

Lolita, opening scene

A | Kubrick's version

Kubrick's version of *Lolita* is known for being quite tame and with almost no sexual innuendos at all. The first thing the audience might notice when they watch the film adaptation by Kubrick is the lack of details about Humbert Humbert's past and background. In the book, the very first chapters give us information about his background and the loss of his beloved Anabelle when he was a teenager back in France. All this background is cut out in Kubrick's film which immediately starts at the end (with the murder of Quilty).

Nabokov spends close to 50 pages detailing the background of Humbert's life. He delves deep into his mind. The content of this part of the novel is impossible to recreate on a film. Nabokov's book is also fairly renowned for its beautiful prose style. The rhythm and flow of the book is song-like and the reader becomes fully immersed in Humbert's mind. Moreover, in the book Nabokov addresses the readers as if they were members of a jury. He is pleading guilty and defending his case. Hence the beautiful - but convoluted - writing style that the narrator employs in order to embellish the story and **coax the reader into understanding him**. The psychological aspect of the first chapters as well as the very special writing style are impossible to recreate on a film. Therefore, Kubrick has to move the film into another direction. Kubrick is aware that he must seize and hold the audience's attention and to do so he starts with the most action packed scene of the text (Humbert murdering Quilty), albeit at a slow pace.

In the novel, long before *Lolita* shows up, we are well acquainted with Humbert and when she appears the reader knows that he will be tempted. In Kubrick's movie there is only a hint of foreshadowing of what may come. Indeed, when Humbert shows up at Quilty's house to murder him he refers to *Lolita* but the audience doesn't know who this *Lolita* is. If we haven't read the book, we might imagine that she is a girlfriend or his daughter but we certainly would not assume that she used to be his 12-year-old lover. In Kubrick's film the audience is left in suspense as to what will happen between this *Lolita* and Humbert. Kubrick hides Humbert's liking – sexual, emotional, and intellectual – from the audience. On the contrary, Nabokov ushers the readers into Humbert's mind.

One of Nabokov's great talents as a writer was his **elegant and very bright in colour writing style**. The novel thoroughly describes the beauty of the American landscape with its grassy backyards and tree lined suburban streets. However, Kubrick's motion picture was entirely **filmed in England due to difficulty with censorship and production at the time**. As a consequence, almost all the action that takes place outside must take place inside in the film.

B | Adrian Lyne's version:

Adrian Lyne's film and the novel begin in much the same way. Humbert Humbert is offering his confession to whomever would like to hear it. **Humbert speaks affectionately about his obsession for *Lolita***. The film **starts with the famous lines of chapter one: "*Lolita, my sin, my soul...*"** This film adaptation is much **more faithful** to the

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original book. A lot more **dialogue was directly lifted from the book and the film had more voiceovers** (as if he was telling his story to the audience, recalling everything.) Adrian Lyne decided to keep Humbert-Humbert's background at the very beginning of the film, just after the opening credits. Lyne's adaptation kept Humbert's childhood which is completely swept away in Kubrick's version. The audience is given all this information by means of flashbacks. **Furthermore, the soundtrack (piano) adds to the sad and melancholic effect of the scene.**

C | The garden scene

- **Kubrick:**

Lolita is 12 in the novel, and fourteen years old in the film played by an actress who was sixteen. For an American audience of that time, 13 is the age in which a girl starts to become a woman (puberty). A twelve-year-old girl is far too young to associate sexual thoughts with and certainly would not have been accepted by audiences of the 1960's. Since censors would not allow anything close to a suggestion of pedophilia, Lolita's age had to be increased from 12 in Nabokov's book to 14 for Kubrick's film.

The age difference was just a means to make the audience feel more at ease (comfortable) with watching an older man seek out and seduce a girl-child. In the book, Lolita is fully aware of her sexual power over men. However, in Kubrick's adaptation Lolita is a little brat and not self-aware enough to fully use her "seductive" power.

- **Lyne:**

Just as in the book, Lolita is fully aware of her sexual power over men.

She is **wearing braces to make her look younger.**

Water sprinkle => eroticism.