

# Film assignment the graduate essay

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The Graduate This film was considered a strong statement in the late sixties because of the subject it approached on the “ generation gap” between the youth of the time and the authoritative figures of their parents and the government. Yet, it was not cast as a view of the “ hippies” or the rebellious ones who were open about their disdain of the “ establishment” but the youth of the upper middle class. These young people were the college students and obedient children that tried to follow the rules set aside for them and to accomplish what was expected of them by society and their families. Benjamin Braddock returns from his four year college as a graduate, an honor student, and track star but he comes home feeling “ angry”, as he terms it in the movie, and seemingly unconcerned about his future. He remains polite to his parents, his father, a well-off lawyer, and his mother, a dutiful but social conscious wife, but all of their attempts to get him to commit himself to something is wasted. The audience can feel a quiet seething inside of Ben, a frustration and rage that he can’t seem to find a way to release.

That is until, the wife of his father’s law partner, clearly approaches him with the intention of seducing him. Mrs. Robinson is a bored, sardonic alcoholic that quickly hones in on Ben’s vulnerability.

At first, Ben is appalled but as she challenges him, he succumbs and actually begins to see it as a form of rebellion against the standards that he feels so angry against. The May/December romance continues until the Robinson’s daughter, Elaine, comes home for a weekend to stay. Ben’s parents and Elaine’s unsuspecting father see it as a perfect opportunity for the two young people to get better acquainted. In natural course as fear of exposure, Mrs.

Robinson has exactly the opposite reaction as she demands a promise from Ben that he will not see Elaine under any circumstances. He tries to honor his word but it backfires as his parents and Mr.

Robinson continue to put on the pressure. Finally, he has no other choice but to ask Elaine out for an evening. They begin the date with Ben having every intention of sabotaging it with as miserable a time as he possibly can. He treats Elaine rudely by taking her to a place that is very disrespectful to her status as a “ nice girl” and also by trying to show total disregard for her feelings. After having been thoroughly offended and confused, she asks him to bring her home and then she breaks out in tears. The tears are Ben’s undoing and he apologizes while asking her to give him a second chance. Through the rest of the evening, they find that they are very much alike and Elaine has a complete understanding of Ben’s “ anger”.

Ben realizes that by being with Elaine, he feels none of “ filthiness” that he does when he sleeps with her mother and he feels happy for the first time in many weeks. A visit to a late hour bar at a hotel which is the rendezvous point for Mrs. Robinson and Ben’s affair, Ben is forced to disclose to Elaine that he is having an affair with a married woman, without telling Elaine who that woman was. By the next day, however, the secret is out as Ben tries to see Elaine again. She is quickly shipped back off to school and the Robinsons feel safe that they can marry her off to a suitable young man. Ben is a determined young man, though. He pursues Elaine with the same tenacity that he used to accomplish his goals in school.

He faces all forms of adversity, including Elaine's reluctance to defy her parents, but in the long run, he wins and he and Elaine finally rebel in classic style, therefore, claiming their lives as their own and no longer the property of their parents. I found the movie to be a funny but darkly humored story of the wave of movement that seized all of the 1960's for the Baby Boomers. They were a generation that set out to change the antiquated traditions of the past and that they did. Perhaps now, the loss of those traditions have caused a more dysfunctional society but the young people of the 1960's era brought the world into pop culture and more individual freedom. The movie has become a iconic symbol of its time. Reference " The Graduate", directed by Michael Nichols, screenplay by Calder Willingham, starring Anne Bancroft, Dustin Hoffman and Katherine Ross, released 1967