Famous Prototypes in the American and British Cinema: Reality and Fiction

Abstract. The article deals with the famous prototypes of American and British cinema. The real life stories of the cinema heroes are described.

Key words: prototype, film character, biography film

Without doubt, cinema belongs to the most popular forms of entertainment. Different people enjoy watching different movies, but only few of us know that our favorite film characters have their real prototypes.

The prototype character (literature, art, cinema) - prototype, specific historical or contemporary personality familiar to the author, he served as a starting point to create an image [1]. The given article describes some fascinating stories of the most popular prototypes in British and American films and cartoons.

The prototype of the charming ogre, the character of the world popular cartoon Shrek (Directed by Andrew Adamson, Vicky Jenson. Country: United States) was a famous wrestler Maurice Tillet. He was born in 1903 in Russia. With the beginning of the Russian revolution Maurice and his family left Russia for France. It is known that he was very smart and could speak 16 foreign languages. In the childhood Maurice had a nickname “The Angel” as he had angelic appearance. When the boy became 17, his body started to swell - head, hands, feet. The diagnosis made by the best doctors was hopeless: it was acromegaly, a condition caused by an excess of growth hormone, which causes the overgrowth of bones in the face, hands and feet. In spite of the diagnosis, Maurice Tillet managed to begin a good wrestling career in the USA. In 1940 he became a champion on the version of the American Wrestling Association and was holding the title for the next 19 months. All his life this amazing man was nicknamed "the French Angel" because of his kindness and mild character.

The other movie, the American biographical drama Beautiful Mind (Directed: by Ron Howard. Country: United States), is based on the real story of John Nash, a Nobel Laureate in Economics. Nash was a great economist and mathematician who began to develop paranoia being a graduate student at Princeton University. Suffering from visual and auditory hallucinations, Nash spent several years at psychiatric hospitals but in the middle of 1980 he was able to continue his academic work. Although the film is not fully authentic, it shows the main aspects of true Nash’s biography.
Saving Private Ryan (Directed: by Steven Spielberg. Country: United States) is an American war drama film. The prototypes of the film are the Niland brothers, four siblings, who all served in the US Army during World II. Robert, Preston, and Edward Niland were supposedly killed in war actions, their remaining brother, Fritz was sent back to America so that the Niland family wouldn’t lose their last son. Edward, who was originally thought dead, was actually found alive after escaping a Japanese prison camp in Burma. The brothers became national heroes having shown the example of heroism and brotherhood.

The adventures of Sherlock Holmes are known by everybody. There are lots of well-known screen versions of the famous works by A.C. Doyle, but the British series Sherlock (Directed: by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat. Country: Britain) had a stunning success. Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson have little in common with traditional Conan Doyle characters, but the most features of the famous detective are unchangeable.

But who was the prototype of the famous hero, people wondering more than 100 years. According to one version, the prototype of the genius detective has been a professor at Edinburgh University - Dr. Joseph Bell.

He was a very observant person, who could determine somebody’s occupation on the small details of clothing. Conan Doyle turned this ability to the famous deductive method of Sherlock Holmes. He also used Bell’s passion for using poisons in chemical experiments.

The other version says, the real prototype of Holmes is Conan Doyle himself. Dr. Bell wrote in a letter to Condon Doyle "You yourself are Sherlock Holmes, and you know it." The similarity of Sherlock Holmes to the author is evident. Holmes’ smoking pipe and his red dressing gown were the favorite things of Conan Doyle. Holmes possesses several character features of his creator. However, no matter who the prototype is, the adventures of Holmes are admired by viewers all around the world.

In conclusion, it is fair to note that the films based on real prototypes’ life stories are always interesting for wide public as it is amazing to learn that even famous people have their weaknesses and strengths and to follow their way to the glory.

References