatest traits of people is that we can feel and learn new ways to do things.

The Terminator's change symbolizes the possibility that even the most evil things can become good. He is first reprogrammed to save John and Sarah and destroy CyberNet rather than to destroy people. Then, he also gains the capability to learn new things so that he becomes more willing to help and able to make decisions. Viewers are encouraged to keep hope because even the worst parts of technology may be able to be used for good.



Essay Questions

How is the T-1000 different from the original Terminator?

Why is Sarah in the mental institution?

Why does John steal money from the ATM machines?

How does John meet the Terminator?

What is Sarah's reaction to seeing the Terminator again?

Who is leading the research at CyberNet and why?

Who is Enrique?

How does Miles react when he learns that he may cause great destruction?

How do they plan to destroy Miles's research?

Why does the Terminator have them destroy him?