

Short summary plot:

The given still is taken from the film *Gran Torino* which shows the dynamic character of Walt Kowalski. He is a difficult elderly white man developing a relationship to his neighbours who come from a different ethnicity and culture. This Walt Kowalski, a recently widowed Korean War veteran, gets involved in his Hmong neighbours' family issues. As the film develops he tries to support the Lor family in various ways and thereby begins to see the world in a different light.

Description, setting, content:

In the presented still we can see a scene set outside, to be precise in the streets of a city. In the centre of attention is the film's protagonist Walt who is seen from the front and upwards from his chest. He is pointing his right index finger at the viewer like a gun. He is wearing a light-coloured, striped shirt and an old-fashioned dark jacket while looking at the viewer in an enraged way. In the left background we can see the roof of a white Ford pick-up truck, a street sign and some trees in front of the grey sky.

This scene takes place in the streets of Detroit. On his way home, driving his Ford pick-up truck Walt one day witnesses a group of young Afro-Americans harassing his Hmong neighbour Sue Lor and her white school friend. He gets out of his safe car to confront the gang members and to make them leave Sue and her intimidated friend alone. As mere talking doesn't convince the self-assured boys, Walt finally does not only menace them with the finger gun as shown in the still, but he then pulls a real gun and forces the group to let Sue and her friend go. Finally, he takes Sue with him in his car and drives her home and into safety.

Atmosphere and overall impression:

To start with, the entire atmosphere of the scene is mostly dominated by Walt's facial expression and his finger gun.

Moreover, the atmosphere is also influenced by decay. With his old car and old-fashioned clothing Walt perfectly matches this declining state of affairs. Although the scene's subdued colours make the scene seem serious, there is also a sense of humour in Walt Kowalski threatening the group with his finger gun first instead of using a real gun.

Cinematic device:

The still is a low-angle, close to medium shot which makes Walt look important, so his action and the shown mood clearly catch the viewer's attention.

Analysis:

Considering the film in its entire dimension, the presented still is a display of Walt's developing character. We could even say that this scene is a turning point in Walt's behaviour.

To start with, the mere fact that Walt stops and leaves his car in order to help Sue shows him in a different way of acting compared to his preceding behaviour in the film. For the first time, Walt seems to care about Sue and her well-being. Acting in favour of someone else and thereby saving Sue is a big step forward for this prejudiced white man.

Moreover, the scene demonstrates that Walt, despite originally being ill-tempered, rude and even racist, still has a sense of what is morally right and wrong. In addition to that, he obviously cares for his neighbourhood's peace and wants it to be free from crime.

The fact that Walt first tries to persuade the boys with words and only uses his real gun as a final means tells us that he does not want to hurt anybody if it is not absolutely necessary. As Walt is shown as a Korean War veteran and is clearly influenced by his war experiences, the scene emphasises his development towards a both sensitive and sensible person.

Finally, when confronting the gang of youngsters he displays a sense of humour the viewer does not expect after having seen his sincere and hostile behaviour in the early parts of the film.

To sum it up, the given still shows Walt as a more profound character than one might have thought previously. So we can see Walt not only depicted as a hateful man but also as a caring neighbour who wants to right wrongs.