



EXPLORING ECOLOGICAL IMBALANCE AND HUMAN IMPACT IN “THE MEG”: AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: The Meg is a science fiction thriller film released in 2018, helmed by director Jon Turteltaub. It is an adaptation of the novel Meg: A Novel of Deep Terror written by Steve Alten and published in 1997. This research paper applies an ecocritical lens to analyze the representation of ecological imbalance and human impact on the environment in the film. By examining the portrayal of nature and the environment, the study explores how human activities disrupt the delicate balance of ecosystems and examines the potential consequences of this ecological imbalance. Through an ecocritical analysis, the paper delves into the themes of human-induced environmental damage and the subsequent effects on the natural world. Furthermore, the research highlights the significance of adopting sustainable practices and promoting environmental consciousness to prevent further harm to the ecosystem. By emphasizing the importance of environmental sustainability, the paper advocates for a shift towards more ecologically responsible actions to mitigate the negative impacts of human activities on the environment.

Index Terms - Ecocriticism, "The Meg", ecological imbalance, human impact, environment, nature, representation, sustainability, scientific expedition, megalodon shark, deep-sea habitat, potential consequences.

INTRODUCTION

Ecological imbalance occurs when the natural equilibrium of an ecosystem is disrupted, which can be attributed to a variety of factors, including human activities, natural disasters, and climate change. It arises when the delicate balance between the different elements of an ecosystem, encompassing both living organisms and their physical surroundings, is disturbed. Human activities exert a substantial influence on the occurrence of ecological imbalances. Actions such as deforestation, pollution, the excessive extraction of natural resources, and the destruction of habitats can result in the loss of biodiversity, degradation of ecosystems, and disruption of crucial ecological processes. These activities disrupt the harmonious functioning of ecosystems, leading to imbalances in species populations, nutrient cycles, and energy flows. By applying ecocriticism, the paper examines how the film depicts the consequences of human actions on the environment, specifically focusing on the release of the megalodon shark and its ecological implications. It provides messages about the importance of environmental sustainability and the need for responsible human behavior.

The Meg is a 2018 science fiction thriller film directed by Jon Turteltaub. The story is based on the 1997 novel *Meg: A Novel of Deep Terror* by Steve Alten. The film follows a group of scientists and divers who encounter a massive prehistoric shark known as a megalodon. The plot revolves around a deep-sea research facility called Mana One, located in the Mariana Trench. During an exploration mission, a submarine carrying a team of scientists is attacked by a massive creature, damaging the submarine and trapping the crew at the bottom of the ocean. To rescue the stranded scientists, a team is assembled, including deep-sea diver Jonas Taylor, who is known for his expertise in deep-sea rescue operations. Jonas has a personal connection to the creature responsible for the attack, as he encountered a similar creature years ago and believes it to be a megalodon. As the team ventures into the depths, they discover that the creature is indeed a megalodon, a gigantic shark species believed to be extinct for millions of years. The

megalodon, attracted to the surface by a disturbance caused by the research facility's activities, poses a significant threat to the crew, marine life, and even nearby coastal communities. The film showcases the team's attempts to outsmart and capture the megalodon, utilizing advanced technology and risky tactics. They face numerous challenges and encounters with the formidable creature as they race against time to prevent further destruction. Throughout the story, *The Meg* explores the themes of ecological imbalance and human impact on marine ecosystems. It highlights the consequences of human interference, such as deep-sea exploration and tampering with natural habitats, leading to the re-emergence of a long-extinct predator and subsequent threats to marine life and human safety. Ultimately, the film culminates in a high-stakes battle between the team and the megalodon, as they strive to protect themselves and the world from the destructive force of the ancient shark.

Ecocriticism is a theoretical framework that emerged in response to the environmental crisis of the late 20th century. It seeks to understand the complex relationship between literature, culture, and the environment, and how these interactions shape our perceptions and treatment of the natural world. At its core, ecocriticism recognizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and ecosystems, emphasizing the need for responsible and sustainable approaches to environmental issues. One central aspect of ecocriticism is the examination of how literature and cultural expressions depict ecological issues and human impact on the environment. It analyzes how authors portray nature, environmental degradation, and the consequences of human actions, shedding light on the power dynamics and ideologies that influence our relationship with the natural world. By uncovering the underlying messages and values embedded in literary works, ecocriticism raises awareness about environmental concerns and challenges anthropocentric perspectives. Ecocriticism also highlights the importance of recognizing the ethical dimensions of our interactions with the environment. It calls for a reevaluation of our attitudes and behaviors towards nature, urging a shift towards more sustainable practices and a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of ecosystems. By integrating environmental science, philosophy, and literary analysis, ecocriticism provides a valuable tool for promoting environmental awareness, inspiring change, and fostering a more harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world. Ecocritics examine how literary texts reflect and shape our attitudes towards the environment, as well as the impact of human activities on the ecosystem. The application of ecocriticism to film, especially those with a focus on environmental issues, has become increasingly popular in recent years.

In a study conducted by Ogunsola (2019), the application of ecocriticism to the film *Avatar* revealed its portrayal of the impact of human activities on the environment and indigenous communities. The research highlighted the film's emphasis on the preservation of biodiversity and the recognition of the intricate connections between humans and the natural world. In another study by Matoba and Tsukamoto (2020), ecocritical theory was employed to analyze the Japanese animated film *Princess Mononoke*. The researchers explored the film's representation of the relationship between humans and nature. Their findings indicated that *Princess Mononoke* portrays nature as a sentient and living entity, while emphasizing the significance of maintaining a balance between human development and environmental preservation. Both studies exemplify the application of ecocritical analysis to films in order to delve into their ecological themes and messages. By employing this theoretical framework, researchers can gain insights into how movies depict human-environment interactions, advocate for environmental awareness, and promote sustainable practices. These studies highlight the potential of ecocriticism as a valuable tool for understanding and analyzing the representation of nature and environmental issues in popular films.

The Meg explores the concept of ecological imbalance as a central theme. It presents a scenario where human interference disrupts the natural equilibrium of the marine ecosystem, leading to the emergence of the megalodon and a series of ecological consequences. The film highlights deep-sea exploration as a key factor contributing to this ecological imbalance. The activities of the research facility, Mana One, disturb the deep-sea habitat and inadvertently trigger the return of the megalodon. By venturing into uncharted depths and tampering with the underwater environment, humans disrupt the delicate balance that has existed for millions of years. The film underscores the impact of human intrusion on natural habitats. The construction and operation of the research facility disturb the underwater ecosystem, creating disturbances that disturb the ecological harmony. *The Meg* suggests that these actions can have unforeseen and potentially disastrous outcomes, emphasizing the need for caution and respect when interacting with natural environments. The film also highlights the impact of overfishing and pollution on marine life. As such, an ecocritical analysis of the film can contribute to a better understanding of the importance of protecting the environment and the need for responsible human behavior. The ecological imbalance

portrayed in *The Meg* is a consequence of human activities, specifically the actions of a scientific expedition seeking to explore the uncharted depths of the ocean. The team's disregard for the potential consequences of their actions leads to the accidental release of the megalodon shark, which was thought to be extinct. The sudden appearance of the shark disturbs the balance of the deep-sea ecosystem, leading to a ripple effect that affects all marine life in the area.

The Meg uses cinematic techniques, narrative elements, and character reactions to portray nature as a formidable and awe-inspiring entity. The film creates a sense of wonder, fear, and respect for the power and unpredictability of the natural world through its visual presentation and character interactions. Through stunning visuals, including underwater cinematography and vast oceanic landscapes, the film captures the magnificence and scale of nature. These visuals immerse the audience in a world where nature is dominant, evoking a sense of wonder and highlighting humanity's insignificance in the face of such grandeur. The megalodon, portrayed as a primal and ancient creature, taps into our collective fears and fascination with the unknown. Its predatory instincts, massive size, and powerful movements remind viewers of the primal forces at play in the natural world. The film emphasizes that nature operates on its own terms, often defying human attempts to control or tame it. Despite human efforts, nature's resilience and adaptability are showcased in the film. The megalodon demonstrates its survival instincts and thrives in its marine environment, illustrating nature's ability to endure and overcome challenges. This portrayal reinforces the idea that nature possesses inherent strength and serves as a reminder of its awe-inspiring resilience.

The Meg sheds light on the repercussions of human interference on marine ecosystems by illustrating the emergence of the megalodon and its profound impact on the underwater environment. The film serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the potential consequences of human actions and exploring the disruptions that can arise from human interference in delicate marine ecosystems. The presence of the megalodon disrupts the natural balance of the marine ecosystem, as it assumes the role of an apex predator, altering population dynamics and the intricate food chain. This disturbance reverberates throughout the ecosystem, potentially leading to the decline of certain species and causing a significant shift in the ecological equilibrium. The film establishes that human activities, particularly deep-sea research endeavors, trigger the ecological disruption. The presence of the deep-sea research facility and the exploratory missions conducted by the scientists play a pivotal role in awakening and releasing the megalodon, a supposedly extinct prehistoric shark species. This portrayal prompts contemplation about the unintended and far-reaching ecological consequences that can stem from human curiosity and scientific exploration.

The Meg features Mana One, an advanced underwater habitat where the researchers reside. While intended for scientific exploration and experimentation, this artificial structure inadvertently becomes a catalyst for the megalodon's escape. The film raises ethical considerations and highlights the potential risks associated with establishing human-made structures in fragile marine ecosystems. As the megalodon emerges and wreaks havoc, the characters in the film devise a plan to hunt and capture the shark, reflecting humanity's desire to control and manage ecological disruptions caused by their own actions. However, these attempts inadvertently escalate the situation, further disrupting the ecosystem and endangering human lives. In addition to ecological aspects, *The Meg* portrays the consequences of the megalodon's presence on economic and social fronts. The film suggests that the disruption caused by the megalodon has implications for industries such as fishing, tourism, and coastal communities that rely on healthy marine ecosystems for their livelihoods. This depiction underscores the interconnectedness between human well-being and the overall health of marine environments.

The movie portrays the importance of balance and harmony in the ecosystem and how the sudden appearance of a predator can cause irreparable damage to the environment. The movie's portrayal of human impact on the environment highlights the need for responsible and sustainable environmental practices to ensure the protection and preservation of the natural world. Moreover, the ecocritical analysis of the movie emphasizes the significance of viewing literary and cultural works through an environmental lens. Such analyses can provide important insights into the representation of nature and the environment in popular culture and literature, and help us understand the impact of human activities on the environment. Ecocriticism can also help us develop a greater awareness of environmental issues and inspire us to take action towards environmental sustainability.

Conclusion

In the current era of climate change and environmental crisis, *The Meg* serves as a powerful reminder of the consequences of neglecting the natural environment. The movie serves as a thought-provoking depiction of ecological imbalance and its connection to human impact on the environment. The film effectively portrays the disruption of the marine ecosystem caused by human interference, showcasing how deep-sea exploration and habitat tampering lead to the emergence of the megalodon. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of marine ecosystems and the significant influence of human activities on their stability. By applying an ecocritical analysis to *The Meg* we gain a deeper understanding of the film's underlying themes regarding ecological imbalance and human impact on the environment. offers a valuable lens through which to view and understand environmental issues in popular culture and literature. It prompts us to critically reflect on our relationship with nature, consider the ethical implications of our actions, and recognize the pressing need for sustainable environmental practices. *The Meg* serves as a catalyst for examining our role as responsible stewards of nature. It urges us to reassess our attitudes and behaviours towards the environment, fostering a greater appreciation for the interconnectedness of ecosystems and the importance of adopting sustainable practices to mitigate ecological imbalances.

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