**Context 2 - Institutions**

***Get Out* - Institutions Notes**

The institutions that create media texts are bound by many **internal factors** including ownership, budget, time, equipment, and resources, and by **external factors** which might include legal and voluntary controls (e.g. the MPAA in America and the BBFC in Britain), general laws, health and safety, and copyright.

You will need to be able to write about at least 3 institutional factors for *Get Out* and analyse in detail how the effects of those factors can be seen in the film. You will also need to be able to analyse how the institutional factors have affected the way the film uses each of the content-based key aspects (**Categories, Language, Narrative, Representation**). The following table describes several institutional factors and makes some suggestions for how they have affected the film, and briefly suggests how they have affected specific key aspects. You need to think for yourself and make detailed notes about how each institutional factor has affected the key aspects: the table below is only a starting-point!

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| **Institutional Factor** | **Effect on film** | **Links to specific key aspects** |
| **Production Company and Budget:** |
| **Production Company and Budget:*** The film was made by Blumhouse productions, who gave it a $4.5 million budget (for comparison, the recent remake of *It* had a budget of about $30 million)
* Blumhouse is a production company created and run by Jason Blum, and it has a very specific model for film-making: original films will have a budget of no more than $5 million (sequels can go up to $10 million); all aspects of the production, including post-production, are done in-house; all members of the cast and crew are paid ‘scale’ (i.e. union rates) so above-the-line casting costs are kept to a minimum (the stars may make more money if the film is profitable, by signing a contract that allows them a percentage of the film’s take); film-makers are allowed a high degree of creative control over their projects (partly as a response to Blum’s experience working with the overly- controlling and abusive Harvey Weinstein, and partly because budgets are so tight that no individual film runs the risk of incurring heavy losses).
* This model means that the institutional drive for profit is much more achievable: e.g. *Insidious*, which grossed over $97 million worldwide was made for a budget of $1.5 million, and *Sinister* grossed over $87 million worldwide from a budget of $3 million.
* *Get Out* grossed $255 million from its $4.5 million budget.
 | * **The low budget meant that special effects were very limited. This can be seen in the ‘sunken place’ sequences. Toby Oliver (the cinematographer) has said:** *The sunken place was quite abstract and ­conceptual on the page. So it was a real challenge to figure out how we make that illustration of someone’s subconscious work without a huge truckload of visual ­effects. I came up with the idea of shooting it with a technique called “dry for wet.” Normally that’s used for an underwater scene — I think they did a lot of it in James Cameron’s* The Abyss. *You shoot on a dry stage that has lots of smoke and shoot everything in slow motion, make it feel like it’s underwater. Then you have some winds to ripple anything that’s moving and give you that feel that it’s floating. But we didn’t use any smoke, because we’re not actually trying to say it was underwater. We’re saying it’s in his mind.*
* **The low budget also affected filming locations**: filming began in LA, but after missing out on a California tax rebate, was moved to Alabama. This ultimately helped the film, as the property used for the Armitage’s house was a more convincing Southern building, providing a visual echo of the history of slavery that ties in with the film’s themes.
* **The budget also meant that there wasn’t enough money for lots of extras in the party scene**. Peele used this to his advantage by choreographing the movement of the camera so that the guests were always grouped around Chris, subtly helping to increase the eeriness of the scene and suggest something sinister about the party
* **The institutional drive for profit can also be seen in the film’s changed ending.** The original ending (where Chris is arrested and imprisoned) didn’t play well at test screenings, so Peele came up with the ending where Rod turns up to rescue Chris. This was done partly in order to please audiences and so increase the film’s profit, and also in order to get across a more positive message about resistance to racism.
 | **Categories:****Purpose** – the changed ending helps the film achieve its purposes of profit and social commentary**Genre** – the Alabama location made for a highly appropriate twist on the horror convention of the ‘bad place’**Tone** – the party scene is more creepy and disturbing because of the lack of extras**Language:**The low budget led to lots of handheld camera work, which is much cheaper than elaborate fixed camera rigs, and allows the audience to identify much more closely with Chris’ POVThe low budget led to the use of ‘dry for wet’ filming in the sunken place scenes, which proved highly effective and memorable**Narrative:**The changed ending allows for a more satisfying new equilibrium (Todorov) / return to the ordinary world (Hero’s Journey)The lack of extras in the party scene helps to create hermeneutic codes (enigmas) about why the guests are all so fixated on Chris**Representations:**The Alabama location creates a much more satisfying representation of a stereotypical Deep South mansion as the Armitages’ house |
| **Casting:** |
| * As no cast member is paid an upfront fee, actors will only agree to take part in Blumhouse films if they really believe in the project
* Alison Williams (Rose) has talked about how she wanted to play a role that would challenge how audiences perceive her and break the stereotypical ‘WASP princess’ perception of her.
* Daniel Kaluuya, who was British, was cast largely because of his role in *Black Mirror*, and his own experiences of racism and police prejudice in Britain fed into the way he played the role.
 | * The film doesn’t feature any major A-list celebrities, but as all the actors took part from a belief in the project rather than for huge fees, they are able to work together very convincingly as an ensemble cast. The cast members refer to a ‘family’ atmosphere in rehearsals and on set, and the level of trust built up between them allowed for moments of improvisation like Rod’s (Lil Rel Howery) speeches about ‘sex slaves’ etc.
* The casting of Alison Williams, who has starred in *Peter Pan, Marnie* and *Girls* was deliberate on Peele’s part – he wanted a character that audiences would instinctively trust, in order that her betrayal would be even more shocking.
* The casting of Daniel Kaluuya was also very effective – audiences (both white and black) needed to identify fully with Chris’s character, and Kaluuya has a likeable, ‘everyman’ quality that made him very successful in this.
 | **Categories:****Tone** – the casting of Lil Rel Howery provided effective comic relief from the film’s horrors**Genre** – Alison Williams made for a highly original and surprising villain (horror convention), and Chris also made for a relatable and likeable survivor (horror convention). Lil Rel Howery’s comic background made for an interesting twist on the convention of the savant**Language:**Mise-en-scene – Rose’s costumes in the first part of the film reinforce Alison Williams’s innocent and likeable persona, and her appearance after Chris’s capture, with her hair tightly drawn back and her ice-cold expression, helps to anchor the shock that the audience will feel at her betrayal.**Narrative:**Alison Williams made for a very effective false hero / villain (Propp’s character functions) as the audience would instinctively trust her at first, making her reveal as villain more shockingDaniel Kaluuya’s charm and likeability made for a very convincing and relatable hero (Hero’s Journey / Propp’s character functions)Lil Rel Howery’s background as a comedian made for a very effective helper (Hero’s Journey / Prop’s character functions) **Representations:**The casting of Alison Williams and Daniel Kaluuya is highly effective in creating their representations for all the reasons already mentioned. |
| **Ratings - MPAA / BBFC:** |
| * Rated R in America and 15 in UK – the BBFC rating refers to violence, sexual language and swearing, and describes the film as containing moderate threat throughout.
 | * The final act of the film, as Chris fights his way free of the Armitages, is made much more effective and exciting by the use of violence that would not have been possible in a 12 certificate film. However, the camera does not dwell on images of gore, and much of the worst violence happens off-screen, allowing the film to avoid an NC-17 or 18 certificate.
* Much of the swearing comes via Rod and his rants about sex-slaves and Jeffrey Dahmer, and allows for effective comic relief throughout the film.
 | **Categories:****Genre** – makes for a more convincing & effective horror film to include some violence and threat**Purpose** – violence helps to dramatise the horrors of racism more effectively and so helps the film to achieve its purpose of social commentary. Also, violence helps to satisfy the needs of a horror audience and so helps the film to achieve its purpose of profit**Tone** – escape sequence is made much more dramatic and thrilling through the use of moderate violence.**Language:**Keeping some of the violence off-camera and using sound to anchor the violence of e.g. Chris’s fight with Jeremy allows the film to keep its 15 certificate.Making the main ‘bad place’ in the film the sunken place, and filming it as an empty void allows the film to create real threat and a sense of horror without lots of gore, again allowing the film to achieve its 15 certificate. |
| **Copyright:** |
| * Only 3 songs needed licensing for the movie: *Run Rabbit Run, Redbone,* and *(I’ve Had) The Time of My Life*.
* All 3 songs are important, but Jordan Peele has spoken about how important it was for him to get the Childish Gambino song *Redbone*, as its ‘Stay Woke’ lyric was perfect for the film.
 | * *Run Rabbit Run* is used to establish an eerie tone in the pre-credit sequence
* *Redbone* is used early in the film to foreshadow the struggles over race that will follow.
* *(I’ve Had) The Time of My Life* is used to firmly establish Rose’s evil qualities after Chris has been captured, as we see her listening to the song while choosing her next victim.
 | **Categories:****Language:****Narrative:****Representations:** |