

Light, Cameras, Flowers

By Alice Adams

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Sympathy Flowers in Movies

Given the role flowers have always played in our ceremonies for lost loved ones, it is no wonder they are such an iconic element in our stories and films. Their presence and absence speak volumes to us subconsciously as viewers and readers, as they do in real life when we are mourners ourselves.

Lord of the Rings is one of the countless films that have put the symbolism of flowers to cinematic use. Those fond of the trilogy were moved by the harsh procession of warrior Theodred's body to a mountain-side crypt. An oppressive brown palette dominated the scene and the mourners were locked in silent grief over his senseless death. Then a single white flower emerged in the camera foreground once the tomb was sealed. In the following minutes of film, a turning point occurred, whereby the benevolent wizard Gandalf – hillside of white flowers behind him – breaks through the spell cast on the hero's father, who then begins to weep as he understands what he has lost.

Similarly, the stark church setting in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was contrasted with the bright red and orange spray adorning the casket of one of the movie's most flamboyant characters. The flowers made a bold statement for the zest with which the deceased had lived his life, as well as a vivid underscore for the poem spoken by his long-time lover.

The gorgeous and elegant floral arrangements in the original British comedy *Death at a Funeral* provide the perfect foil for the outrageous events that ensue as that funeral unravels. As one outrageous plot twist after another comes, there is still the striving for what is right and respectful, though by the film's end little but the flowers themselves manage to retain their decorum.

And say what you will about young people's supposed disdain for tradition. If the excitement around *The Hunger Games* books and upcoming film is any indication, the symbolism of flowers is alive and well among our youth. The best-selling fantasy series involves a futuristic gladiator-style competition among various districts where a strong-armed regime selects teens to compete in a death match where only one survives. In the most poignant scene of the first book, the main character Katniss steals a few moments in the heat of battle to tenderly surround the body of one of the fallen children with blossoms. It's a scene that anyone who's read the blockbuster book can never forget and was the subject of a fan-made YouTube trailer (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_jw3z68TW0) that's had nearly two million hits to date, even though it's not an official clip from the soon-to-be-released movie.

Will there be flowers in the scene when the film opens this March? Most assuredly, if Lionsgate knows anything about human emotion.