

The graduate essay

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



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The Graduate “ The Graduate” is a great film, with Dustin Hoffman, playing Benjamin (Ben) Braddock, the epitome of the confused and isolated young adult male. Ben is confused about where his life is heading, he fumbles for an answer whenever one of his parents’ friends asks him “ what are you going to do next? ” He stares mournfully into his fish tank, perhaps likening himself to the fish dwelling within it. He is trapped in this glass cube. This movie is for anyone who’s ever wondered what he or she are going to do with their future.

Not a classic love story, “ The Graduate” is a coming of age film. You can see that by the different types of love portrayed in the film, love of self, parental love, lust and finally near the end of the film, romantic love. We see self-love through out the film but heavily in the opening act. One example is when Ben is in his upstairs bedroom in his parents’ home. He sits in his room staring blankly ahead, looking into his aquarium tank (while observing its occupants) and wanting to be alone with his thoughts. At the bottom of the aquarium tank is a model of a diver, symbolizing Ben’s “ drowning. He is thinking about his future and what to do.

Ben tells us as much when his father comes in and notices Ben staring at the tank. He guesses Ben is worried and asks him if he is worried and what of. Ben replies “ I guess about my future” and when pressed he says he wants it to be “ different. ” Clearly Ben is thinking only of himself at this time, he has graduated and now must decide what to do next, coming of age, Ben is unsure where he is going next. But Ben’s father is there for another reason, to get his son downstairs for his graduation party. At the graduation party we

see another form of love, that of parental love and part of coming of age is to stretch your wings and move out from under your parents total control.

Ben's father insists Ben come down to the party, but the guests at the party are all his parents' friends, none of his friends, his parents want to show off their prized son. This display of parental love is a bit over the top and only gets worse when they read from his year book Ben's long list of accomplishments.

We see several scenes where this is evident, one of the best is a short time later when Ben is celebrating his 21st birthday – a crucial bridge year between youth and adulthood. His parents have thrown another party for him, again inviting only their own friends. Once more Ben is the featured attraction. He has reluctantly agreed to show off and model his birthday present for the guests, a new scuba diving outfit. Ben appears wearing the scuba suit, moving ponderously, with his fins on, through the crowd, and submerges himself at the bottom of his parents' pool for peace and silence just like the toy in his aquarium (except for the sound of his own rhythmic, heavy breathing). His parents are more concerned with showing Ben off to their friends than they are with giving him time to figure out where he wants to go.

His parents love for him is truly driving him crazy and he is in conflict between their love of him and his love of himself, he finally takes a little charge when his father finds him floating around the pool not showing any ambition and asked him “ Would you mind telling me then what those four years of college were for? What was the point of all that hard work? ” and

Ben replies, “ You got me. He is starting to come of age, parental love is evident through several scenes in the film but mostly in the beginning. When Ben is re-introduced to a family friend, Mrs.

Robinson, she opens a whole new world to Ben, and the way she does it is thrilling to view. With Mrs. Robinson, Ben finds a new form of love, LUST and she will take him through another step in his journey to come of age, she will take his virginity. Lust is a major player in all of act two and part of act one. It starts after Mrs.

Robinson follows Ben to his room, entering then pretending to be looking for the bathroom. Ben is awkward at best, Mrs. Robinson convinces Ben to drive her home, not sure what he was doing Ben was under her spell, lust had entered Ben’s life and even if he did not know what to do he was compelled to take the next step to manhood. One of the best examples is how she manipulates Ben into her house, telling him she feels “ funny about coming in to a dark house, “ then she just did not want to be alone in the house. Then Ben finally gets it when he asks Mrs. Robinson “ Mrs. Robinson – you are trying to seduce me ..

.. Aren’t you? ” We all know that yes that is what she wanted, later after she lures him up to her daughter Elain’s room she bluntly tells him “ if you won’t sleep with me this time I want you to know that you can call me up anytime you want and we’ll make some kind of an arrangement. ” After Ben thinks about this for a while he decided to take the next step and call Mrs.

Robinson. Ben is now caught between two worlds. One scene that particularly struck me was when he was holding the door open at the Taft Hotel.

Behind him, young, formally dressed couples are gathering for a prom. The hotel is also filled with well dressed elderly couples. As Ben opens the glass lobby door of the hotel to enter, he must hold it open so that a long string of elderly guests of a different generation can exit. When they have passed and before he can enter, a group of prom-goers race by him into the hotel, obviously, he cannot identify with either the older or the younger generation. This image was interesting to see in reference to the film. It seems as though Ben will never reach this phase of his life, but he is at a point where he needs to make a decision and take the step to manhood, he did, they had sex for the first time that night, and sex finally enters the film, lust and sex are only found in the second act of the film.

We know its lust and not love because they cannot even talk to each other and Ben continues to call her Mrs. Robinson, even when they are in bed. The affair will last for for most of the summer till one day Elaine , Mrs. Robinsons daughter comes up during an attempt at conversation.

Mrs Robinson is furious and makes Ben promise to never date her daughter he agrees but you get a sence that the film is changing direction. Enter Elaine and Ben's next step in his journey, Love and an attempt at romance. Romance and romantic love finally show up at the end of act two when Ben is forced to take Elaine out on a date, knowing this will cause a problem with Mrs. Robinson he feels compeled by his parents to do it. He starts out to ruin the date by being distant rude and even taking her to a strip club.

Upset Elaine runs out of the club crying, Ben catches her and his emoitions take over, they kiss and Ben is in love. Act three starts with Ben telling Elain

he likes her and asks her out again. The film gets a bit crazy from here on and moves fast as Ben tries to take charge feeling more confident and secure. When he goes to pick up Elaine Mrs. Robinson is waiting and confronts him, trying to take control Ben decides he will tell Elaine he has been seeing her mother, this backfires and Mrs. Robinson tells Elaine that in fact Ben took advantage of her. In response Elaine leaves for school not talking to Ben any longer. But Ben is not through, he decides he loves her and proclaims to his parents in his final gesture of independence that he is going to marry her even though she does not even like him.

He is now nearing the end of his journey and takes off after Elaine to find her at school. After watching her for several days he joins her on the bus and proclaims it is just a coincidence that he is there and follows her to meet her boy friend Carl Smith at the zoo. Being in love, this makes him very jealous and is hurt. Later Elaine shows up at his apartment demanding to know what happened between him and her mom. He explains and she believes him, Ben then tells Elaine that he loves her. Elaine is showing she must have feelings for Ben also and even asks Ben not to leave, now Ben is confused. Then later that night while sleeping, Elaine appears in his room and asks for a kiss. Ben then asks her to marry him, she says she might and that she will think about it.

This takes Ben over the edge and is hopelessly in love, he is after her every day to decide. Ben even buys a ring but when he returns to his apartment he is met by Mr Robinson and is informed that Elaine is leaving school and he should never see her again. But Elaine was not done with him she leaves him

a dear John letter telling him she loves him. Ben starts driving home only to find out her parents have arranged her marriage to Carl Smith from school. Now he is love and hurt but determined to find her and marry her, eventually he finds her at the church and he was too late she had just married Carl.

Ben however had come too far and loved her too much. He was a man who knew what he wanted, Elaine. He will now cross another line of no return he takes the chance of putting his entire self on the line, and wins! He disrupts the wedding as he is pounding on the glass yelling “ Elaine! Elaine! Elaine! Elaine! ” She rushes to him, deciding she wants Ben after just saying I do to Carl. The whole last scene is filled with excitement, yet when the two finally get away Ben only seems to be happy for a few seconds as they jump on a bus to who knows where.

He and Elaine have no money, no prospects, and no certain future. Which leaves the viewer asking, what’s next? Works Cited O’Conner, Flannery. “ A Good Man Is Hard To Find. ” Literature: Reading, Reacting, Writing. 5th Ed. Ed. Laurie G.

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