

# Un long dimanche de fiançailles essay



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BUSTER**

The 2004 French film *Un Long Dimanche de Fiançailles* directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, stars Audrey Tautou as Mathilde, a young girl searching for her fiancée Manech (Gaspard Ulliel) who has disappeared in the wake of World War One. Everyone believes he has died after being court-martialed, but Mathilde refuses to believe it, clinging to little strands of hope as she delves deep into the mystery surrounding her fiancée, herself, and the people she meets along the way. What originally drew me in was the casting of Audrey Tautou as the main character.

I loved her in *Amélie* and *A la Folie... Pas du Tout* and I was anxious to see her in this role which seemed completely different from her quirky characters in those other two films. I wasn't disappointed; I absolutely loved her in this film! In some minor ways her character reminded me of her role as *Angelique*. Both *Angelique* and *Mathilde* were young girls obsessed with love and their own ideas that they refused to view as false no matter how much people tried to convince them otherwise. The difference in their obsessions is that while *Angelique* was psychotically unstable, *Mathilde* wasn't, even though many people thought she had to be to keep pursuing a lost cause.

After the initial draw of Audrey Tautou, the plot, *mise-en-scène*, and visual effects kept me hooked. I thought the film was visually stunning and was extremely realistic at portraying the time period. Every aspect from the music and lighting to the sets and costumes combine to almost transport you to early 1900's France, pre, during, and post-World War One. While extremely realistic, the filmmakers also managed to throw in some *Meliesque* special effects. As far as the plot goes, when the movie opened I was immediately turned off and almost stopped watching.

The opening was extremely disturbing and too gory for my tastes as it all too accurately depicted trench life and the horrors of war. I honestly thought I was going to hate this movie, and I was surprised by just how much I ended up loving it! The film presented the audience with so many different themes and aspects of human life: love, hate, brutality, jealousy, self-preservation, vengeance, irony, passion, optimism, fear, sadness, hope, humor, overwhelming joy, compassion, and so much more.

Over-all I really found this to be a terrific film and I would recommend it to anyone who wouldn't be offended by a few... risque... scenes. The characters were real, interesting, and easy to connect with and become attached to. It was visually stunning, and as a period piece it was very realistic and extremely powerful. And, while it's a brutal war story, it's also an impassioned love story, and I think over-all that's what kept me the most drawn in. The touching, heartfelt ending is well worth the opening cringe-worthy scenes and I am so glad I didn't stop watching this film because of them.