

Ethical matters in the film Juno



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The 2007 movie Juno raises many ethical issues through the perspective of Juno, a sixteen-year-old girl who becomes pregnant in high school. The movie is based around the moral struggles she faces during the pregnancy, as well as how she handles other characters intervening and imposing their personal beliefs upon her. Being so young, Juno receives an abundance of advice from her parents, friends, and adoptive parents who all believe they know what is best for her. However, she is at an age where she has developed her own set of values, and she intends to continue to be guided by them. Battling between living by her own ideals and allowing others to help guide her, Juno faces an abundance of internal conflicts during her pregnancy, which illuminates a large amount of ethical concerns and principles in the film.

The film is based around the already-controversial idea of teen pregnancy, which raises an ethical matter in itself. Although Juno can physically have a child, it can be argued that she, and other teen mothers, have not yet developed a mature emotional state capable of handling the process of motherhood. Juno often mentions how she is not quite sure who she is as a person, and that she is still “just a kid.” Because of this, Juno decides not to keep her child. First, she considers getting an abortion, and is quite content with the idea. This raises another moral issue concerning whether or not terminating a pregnancy is ethical. Abortion is often deemed unethical because it involves ending a life, and is frequently considered with young people doing so on the account of making careless, irresponsible mistakes. Juno, however, soon discovers that she could not emotionally go through with the plan of abortion, so she decides search for a set of adoptive parents.

Mark and Vanessa, the adoptive couple, see the adoption as a selfless act on Juno's part, and that she has "answered their prayers." What Juno's family sees as a burden on their life, the couple considers a blessing. Although they seem like a perfect couple to raise Juno's child, the characterization of Mark and Vanessa, and Juno's relationship with them, both expose a number of ethical matters. One issue involves the husband and wife's relationship with one another and their decision to get a divorce. The idea of divorce is controversial, especially when it takes place during the adoption process. Although it is very common in today's society, divorce is still considered a "wrong" thing to do. In many religions, divorce is frowned upon because marriage is supposed to be permanent. In general, a divorce signifies that the promise of love and devotion was broken, and promises in general are not supposed to be broken. The divorce process in Juno illuminates the true differences between the couple and the morality they each have toward receiving a child.

Vanessa tries to encompass the values of a perfect, textbook image of a mother, while Mark has doubts that he is actually ready to become a father. He sees it as "bad timing" and feels as though he wants to do more with his life before having the responsibility of a child weighing him down. Juno brings this attitude out of Mark by making frequent visits to the couple's house. This can be seen as immoral because Juno and Mark developed a friendly, almost-creepy relationship without Vanessa's knowledge. Although it was not a sexual relationship, Juno was overstepping marriage boundaries and interfering with Mark's feelings with Vanessa by regularly stopping by and calling. This can ultimately be viewed as positive, however, because it

brought out Mark's false happiness about Vanessa and having a child.

Instead of deciding to live in suppression of these feelings, Mark was honest to himself and to his wife for the first time. This process saved Mark's piece of mind, and possibly Vanessa from getting even more hurt in the long run, even though it involved the issue of getting a divorce.

Juno, a didactic story, incorporates moral reasoning into its plot in order to both provide entertainment to its viewers, and to offer different perspectives, solutions or ways to face similar situations in real life. People are often curious about teen pregnancy because it is not glorified, and is considered as a relatively bad thing. When people see a pregnant teenager, they are generally concerned for her or perhaps even disgusted by it. The film offers ways to satisfy this curiosity by exposing the realistic, ethical issue of teen pregnancy and allowing the audience to empathize with Juno during the process.