

Let the right one in: puppy love as vampirism essay examples

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In the 2008 Swedish film *Let the Right One In*, a young boy named Oskar strikes up a friendship with a mysterious young girl in his apartment building, Eli. However, Eli is not all she appears; she is a century-old vampire who sucks the blood of the living to survive, helped along by her father/accomplice Hakan. The film is constructed with a quiet, macabre beauty, with wonderful performances that ground the movie in a dark sweetness that makes you empathize with the main characters. Throughout all the bloodshed, murder and destruction, the characters of *Let the Right One In* simply want to love and be loved; the vampirism of Eli reflects the toll that this kind of adoration can inflict on people and communities.

The way director Alfredson depicts the outcast Oskar and Eli plays into very familiar feelings of loneliness and alienation young adolescents often feel. Oskar is the typical bullied child, with much bigger and stronger children poking fun at him, driving him towards some violent impulses of his own as a defense mechanism. Meanwhile, Eli, a girl with secrets of her own, has a strange arrangement with Hakan (revealed to be her lover/protector from decades ago – she does not age while he does). Eli's first meetings with Oskar are curious, tentative; they both learn little about each other, but are intrigued. The mere suggestion by Eli that Oskar should stand up to his bullies drives Oskar to sign up for weight training classes in school; the influence she has on the people around her is infectious, especially when they are infatuated with her.

The cold environment of Stockholm is just as much part of the movie's core as its characters – snow falls on a near-constant basis, and the stark white environment contributes to the loneliness and isolation the characters feel.

Everything around the characters feels so mundane and ordinary, as the characters themselves seem to not have much going on for them except their own daily lives. There is a simplicity to the environment that mirrors Oskar's world – his problems are simple, but magnified by the fact that he is a kid, and so is much more susceptible to the wish fulfillment the powerful Eli affords him (by slaying his enemies for him). The ability to tap into the adolescent's perspective that their problems are the most important things that will ever happen to them is what makes *Let the Right One In* such a fantastic portrait of adolescent confusion and growing up.

In conclusion, *Let the Right One In* is not only a great vampire story, and a tragic love story, but an interesting allegory for the pain and confusion of growing up. Eli is the crush, the first love that drives Oskar to do anything and everything for her. The strength of that appeal is clear in both his and Hakan's dedication to Eli; not knowing any better, they submit to her will and desires. At the same time, however, she is also fiercely protective of them, leading to scenes of bloody brutality accented by the snowy, quiet environment of Stockholm. Eli's status as a castrated boy cements the androgynous appeal of that character; she is truly an object of curiosity, so different from Oskar's world (or anyone else's) that people get drawn in as they please, even if it kills them.

Works Cited

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