Life (2017)

Adam Ghalem

Lynn University

*Life (2017)*

*LIFE* is a film directed by Daniel Espinosa and produced by David Ellison and Dana Goldberg. The film *Life* was released on March 24, 2017, and the distribution rights of the film were assigned to Sony Pictures. According to D'Alessandro (2016), the release date was moved up to avoid competition from a movie of the same genre titled Aliens: covenant. The film *Life* demonstrates how characters react when uncovering the first evidence of life on Mars. Throughout the film, the characters are being used to show how people would react in unknown circumstances and how that might affect humanity in general. The special effects that are used in the film also make it more exciting and give the film more suspense. The film depicts the human curiosity when faced with unexpected and unfamiliar circumstances.

*Life* is a sci-fi horror movie that talks partly about the meaning of life (Tiffany & Grush, 2017). The film also illustrates a violent space creature named Calvin. The creature was initially small, but it grew rapidly. The violent creature caused chaos onboard the ISS. Calvin was referred to as a new form of life whose main objective was to destroy human life. The creature held onto life and eventually was causing more damage to everything and everyone. Upon discovering its objective, the crew put in all efforts and tried to fight the creature to no success. Ultimately, Calvin attacked the crew and killed them. From this illustration, it is obvious that the quality of human life is often threatened by incomprehensible forces (Tiffany & Grush, 2017).

Some people have criticized the film for its poor execution; nonetheless, the plot was well-articulated and executed (Debruge, 2017). The plot revealed the violent nature of the creature that was initially protected by the astronauts. Therefore, violence is among the central themes in the film. The violence centers on the strength of the creature. Calvin possessed immense strength that it overwhelmed the majority of the crew, leaving only two behind. The film illustrated acts of violence when Calvin killed crew members. Initially, Calvin became violent and crushed Hugh's right hand. The creature then devoured a lab rat by absorbing it, and this made it increase in size (D'Alessandro, 2016). Also, the creature was feeding on one of Rory's legs, and this caused his untimely death. It eventually entered his mouth and devoured him from the inside, thereby killing the him, and making the creature grow in size.

The significant theme of the film revolves around the human quality of curiosity. Indeed, curiosity is one of the essential traits any human being could possess. The six-member crew astronauts aboard the International Space Station were on a mission to retrieve a soil sample from Mars and were headed to Earth. Hugh Derry, the biologist, discovered and revived a dormant cell from the soil sample. He was very interested by the cell, which grew rapidly into a multi-celled organism. Hugh's curiosity was heightened, and he started playing around with the cell (D'Alessandro, 2016). The cell twitched as he moved his fingers around, with the cell’s intelligence also increasing. Human curiosity leads them to explore new circumstances unaware of the dangers that it might cause. Calvin had caused extinction on Mars, and it was also threatening the lives of all humans on Earth.

The film demonstrated its ability to outline the quality of life at some point (Robey, 2017). The film is about the decisions human beings make for their survival. On the other hand, Hugh conducted random experiments on the creature. There were occasions where Hugh changes oxygen and temperature levels in the box to awaken the creature. Hugh was protecting the creature's life at all costs, oblivious to the danger posed by the creature. High and other crew members watched the creature grow into “all muscle, all brain, and all eye” (Robey, 2017). The astronauts were less suspicious about what the little creature from Mars could do on human life. The astronauts' decision to keep the creatures on board the ISS was one of the wrong decisions to have ever been made while in the line of duty.

Most humans hold their lives in high regard. They frequently go out of their means to ensure their survival. The quality of human life is one of the most important aspects (Kenny, 2017). *Life* outlined that people valued their lives, and they would fight all odds to survive. This is illustrated in the film when the crew tried to burn Calvin, a creature that was undermining their quality of life. Life on Mars was affected by the presence of the creature. Similarly, the quality of life on Earth was soon to be threatened by the presence of the creature. One of the surviving astronauts tried to warn his rescuers not to open the enclosed pod that had Calvin. However, the rescuers opened the pod, and the rest is history (Kenny, 2017). Back on the ISS, the crew fought extremely hard for their safety, however, the creature overpowered them and took away their life.

Curiosity can make people explore new things to unimagined lengths. Nonetheless, the crews’ curiosity was incomparable as they were eager to explore and learn all that was there to learn. In the early scenes of the movie, Dr. Jordan looked amazed by the tiny baby alien. He whispered to his colleagues that “its curiosity outweighs its fear...” (Jaafar, 2015). This statement carried the central theme. Curiosity made them protect the life form from mass, and the results were catastrophic. *Life* was an enjoyable movie, and it fulfilled its horror part. The movie also warns views about the dangers of curiosity.

None of the dreadful events would have occurred if the astronauts had not revived Calvin. The revival of the creature set into motion events that the astronauts could not comprehend. *Life* takes views through the tense scenes where the astronauts fell prey curiosity, making them escape the creature's clutches in a whisker (Gerritsen, 2017). The astronauts' curiosity made them nurture the creature wholeheartedly to study its movements and behavior. The astronauts discovered that Calvin had an adaptable nerve system, and it possessed great strength to the extent that it overpowered the crew and killed the majority of them. Calvin caused too much chaos and terror for the crew, all because of their curious nature. If only they had not awakened Calvin, they would not have been met by the terrible ordeal they all went through.

*Life* is one of those movies that bring some sort of scientific excitement to the viewers. The film was at its scariest when the creature became least predictable and attacked the crew. According to Fuster (2017), the movie surpassed all other movies released on the same day. The film was rated even highly among critics. Others claimed that *Life* was quite identical to one film known as Aliens.

The film demonstrates how human mistakes can lead to a quick downfall. It was humanly wrong for the astronauts to carry with them a creature that they did not know about in the same traveling vessel. The glaring human mistake in life gives the film a lift off the moment of cowardice that made the forget their top-level training in regards to tackling catastrophic events. Rebecca Ferguson was a security expert who did everything by the book, including the deadly crisis (Gerritsen, 2017). The film received a warm reception among the views who rated the film quite high. The clear and well-illustrated scenes in the movie would draw the attention of sci-fi lovers.

*Life* tried the fact that it had borrowed several aspects from other movies. The film joyfully paid homage to old and new science fiction films (Alexander, 2017). The film was well crafted, and it provides an entertaining ride for the entire audience. *Life* was released only a few months ahead of another classic sci-fi film Alien: covenant. It was anticipated that the film would be have welcoming support from sci-fi fans in the United States and beyond. It was clear that the film was set on an ISS stationed above the Earth. Many speculated that *Life* had borrowed scenes from the movie Spiderman 3 (Alexander, 2017). Upon its release, however, the film did not have any scene from Venom: Spiderman. It was hugely speculated that *Life* could be a sequel of Venom: Spiderman movie, but this was not the case. This is because one of film’s casts, Rory Adams, had a contract with Deadpool, and according to Couch (2017), Rory could not be allowed to play a role in Venom’s sequel.

The film demonstrated resilience and the willingness to put up with harsh conditions to achieve their intended missions. Some of the crew had spent so much time in space that their life depended on it. Jake Gyllenhaal spent a total of 473 days in space, and this was because of the mission he was sent to accomplish. At some point, Dr. Miranda tells Jake that "Your atrophy is accelerated and you're close to your radiation limit” (Gerritsen, 2017) Miranda was of the view that Jake needed to go back to Earth because he was super ill. On the other hand, Jake liked it better in space.

Jake dislikes returning to Earth because he was once involved in a war that left him traumatized. This simply highlights the extent to which humans can go to achieve their dreams and set objectives in their lives. The crew had spent several months waiting for the return of the research pod that had been sent to Mars. On the return voyage, the pod had suffered damage, and this forced the crew to seize the capsule with the use of a robotic arm (Couch, 2017). Their resilience bore fruits as they were able to discover a creature that enabled them to learn that indeed, there is life beyond the planet. This scene showed their hard work, resilience, and team effort to accomplish the assigned tasks.

*Life* is one of those movies that a person does not have to take forever to understand the film's plot. The movie has got a few twists and turns; however, it is quite understandable. Life is rather straightforward except for a few scenes. As the view opens up, viewers are introduced to the crew who were trying to catch the pod (Fuster, 2017). This part is not so significant, yet, if the team failed to catch the pod, then there could be no storyline. The pod contains Martial soil and in the soil is a single celled creature of Martian origin. This part keeps viewers on their toes in anticipation of the events that would follow next.

In the film, a person can blame the lab accident for the aggressiveness of the Martian creature. This is because, after the creature was revived, all was well, but when the lab accident occurred, it interfered with the atmospheric conditions, and such a move turned the creature violent. Human error is indeed to blame for the incident which destroyed the humans. It was the careless mistake of the crew that offset the creature into action. Immediately after the accident, Calvin was completely transformed and started some sort of its 'mission attack' on the astronauts. Had human error been curbed, then the crew would have perhaps encountered different turns of events while aboard the ISS.

In the film, the aliens are represented as violent creatures. The single-celled creature from Mars was initially small and peaceful. As time progressed, the creature became entirely smart and intelligent. The crew knew this, and so did the viewers. A single accident spanned the alien into violent motion. The Martial alien attacked the crew members indiscriminately and without any doe of mercy or compassion. The alien went to the extent of feeding on the astronaut's leg. If this was not pure evil, then it's hard to describe what that scene was. It was evident that Hugh's move to utilize electricity to revive the creature was wrong. Because the electricity seemingly upset the creature, and it broke one of Hugh's hands (Fuster, 2017). Roy rushed to Hugh's aid, but the alien turned against him and devoured Roy from the inside out. The alien was very active, and it attacked at every opportunity it got. It is important to note that the alien was not affected by flame. Therefore, viewers could run a conclusion that Martial aliens are cannot be destroyed when it comes to Earthly fire.

Another important aspect humans learn about the Martial alien is that it feeds on weird things. Other than feeding on a human, the alien in the movie consumed the coolant. After the ship had lost connectivity to Earth, Sho decided to send out an SOS call to Earth. After that, Katerina stepped out of the ship to ensure that the antenna was in proper working conditions. Nonetheless, she realized that something was missing. The alien had consumed the coolant as food. The realization shifted Katerina’s reaction because she then came to terms with the idea that the alien was not up to any good (Debruge, 2017). The Martial alien would not stop at any cost until all the crew is dead and gone. The humans' reaction was that of disbelief, shock, and anger. They were shocked at how the tiny creature increased in size at such an alarming rate. Also, they were in disbelief that they had saved an alien that would, later on, threaten their existence on the ship.

The astronauts' were indeed angered by the aggressiveness of the alien, and they did everything humanly possible to end the alien's life to no avail. Katerina risked her life to save the rest of the crew. Afterwards, Calvin made a way to re-enter the ship and continue with its mission. Humans were extremely angered, and they tried all means to get rid of the alien. The alien was continually growing larger by the minute (Debruge, 2017). Without a doubt, the human's reaction to the alien was filled with regret. If only the crew had not revived the alien, then they would not have to have such negative reactions towards the Martial aliens. Human curiosity nonetheless made the astronauts become the prey to their own mistakes.

A significant message to society is to control their level of curiosity. The society should control curiosity. If the crew had not been extra curious, misery would have spared them. At times, society is curious to know those things that seem unfamiliar to them. Although it is good to question the existence of things whose existence people are unaware of, the curiosity ought to be regulated to control any unintended misfortunes to the society (Debruge, 2017). The film sends a clear message to society to avoid looking into the unknown and mind their business.

The film has emphasized the need for a team effort. Collectivist societies are bound to achieve the greater good for the greatest population. The crew put in relentless but coordinated efforts in fighting off the Martial creature. The team spirit and effort was seen when two of the crew members escaped from the claws of the creature. Two lives were spared, and the astronauts had really fought for their lives, but unfortunately, the lives were lost. Individualism affects the efforts of the team or society as a whole. Most of today's industrialized societies embrace the collectivist spirit. Therefore, the movie is trying to show that team work is the key to solving many things.

Also, society should value the quality of human life. This entails that society should fight off any alien that undermines the quality of life. Human life is viewed as sacred, and no one holds the right to take away any life. Just like in the movie, Calvin did not have the right to attack the crew, but it did anyway (D'Alessandro, 2016). The crew tried to neutralize the creature they had once saved. From the society, they should eliminate anything that threatens the existence of humankind. Occasionally, human error is to blame for the loss of many lives. Society should protect the lives of its members and ensure total peace in the society.

When *Life* was released, some members of the public speculated that the film was based on the book titled Gravity by Tess Gerritsen (Gerritsen, 2017). Tess explained that once the film was showing in theaters, huge numbers of her fan emailed her enquiring whether or not *Life* was based on Gravity. Tess lacked a conclusive answer as she could not tell whether the film was inspired by her book and if the similarities between the movie and her book were mere coincidences (Gerritsen, 2017). Fundamentally, life had a lot of similarities, not just with the Gravity but with the movie Aliens: covenant as well. All in all, the movie managed to surpass great expectations, and it received great reception in the U.S and globally. Whether or not the movie had similarities with other movies of books, the rumors remain unconfirmed.

Undoubtedly, Daniel Espinosa was a great choice as life's director. His experience made it possible for life to achieve global success. Jaafar (2015) explained the rumors surrounding the release date and where the movie would be set at the time. Among the many skilled directors, Espinosa was the best choice for many reasons. His previous movies had been received warmly, and his prior experience with some of the film's cast made it easy to have a good storyline. Kenny (2017) outlines some of the decisions made by the crew onboard the ISS. Kenny noted that the crews' decisions were made in haste, and they failed to consider the repercussions of the decisions to save and keep the Martial creature with them.

*Life* provided great nail-biting and thrilling scientific experiences to the viewers (Robey, 2017). Robey is a film critic who held life's plot in high regard. The film used effective lighting that made the film more appealing to the audience. Robey (2017) acknowledged that the film was pretty modern even though people could mistake the film's title for an old movie. The film's director perfected the use of techniques of instilling fear, anxiety, and suspense to the viewers. The techniques used are more likely to move viewers to tears because of some of the unexpected sad scenes in the film. Robey reviewed the film positively and encouraged viewers to watch the movie.

In the film, the tilt shots technique was used. Tilt shots technique is one of the simplest camera techniques to ever be used in films. At times, the simplicity of the technique makes it easy to display poorly executed outcomes. However, *Life* made great use of the tilt shots technique to bring out great coordination and interesting action in the movie. The technique was used in the film during one of the scenes when Hugh was attacked by the Martial creature (Couch, 2017). The technique was also used to show how Calvin enlarged in size after feeding on the lab rat and Rory.

Another film technique evident in the movie is the extreme close upshot. This technique is used sparingly; it is saved for moments when one needs to increase the emotional intensity of a scene in the film. There were many instances where the technique was used in life. For instance, when Hugh's hand was grabbed and attacked by the Martial creature, there were several emotions in the room. Some of the crew wanted to open the box to free Hugh's hand, but others were against the idea as it would have freed Calvin (D'Alessandro, 2016). The technique was used in the film when crews' faces were zoomed in to show their reactions once Calvin was let loose. The technique was used effectively, and it set the mood of the film.

Indeed life depicts human curiosity when faced with unexpected and unfamiliar circumstances. The six astronauts on the ISS were full of curiosity, and this led them to their demise. The astronauts’ curiosity to revive and take care of the Martial alien ended up costing the lives of most of the crew members. Only two survived, one of the survivors disappeared and was lost into space. The other survivor mistakenly landed on Earth with the creature all because of their curious. The impacts of their astronauts' decisions were disastrous. The mission was to retrieve a soil sample from Mars at whatever cost. From the movie, people learn the importance of fighting for human survival. From the film, society shows the importance of protecting and looking out for each other. Finally, people learn that curiosity can sometimes have deadly implications in the long run.

References

Alexander, J. (2017). Spider-Man 3 footage is being used in the trailer for the upcoming space movie, Life. Polygon. Retrieved October 18, 2019, from https://www.polygon.com/2017/3/14/14926538/spider-man-3-footage-life-trailer

Couch, A. (2017). 'Life' Screenwriters Share Sequel Details and Offer 'Deadpool 2' Update. The Hollywood reporter. Retrieved October 18, 2019, from https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/life-movie-sequel-spoilers-plot-shared-by-screenwriters-988776

D'Alessandro, A. (2016). Warner Bros. Makes 2017 Date Changes To 'King Arthur,' 'CHiPS,' 'Annabelle 2' & More. Deadline. Retrieved October 18, 2019, from https://deadline.com/2016/12/warner-bros-makes-2017-schedule-changes-to-king-arthur-chips-annabelle-2-more-1201865708/

Debruge, P. (2017). Film Review: 'Life.' Variety Media, LLC. Retrieved October 18, 2019, from https://variety.com/2017/film/reviews/life-review-jake-gyllenhaal-1202011545/

Fuster, J. (March 21, 2017). "Can 'Power Rangers' Slay Disney's 'Beast' at the Box Office? Retrieved October 18, 2019, from https://www.thewrap.com/can-power-rangers-slay-disneys-beast-box-office/

Gerritsen, T (2017). "Life," the movie — yes, it sounds like my novel "Gravity." Retrieved October 18, 2019, from http://www.tessgerritsen.com/life-movie-yes-sounds-like-novel-gravity/

Jaafar, A. (2015). Daniel Espinosa To Direct' Life' For David Ellison's Skydance. Deadline. Retrieved October 18, 2019, from https://deadline.com/2015/11/daniel-espinosa-to-direct-life-david-ellison-skydance-terminator-mission-impossible-tom-cruise-jack-reacher-star-trek-1201628859/

Kenny, G. (2017). Life. Ebert Digital LLC. Retrieved October 18, 2019, from https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/life-2017

Robey, T. (2017). Life review: Ryan Reynolds's nail-biting alien thriller shows signs of real intelligence. Telegraph Media Group Limited. Retrieved October 18, 2019, from https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/0/life-review-ryan-reynoldss-nail-biting-alien-thriller-shows/

Tiffany, K., & Grush, L. (2017). The fictional NASA in Life is run by a bunch of psychopaths and idiots. The Verge. Retrieved October 18, 2019, from https://www.theverge.com/2017/3/25/15047980/life-movie-space-science-iss-nasa-jake-gyllenhaal