
Seven Deadly Sins In The Film Seven

David Fincher is an American director born in 1962. He is best known for his films *Seven*, *Gone Girl*, *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, *Fight Club*, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* as well as more. He typically incorporates image-driven and darker themes into his films, those dark images and themes often making it obvious when a Fincher film is playing. In this essay we'll be focusing on his 1995 psychological thriller film *Seven*. *Seven* follows that life of William Somerset, a soon to be retired detective and David Mills, a rookie officer assigned to Somerset just days before his retirement, as they rush to solve a case they think to be linked to the seven deadly sins. The film explores the theme of the darkness within - which in itself explores the shadows of the character's lives and the dark secrets that everybody hides - as Fincher shows the detectives tracking a serial killer by the name John Doe who kills those he believes to display each of the seven deadly sins: Greed, Gluttony, Sloth, Envy, Wrath, Pride and Lust. The theme is explored throughout the film by using a range of different film techniques such as cinematography, sound and lighting, all of which is supported by dialogue. This is most prevalent in the scenes 'Sloth' where the detectives find the third victim who has been strapped to his bed and starved for a year, and 'Gluttony' where they find the first victim, an obese man who was force-fed then murdered. These scenes demonstrate the lengths people will go to, to achieve things that they believe to be right, such as John Doe believing that by killing these people he is ridding the world of seven monstrous people.

Fincher uses a range of different camera, lighting and sound techniques in the 'Sloth' scene where the killers motives become incredibly clear to Somerset and Mills. They discover that John Doe is punishing his victims how he sees fit according to the life they led. The victim in 'Sloth' was a drug dealer and child molester, so John Doe saw it fitting to have him tied to his own bed by himself instead of in the bed of an unwilling child, and starved of food, human interaction and the drugs he sells and possibly takes. At the beginning of the scene, police cars and S.W.A.T team arrive at the apartment complex and run up the stairwell to the apartment of the supposedly murdered man. As S.W.A.T is running up the stairs, we can only see the black silhouettes of the men, lit only by the small amounts of sunlight that creep through the dirty and broken windows. The darkness of the silhouettes contrasted by the light is very similar to the lighting that would be used in film noir, tying Fincher to older, much darker films from the past. The dim, low lighting is used a lot throughout the film, largely whenever a murder has occurred because, especially with the first few murders, the characters are 'kept in the dark', both metaphorically and literally about what is to come. This lighting is used to show how everyone has a dark side to them, but we can choose whether we show it or not. This choice sheds light on John Doe's character and how he has chosen to let his dark, murderous side shine through and take control of him. This shows how the darkness within has taken its grip on his life and isn't letting go.

The bold, contrasting light could reflect to the audience chiaroscuro which is often used in art forms to show the stark contrast between light and dark and how it affects the composition as a whole. This is paired with low, chilling music that causes suspense and tension within the scene, projecting that tension onto the audience as they sit with anticipation, not knowing what to expect when the door is rammed down to reveal the crime scene. The camera angles are low, and have jerky movements from the hand-held cameras that evoke a sense of discomfort in

the audience. The jerky movements also show how the detectives are nervous and shaky, because they don't know what to expect when they open the door. The low camera angles and jerky movements show how the killer is unhinged from the world, a shaky man with extremely low morals and a cruel, vengeful nature. Further in the scene, the detectives are examining the room where the body was found, looking at pictures of the body that were taken over the year before he was found, while another police officer is looking over the body. The officer whispers "You got what you deserved" distastefully while looking directly at the victims face, showing how even the police believe that he deserves the punishment he got for his crimes. After the officer tells him that he deserved it, the body suddenly jerks around and coughs twice, startling everyone in the room and the audience. The coughing noise is a diegetic sound technique. The audiences reaction what should be a dead corpse coughing is amplified by the suspenseful lighting and orchestra music used throughout the rest of the scene.

In the 'Gluttony' scene, the same type of dim lighting and suspenseful music is used. The dark silhouettes of the detectives can be seen, holding their torches as they enter through the doorway, framed by the bright sky outside, while low music is playing in the background. The two techniques seemed to be increased as it is the first body to be found by the detectives, and therefore the tension is heightened because nobody knows what to expect from the single, current murder, and from the murders that follow. When the body is discovered, the same dark silhouette is used, however the only light being used to show the victim is from the torches held by the detectives, the audience only sees what the detectives show through their quick movements, shining the light briefly over the body multiple times before carefully moving the light up the entire body, showing everything to the audience. The lack of knowledge from the detectives about what the future holds for the killer, and the extended knowledge and lack of empathy and basic morals from John Doe shows the deep darkness and hate he harbours for people that exhibit the seven deadly sins.

The theme of 'Darkness within' is shown through the different characters in David Fincher's Se7en, most importantly shown through the actions of the serial killer John Dow, and how his victims are portrayed when they are found. His motives and overall actions show a deep darkness and lack of anything good in the world, and communicate to the audience how at some point in our lives, everyone could live with darkness in their hearts, no matter how you live your life, but it's what you choose to do with that darkness, how you choose to deal with it that helps you decide what kind of person you are.