iJRASET
International Journal For Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

**Volume:** 14 **Issue:** V **Month of publication:** May 2026

**DOI:** https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2026.81325

www.ijraset.com

Call: 08813907089 | E-mail ID: ijraset@gmail.com

International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology (IJRASET)
*ISSN: 2321-9653; IC Value: 45.98; SJ Impact Factor: 7.538*
*Volume 14 Issue V May 2026- Available at www.ijraset.com*

# A Marxist Analysis on the Film *Titanic*

Shaline S[1], Harish M[2], Gayathri B[3], Dr. Mary Tency E.L.[4], Rithika S[5], Monicasri L.S.[7]
[1]*Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of English, Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore – 641006*
[2]*Executive Trainer, Centre for Training, Placement & Corporate Relations, Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore – 641006*
[3]*Executive Trainer, Centre for Training, Placement & Corporate Relations, Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore – 641006*
[4]*Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of Mathematics, Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore – 641006*
[5]*Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of Mathematics, Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore – 641006*
[6]*Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of Mathematics, Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore – 641006*

***Abstract:*** ***Film studies is a genre of academics that deals with historical and critical approaches of films. There are various critical approaches that can be used to analyze films. Marxism is one of the approaches which is an economic and social theory that views on the conflict between the capitalists and the working class where the working class or the third class overthrow the capitalists or the upper-class. The following paper aims to do a Marxist analysis of the film Titanic. Titanic is one such film where the class struggle and the domination of the upper-class over the lower-class is evident. The film techniques such as mise-en-scene and camera movements helps one to understand the conflict between the classes. Camera movements portrays the events and characters in the film. A detailed study of these techniques is done in the following paper.***
***Keywords: Film studies, Marxism, mise-en-scene, music, camera movements.***

## I. INTRODUCTION

Film Studies is one of the disciplines in academics that deals with various historical, theoretical, and critical approaches of films. In film studies one goes beyond the story or the plot of the movie and looks at the form of the film, which would demonstrate how the film is put together. There are many critical approaches that can be used to analyze a film. Marxism is one of the lenses through which a film can be analyzed. Marxism is a social, political and economic theory that is based on the struggle between the capitalists and the working class. The following paper intends to do a Marxist analysis on the film *Titanic.*

*Titanic* is an American Epic Romantic Disaster movie, which was released on 18th November, 1997 in the United States. The film was directed, written and co-produced by James Cameron. *Titanic* is a dramatization of the sinking of the famous ship, "RMS Titanic", in 1912 after hitting an iceberg on its maiden voyage across the Atlantic in which over one thousand and five hundred people died and only around seven hundred were rescued. It encompasses the love story of two fictionalized characters Jack Dawson and Rose Bukater. The audience gets to visualize the feel, promise and the power of love. This movie shows the treatment of the different social classes in relation to the different American groups that were segregated at the time. These social differences are portrayed through film techniques such as mise-en-scene and camera movements that is employed in the movie. Mise-en-scene is a French word which means, 'placed on the stage.' It refers to the combination of setting, costume and lighting within the frame of a shot. The setting in this film creates a contrast between the higher and lower classes. The ship itself can be seen as an embodiment of the class division and capitalization. It is filled with greed and capitalization which is evident through the treatment of the lower class by the higher class and in the attitude of the owners of the ship who strive so much to make the ship go faster, stronger and more luxurious for the upper class. The allotment of decks also brings out this class struggle. The first-class passengers are located on the upper deck and the second and third-class people are allotted places in the lower decks of the ship. The upper part of the deck is shiny, glamourous and extravagant whereas the lower deck is dark and cold. The lower-class people are not allowed to go to the upper deck and the people on the upper deck would not want any kind of relationship with the people in the lower deck. Moreover, they don't give attention to the people in the boiler room at all. Though these people have been working hard and striving in that heat, the upper-class people did not have any concern for them. They were working selflessly but on the contrary these people were selfish towards them that they locked them behind steal doors in order to board the lifeboats first amidst the crisis.

©IJRASET: All Rights are Reserved 

The costumes worn by the passengers make the class struggles evident in the ship. The deck consists of three classes of people, the first class, second class and third class. The men of the first-class usually wore tuxedo style suits with white bows, top hats, polished shoes and the women wore tight laced corsets and expensive tailored gowns with gloves. These ladies would go to formal dinners to show off their best dresses. They would wear clean and long white gloves, a hat, a scarf, satin shoes and would also carry an opera fan with them. The costumes also signify the restrictions imposed on higher-class women like Rose. Therefore, with the abandonment of her clothing altogether Rose liberates from her past caged in by corsets, petticoats, stockings and belts and gain freedom from the patriarchal society. The second-class passengers also wore posh clothes, but they were not as posh as the first class and the ladies and girls wore bracelets and necklaces. The third-class men wore britches and shirts and the women wore long skirts, boots and high collared blouses.

The next technique that is used to show the class division is lighting. There is a combination of three-point, low-key and high-key lightings used by Cameron to portray the emotions of the characters. This combination gives the audience a clear understanding of the differences within the scenes. Lighting is used to bring out the power of the rich over the poor. The higher-class people who were in the upper deck of the ship are shown in bright lighting in more sunlight, which portrays their luxurious and happy life. However, the third-class passengers are shown in low lighting and in very little sunlight, showing the simple life lead by them.

Three-point lighting and spotlights have been used in the beginning of the film to demonstrate the varied features of the ruined ship, which appears like a flashlight that is used to move from one room to the other. The high-key lighting is used during the flashbacks to bring out the romance and optimism in the film. Low-key lighting seems to be progressing throughout the latter half of the film to show the intensity and the fate of the RMS Titanic. The sinking of the 'unsinkable ship' is expressed through dark lighting, which brings the elements of sadness, loneliness, love and despair.

Cameron employs natural lighting to bring a reflection of the emotions of this one long lifetime expedition. The low-key lighting and bright lighting are used in shorter frames like in the beginning where the brightness of the sunlight is brighter against the intimidating size of the *Titanic* when Rose steps aboard. This type of lighting not only expresses the time of the day, but it brings out the contrast between the brightest and darkest parts in a scene. Cameron also reveals the beauty of the surrounding areas through bright colors, especially the setting of the sun, which is ethereal with an array of pinks, golds and purples that give an impression of a watercolor painting. The bright lights of the ship during the night, pictures the difference between the luxuriousness in the ship against the dark waters and star filled sky, which also portrays the differences in the mentality of the people inside the ship. This inside and outside differences have been clearly brought out with the help of chiaroscuro lighting.

Soft lighting is used to show the transition in Rose's life from a higher class, educated woman following the upper-class norms to a genuine, jovial woman who is in love with a third-class passenger. The grand setup on the upper deck brings out the usage of practical light which glows brightly and the opposite is seen in the lower deck. The different lighting techniques set the mood of the film by visualizing the emotions and making it more realistic. It helps the audience to understand the intensity of the events and characters and recreates the historic event to an audience who were not present at the time that it occurred.

Camera angles also helped to view the class struggles and the power of the characters. Low angle shots are used in the beginning scene, where it focuses on the captain who is portrayed to be an optimistic and powerful character who has to follow the orders of the owners of the ship even though he is the captain of the ship. On the other hand, a shot shows Jack screaming "I am the king of the world!" portraying him as a person who has the freedom to do what pleases him even though he belongs to the lower-class. An eye-level shot was used to show the disaster to the audience as if they were present in the scene. Low angle and high angle shots are also used to show the breaking and sinking of the ship. The low angle shot shows as if the camera is resting on the water and the high angle shows the domination of the ship over the vast ocean and the power of the non-living thing over the living human beings as the sinking if this ship led to the death of many.

A close-up shot in the party scene of the third-class passengers creates suspense and excitement for the audience. This shot is effective because it draws a comparison between the first-class party and the third-class party. The medium shots imply the relationship between the lovers and the close-up shots engages the audience to the scene by allowing them to read the characters' emotions. A long shot is used to convey the idea of isolation, for example, Jack and Rose's isolation where they are found to be alone together. Th extreme long shot is used in the scene where Jack holds Rose by the waist to bring out the emotion. Immediately after this scene the camera cuts into two viewings and once they jump it also makes the audience jump as they experience the same emotion. Long shot is also used to show the distance of the ship and the characters who are far away from the rest of the world.

In the scene where Jack and Rose stand on the front edge of the ship as if they are flying is the only scene in which a combination of shots such as high angle, low angle, wide shot, medium shot and close-up shot is used. The director has used a dolly shot multiple times in this scene to focus on Jack and Rose.

The first scene of the ship is shot from a lower angle with dark lighting and as the camera tilts above, the lighting gets brighter and newer. The employment of the panning shot gives a wide view of the things happening around the ship. Pan and tilt shots with zoom gives the view of the ship from the outer space. Dolly shot is employed to give a view of the interior portion of the ship.

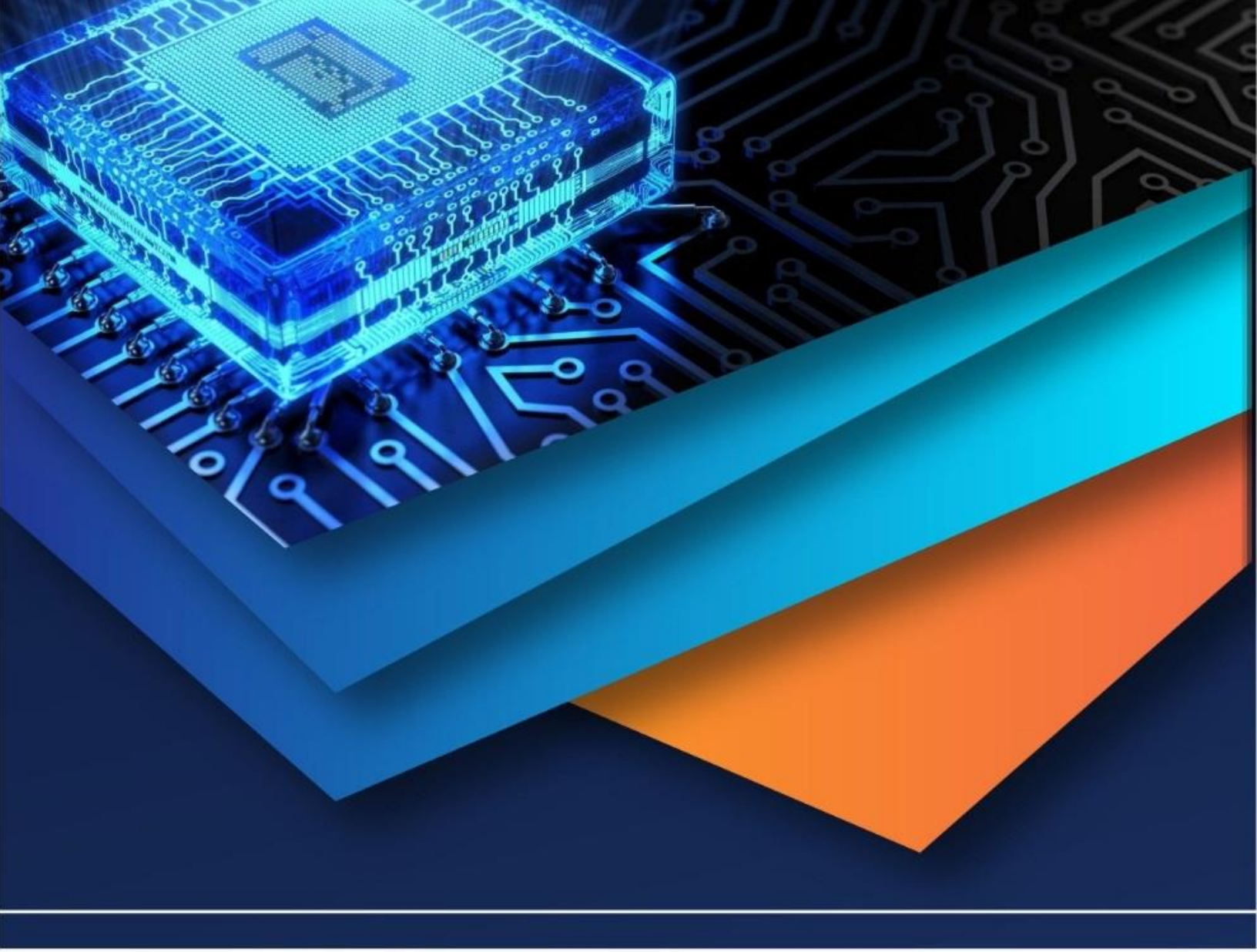
Music also symbolizes the class difference in the film. The lower-class people enjoy the music that is played and dance to it which is seen in the scene where Jack takes Rose to the lower deck to show her the party celebrated by the third-class passengers. In contrast to them, the higher-class people do not dance to the music, they hardly listen to the music being played. They are more engrossed in talking about their wealth and status in the society. The film sound also varies with scenes. Non-diegetic sounds are used mostly during romantic scenes and panicking scenes like the sinking of the ship and in the flying scenes to increase tension. Diegetic sounds are used to symbolize the voyage and the party scene to show relaxation. There are also sounds of the sea, the sea birds, the waves of the ocean, wind and splash of the water when the dolphin jumps out. All these sounds give the film a realistic effect and keeps the audience engaged throughout the film.

The main idea of Marxism is the struggle between the bourgeoisie and proletariat where the working class would overthrow the capitalists. This theory is applicable to this film as there is class conflict and, in the end, the third-class people triumph over the upper-class. Thus, through this analysis, it is proved that history is based on an unending class struggle.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] Babu, N.M, et al. Introducing Film Studies. Mainspring, 2015.
[2] Dotson, Marshall. “Story Structure Analysis: Titanic (Movie).” Six Act Structure., 27 Aug. 2019, Sixstructure.com/story-structure-analysis-titanic/.
[3] Jefferson, Ann, et al. Modern Literary Theory: a Comparative Introduction. Batsford,1997.
[4] Nelmes, Jill. Introduction to Film Studies. Routledge,2012.
[5] “Titanic Movie is a True Representation of Race and Class.” Google, Google, www.google.com/amp/s/bis235au2015.wordpress.com/2015/11/16/titanic-is-a-true-representation-of-race-gender-and-class/amp/

©IJRASET: All Rights are Reserved | SJ Impact Factor 7.538 | ISRA Journal Impact Factor 7.894 |



10.22214/IJRASET

45.98

IMPACT FACTOR: 7.129

IMPACT FACTOR: 7.429

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH

IN APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY

Call : 08813907089 (24*7 Support on Whatsapp)