

The story within the film “The Shawshank Redemption” revolves around the power of hope and the motivation it provides an individual. As prisoners, the protagonists are able to use hope as a protection from their confinement within the gruesome prison environment. Hope consistently offers “a sense of his own worth... or maybe it was only a sense of freedom” that drives them towards the optimistic possibility of a life of beyond the grey walls (Hayworth/King 194). By using a variety of camera and lighting techniques, director Frank Darabont is able to affect the audience with the message of hope.

During one scene of the film, Andy plays music over the loudspeaker of the prison while the camera takes a high angle view of the entire yard. In pure astonishment, the prisoners unanimously feel awe-struck by the sound of music for the first time since many of their arrivals. The capture of the scene from a perspective above the normal camera level allows the viewer to fully grasp the freedom felt by the prisoners with a simple tune. The upward sky focus of the camera depicts the bigger picture of the scene and the world in which the prisoners exist. Moreover, the prison yard is full of vibrant sunlight. In contrast with what is normally a grim and dimly lit area, the natural lighting energizes the setting; sunlight, as a symbol of hope, is an intentional film element that portrays the greater theme of the scene. Andy brings them hope and rejuvenates a more positive spirit from men in a disheartened environment. By looking at the bigger picture the prisoners are reminded of the restraint-free lifestyle that was once there’s while the audience shares the emotions of the fictional characters by viewing them from a different, more expressive, angle.