

# Example of research paper on planet of the apes 1968

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## Planet of the Apes (1968): A Parody of Its Time

The film, Planet of the Apes was released in early 1968, based on the novel of the same title by a French author, Pierre Boulle. Michael Wilson and Rod Serling (who also wrote for Twilight Zone) wrote the film's screenplay and Franklin J. Schaffner directed it. The film was regarded as notable for its makeup, as these effectively and believably made ape characters from the human actors. It was commercially successful and earned millions of dollars in its lifetime.

Planet of the Apes was a creative discourse of the socio-politically momentous era of 1968. It attempted to illustrate the socio-cultural dynamics of the struggle between race / gender discrimination and the socially disapproved war with Vietnam and succeeded in terms of simplicity, truthfulness and acceptability. Despite its explicit messages in a lot of political areas, the film gained votes of appropriateness even in that context because of its imagination—the use of science fiction.

It was also distinguished for how it expressed its social commentary on the socio-political context of that time. was a creative discourse of the socio-politically momentous era of 1968. Its attempts to illustrate the socio-cultural structure and dynamics of that time succeeded in terms of simplicity, truthfulness and acceptability. Despite its explicit messages in a lot of political areas, the film gained votes of appropriateness even in that context because of its imagination—the use of science fiction.

The story is about an astronaut, Col. George Taylor (Charlton Heston), who crashes into an unknown planet that has vast desert areas and low distribution of vegetation and life sources, though with air breathable for

humans. He reaches this planet with four other colleagues, whom he lost during the course of events after their arrival. He later on finds out that this planet is inhabited by humanlike apes who have their own culture, social structure, form of government, and an education system, among other things similar to the human society of the planet that he believed he has left. There were humans in the planet, too, but they were devoid of any form of intelligence known of humans and were, consequentially, being treated by the more advanced apes as wild animals. These humans, including Taylor, were hunted down and imprisoned in the apes' academic and science institution for experimental brain surgery. While in prison, Taylor was treated similar to how the apes treated the savage human beings.

They were tied up in collars and leashes when led in and out of their cages, hosed down with water from fire hoses, and beaten by small clubs when they show any form of aggression. However, Taylor's insistent attempts to communicate with his captors and having shown signs of intelligence gave him Zira's (an animal psychologist; portrayed by Kim Hunter) special attention, calling him "Bright Eyes". She even gave him a "gift", a female companion (Linda Harrison) from among the savage humans they caught from the forests, sending her into his cage. However, Taylor's display of intelligence and Zira and Cornelius' interest in him as a unique human being caused commotions and disturbance among the leadership of the ape society. Taylor's series of attempts to escape has also led to Dr. Zaius' (Maurice Evans) personally taking him into custody to perform emasculation and experimental brain surgery on him. He also charged Zira and Cornelius with heresy as they refloated the theory that the ape society evolved from

the human civilization. Before this could happen, Zira and Cornelius orchestrated Taylor and Nova's (although she was only included because of Taylor's insistence) successful escape with the help of Zira's nephew, Lucius (Lou Wagner). They proceeded to the caves of the Forbidden Zone to collect evidence that will prove Cornelius and Zira's theory correct and acquit them of the charges filed against them. Later, Dr. Zaius and his gorilla soldiers caught on. From here, the story progressed showing that the film's thesis was that humankind brought itself into its own destruction, thus, giving rise to the ape society. The ending of the film displayed Taylor's devastation upon his discovery that he was in planet Earth all along and that his kindred destroyed their civilization long ago, presumably through a nuclear holocaust.

The story of the Planets of the Apes (1968) film showed a myriad of significant social facets that were starkly present in the context of its release for public viewing. Year 1968 was a pivotal moment of history when demonstrations and mass movements against war, for civil rights, for women's rights, and other political agenda were being laid out in the streets and calling for concrete action. . One aspect that it presents is George Taylor's contempt over how the humankind of his time has treated each other—through war, individualism, and self-prioritization. This was very evident in the last journal log he was recording before their ship crashed into the waters; more evident, so, when he saw the half-buried Statue of Liberty on the beach that he rode to with his female companion, Nova. Taylor's grief and anger at the end of the movie was a cry of despair that much to his dismay, the humankind of his time finally did it—they've finally annihilated

themselves.

“ Oh, my God! We finally really did it! You maniacs! You blew it up! Ah, damn you! Goddamn you all to hell!” .

In late January of 1968, Vietnamese Revolutionary Forces mounted a concerted attack on South Vietnamese cities and towns. National Liberation Front (Vietcong) suicide squads penetrated the U. S. Embassy in Saigon, while the former imperial capital of Hue was captured by Communist forces and retaken by U. S. forces after three weeks of heavy fighting. . The Vietnamese call it " Chien Tranh Chong My Curu Nuoc" or " The War against the Americans to save the nation." In the course of this war, some 58, 000 US soldiers were killed in action, as well as 304, 000 wounded. But these figures pale in insignificance beside the horrific casualties suffered by the Vietnamese. Almost 1, 400, 000 North and South Vietnamese were killed in action. .

The year 1968 was also a year of demonstrations and assassinations, marked by violent protests at Columbia University and the Chicago Democratic Convention. It was, likewise, the year of the untimely deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert Kennedy. James Early Ray shot down Martin Luther King, Jr. while standing on the balcony of a motel in Memphis, Tennessee. Following the news of King's murder, racial violence broke out in cities nationwide. In mid-September 1968, controversy erupted over the appointment of John Hatchett as head of the black student center at NYU. .

The film, Planet of the Apes, vividly portrayed how the apes treated those who were unlike them—the humans. Humans were perceived as lower life

forms because they did not follow the same social norms as the apes have. The human beings were hunted down like wild animals, shot with guns to immobilize them, caught them in nets, transferred them into cages, and experimented upon them. . They were also looked down upon because they have less hair (this is analogous to having darker skin color), noting how Zira commented that a shaven Taylor made him look " less intelligent." This was very similar to how the Black Slavery was carried out, beginning in the earlier centuries of man's sea voyages and colonization. (Crash Course World History, 2012). In 1640, whipping and branding, borrowed from Roman practice via the Iberian-American colonies, appeared early and with vicious audacity. One Virginian slave, named Emanuel, was convicted of trying to escape in July, 1640, and was condemned to thirty stripes, with the letter " R" for " runaway" branded on his cheek and " worked in a shackle one year or more as his master shall see cause." .

The strong disdain Taylor expressed on humankind and its self-destructive pursuits in the film could be representing the voice of protesters who were against the war in Vietnam and the clashes between race, color, and genders at that time. As civil rights activists were protesting against war, discrimination, and violence, Taylor was also making his statement against the obliteration of the human civilization on Earth and on how he and other humans were being captured and treated with discrimination, brutality, and disregard in the ape society.

One scene where Taylor was fire hosed in his cage to punish him further for his assertions, while being separated from Nova, represented how people of color and civil rights activists, especially African Americans, were treated

during their demonstrations in the streets. They were met with water bombs, police assaults, imprisonment, torture, and even assassinations. Caucasians who fought for the rights of people of color were also given the same treatment for “ siding with them”. These parts of the film were direct analogies to how skin color was regarded in the past (and in present day) scenarios where Africans with black skin color, Asians and Hispanics who have brown skin color are seen as lesser beings by their Caucasian counterparts, those with the perceived superior white skin color. In the film, being human is equivalent to being an animal and should be treated with brutality, with less regard, and is worth nothing, just good enough to be experimented upon. Zira and Cornelius, too, were prosecuted for giving Taylor so much concern and regard as a human being. Planet of the Apes wanted to give emphasis on how and why there was much clamor for change during that time.

In addition, that year was, likewise, the time when the National Organization for Women (N. O. W.) Bill of Rights was released. The Bill put in provisions that called to ensure that women were treated equally as men. Relevant to the film were the N. O. W.’s call to ban sex discrimination in employment, call for equal and unsegregated education, and the call for equal job training opportunities and allowances for women in poverty. It can be seen that Planet of the Apes wanted to exhibit this in the film, considering that Lt. Stewart (Dianne Stanley) was part of the space exploration team (although she died even before the real story began) and that one of the most assertive characters in the film was Zira. However, its attempt to exhibit women’s empowerment falls short of the true essence of the women’s

liberation movement as their presence and characters appear tokenistic. To further elaborate, Lt. Stewart was never part of the “ Planet of the Apes” story. She was only presented as one of the first females to navigate in space and that was it. The film was unable to provide her a personality, a character or a role in the course of the narrative, apart from being another female companion or “ the new Eve” to the male protagonist, Col. George Taylor, of which he only narrated to Nova later on in the story. How she was as an astronaut was not also shown in the film because she was, along with the other male astronauts, in the pod, asleep and preparing for their landing. Another point was, when their ship had crashed into the planet, it was seen that she had aged, whereas her male counterparts showed no change in physical appearance at all. It was an odd thing to do in a film, so much so that it was unexplained why that had to happen to her.

As for Zira, she proved an important character in the film and had actually brought the story into a pivotal milieu with her strong personality, persistence, intelligence, and commitment to her profession. Her keen observations and analysis of Taylor’s exhibitions of intelligence (during the time he could not speak because of his throat wound) also gave a strong support to his character. However, it is unclear whether Zira was a representation of a woman who is empowered, given her assertions and capacity to assert, or a professionally discriminated woman of intelligence and capacity, given her position as an animal psychologist who does not have any professional authority in their institution. Perhaps it was both. The women’s empowerment was embodied by Zira’s intellect and the knowledge of their society’s laws. She also had the balls to initiate the hearing for



Taylor. She was also the person who played an important role in having their experimental brain surgery laboratory established, despite her lack of authority in her professional designation. However, with Zira remaining in her post and not being given a position worthy of her capabilities is also the film's concrete representation of how women were regarded (and still are) by society.

On the other hand, Nova is the epitome of a disempowered woman who has no capacity to decide for herself and defend herself in moments of adversity. She had her safety and destiny entirely dependent on Taylor's protection and decision. On another thought, though, relative to her kind—the savage humans in the ape society—it was a bold move for her to leave her group and explore other parts of the ape world with Taylor. This was exhibited in the scene where they reached forests that the savage humans occupied prior to their capture. Nova was pulling away from Taylor's grip, responding to her instinct to return home, but decided to move on with the group on Taylor's insistence. Still, she was not able to stand up for what she desired to do, as she was functioning as a human being in the contexts of instinct and primitiveness.

In an interview with Carol Hanisch, one of the pioneers of the women's movement in the late 1960s and writer of "The Personal is Political", she said, "Power is having the power to change things and to have power over our lives to make them better. The whole empowerment issue is oriented only towards individuals, an individual person feeling empowered, which isn't totally a bad thing, but when it takes all the focus, it's not a good thing." . Relating this explanation on women's rights and feminism, the above-

mentioned characters were unable to create changes in their situation and in their respective societies.

Overall, the Planet of the Apes film seems to give no concrete contribution to raise women's awareness on how they can fight for their rights and empowerment at that time—there was Lt. Stewart, an astronaut who was later on downplayed by the main male protagonist as “the new Eve”; then, there was Zira, who despite all her capacities as a scientist, was never given a designation in the institution that permitted her to call the shots; and Nova, a silent and meek primitive woman whose destiny is dependent on the more capable man who designated her as his “Eve”. Despite its attempts to show women as important and / or exceptional characters in the movie, their roles were still unable to catalyze concrete changes for them as women and in the societies that they existed in.

Early feminist discussions have already determined that women's struggles and actions should be aimed primarily at doing two inter-related things: 1) awakening the latent consciousness of women about their own oppression; and 2) building sisterhood. . The film was unable to present both principles consistently and persistently. Zira recognized her lack of authority in the academy as an animal psychologist. She also challenged authority and orders given to her by leading Taylor's escape and going to the Forbidden Zone to gather evidence for their theory. However, in the end, she withdrew all her efforts by staying with Dr. Zaius and conceding to her fate of imprisonment and accepting their leadership's claims of their heresy, despite the concrete evidence they showed him. On another note, the film can, otherwise, only present how “ripe” the women's movement is at that time.

In 1968, there were still a lot of discourses taking place, as this was something relatively new for women and for society.

Planet of the Apes made a strong statement about the context of the time that it was released. It gave a vivid picture of discrimination against race by exhibiting violations of civil rights and against women by showing how disempowered women through Lt. Stewart, Zira, and Nova. It also showed how important it is to protect humankind from its own concepts of development through the main protagonists strong assertions in the beginning and end of the film. The manner of presentation of these themes was, in addition, creative and well thought of, as the film was regarded for its social commentary. The representations of the characters and scenes, though futuristic, were easily relatable to the social context of its time and could even be applicable to modern-day society.

## **Works Cited**

Planet of the Apes (1968). Dir. Franklin J. Schaffner. Perf. Charlton Heston. 20th Century Fox, 1968.

WBAI 99. 5. " Critique of the 1968 Miss America Protest by Carol Hanisch of the Women's Liberation Movement ." July 2003. carolhanisch. org. June 2014 .

Fran Luck of the Joy of Resistance, a feminist radio show, interviewed Carol Hanisch, one of the pioneers of the feminist movement in the 1960s and writer of " The Personal is Political", as a look back on the protest against the 1968 Miss America and how the feminist movement has progressed since.

The interview also delved on how women make use of the power of sexuality and how this has become a backlash to the movement and its progress. They

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also talked about how women should discuss and define power among themselves and how to collectively and genuinely achieve liberation from oppression--by continuing the discourse and working in unity. The document presented the view of a person who helped build the feminist movement and is now seeing how it has progressed over the years. It also gave an honest view of what can still be done to continue the struggle for women's emancipation from oppression in the current context of society.

Woods, Alan. The Tet Offensive: the turning point in the Vietnam War. 30 January 2008. June 2014 .

The article detailed on The Tet Offensive, one of the most violent episodes in the long years of war in Vietnam against the colonialism of powerful countries. It detailed on the number of casualties from both Vietnamese and American fighters and civilians affected by the bombings that the U. S. initiated. The author also shared a very detailed analysis of the war, discussing its origins, the political dynamics between the colonialist countries involved, such as Russia, France, and the U. S. Woods also analyzed why the U. S. anti-war movement was established, highlighting that most of the drafted soldiers came from the working class to poor families in the country and that American soldiers were revealed to have massacred innocent Vietnamese civilians, such as My Lai.

Becker, Eddie. " Chronology on the History of Slavery and Racism." n. d. Help Save The Holt House. June 2014 .

This website document was a project, an independent research of the author, Eddie Becker. It presented a timetable of events from year 1619 to the 1990s, considered as the period of the beginning and end of slavery. The

document gave detailed descriptions of international agreements between countries that practiced slavery, forms of abuses applied to slaves, individuals and groups that fought against slavery based on race and gender, and individuals and groups that proliferated its practice.

Booker, M. Keith. " Planet of the Apes." *Alternate Americas*. n. d. 91-103.

Booker summarized the film, *Planet of the Apes*, in this book section, introducing the characters and presenting the detailed chronology of events in the story. He also compared the consistency of the film to the book written a French author, to which the film was based from. The author gave his own analysis, looking into the angles of the film's historical context, that the film was a political satire of racism, discrimination, nuclear destruction, and of the 1960s. Likewise, he described the sequels of the film, highlighting the synopsis of each of the four films created after the original. This book section presented a wide range of perspectives about the *Planet of the Apes*, analyzing the film from a Marxist perspective, human rights, and also giving its own critique of the characters, their roles, and their feats in the story.

EVANS, SARA M. " Sons, Daughters, and Patriarchy: Gender and the 1968 Generation." *American Historical Review* 114. 2 (2009): 331-347.

Evans stipulated that the various forms of modern-day feminism were derived from 1968. In her paper, she described the dynamics of rebellion of both males and females, against figures of authority, traditions, and social hierarchy pertaining to, in particular, patriarchy. Evans recounted activities, changes in practices and appearances that young males employed as a revolt to their fathers, to being drafted into war, and to the social perception of manhood. She also related how women began social defiance by getting

more involved in demonstrations and student movements, obtaining leadership and public roles that were known to be male roles, and challenging social expectations on their womanhood. Evans' inputs to this paper is the description of how fresh the feminist movement was at the time when the Planet of the Apes was conceived and released for public viewing. Gimenez, Martha. " Marxist-Feminist Thought Today." Science & Society 69. 1 (2005): 5-10.

IMBd. Planet of the Apes (1968) Full Cast & Crew. n. d. May 2014 .

The website gave full information on the production side of Planet of the Apes, from the screenplay writers to the full list of actors of the film. This information was useful in providing the needed information about the cast, producers, writers, and on the turnout of the film after its release.

N. O. W. National Organization for Women (N. O. W.) Bill of Rights, 1968. 1968. May 2014 .

An electronic copy of the N. O. W. Bills of Rights, 1968, uploaded in the Internet. It presented a summary of the eight demands of N. O. W., pertaining to amendment of the constitution for equal rights of women and men, women's rights to unsegregated education, employment opportunities and benefits, services to be made available to workingwomen, and women's sexual and reproductive rights. This document presented the list of what the women's movement demanded for at that time, which put into perspective how the film, on the other hand, presented the female characters in it, what they demanded for, and how they were regarded as females.

Planet of the Apes (1968). Dir. Franklin J. Schaffner. Perf. Charlton Heston. 20th Century Fox, 1968.

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Surak, Amy. 1968. n. d. May 2014 .

Surak's work was a research output for a historical retrospective presentation about New York University (NYU) from years 1965 to 1971. It featured the activities that the university's students' participated in and the events relevant to the social context of 1968. The highlights were stated on each month where significant events occurred that could be directly related to NYU and its student body. The website was established in celebration of NYU's noteworthy student radicalism in 1968.