

# Movie analysis: the breakfast club



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Neima Prabhakar English 8 CP Period 2 5/19/05 A Misleading Exterior In the film, *The Breakfast Club* (1985), John Bender, the slovenly rebel at Shermer High School in Chicago, is serving a Saturday detention with four very different students. Right from the beginning, Bender exhibits the qualities of a destructive and thoughtless criminal, i. e., he taunts everyone else in order to hide his personal inadequacies. Whenever Bender is questioned by his peers about a personal issue, or whenever he cannot provide a clear answer to a question, he—albeit defensively— responds in a facetious and irritated manner. Bender demonstrated this when Andrew Clark, the "sporto", told him that he did not count, and that "if [he] disappeared forever it wouldn't make any difference." Distraught from Andrew's blunt comment, Bender sarcastically retorted, "Well, I'll just run right out and join the wrestling team..." As time goes on, Bender slowly sheds his rough attitude and starts opening up his true self to the other students. At first, Bender is a crude ruffian, who no one respects, particularly Mr. Richard Vernon, the disciplinarian at the high school. When all of the students arrive in the library for their detention, Bender—showing no respect for Vernon's rules—is the first to communicate with the rest of them. Bender continually proposes tempting, yet unlawful things to do. However, the other students, who dislike Bender, refuse to listen. As soon as Mr. Vernon leaves he gives the students an essay assignment and departs, Bender becomes very obnoxious. He exhibits his envy and lack of respect towards Claire Standish, a popular girl from a rich family, by referring to her in a profane manner, "Hey [Brian], why don't you close that door... we'll get the prom queen impregnated!" In addition, when Mr. Vernon dashes into the room and accuses Bender of vandalism, he denies everything, and indignantly responds "Eat my shorts."

Infuriated, Vernon assigns Bender numerous detentions; he does not care, and is more concerned with impressing the other students. In spite the many caveats and punishments, Bender attempts to uphold his invincible image by deliberately disobeying Mr. Vernon's rules. Bender had casually invited the other students to accompany him to his locker, where he collected his illegal stash of marijuana. Upon their return to the library, all of the kids were trapped by a barred exit. Surprisingly, Bender risked getting himself into more trouble by darting sonorously through the corridors, to distract Mr. Vernon; thus allowing the other students to surreptitiously return to the library—showing an interest in the well being of the other students.

Consequently, when Bender was caught and forced back to the designated area, Mr. Vernon angrily remarked to the other students " You think he's funny? Look at him, he's a bum!" This was the first situation in which Bender pondered Vernon's words, and showed compunction for his actions. Having undermined Mr. Vernon's authority, Bender is placed in a small storage closet for the remainder of the detention, where he becomes very vulnerable after being verbally assaulted by Mr. Vernon. Bender appeared to be significantly influenced by Mr. Vernon's threats of violence—influenced by his indoctrination, by his rage, and influenced by his final statement: " That's what I thought, you're a gutless t--d." Although Bender may present himself as strong and undefeatable to everyone, Mr. Vernon's comments certainly have a degrading effect on him. Prior to being challenged by Vernon, Bender was a boisterous anarchist who dominated every conversation he had with both Mr. Vernon and his peers. Nevertheless, when Mr. Vernon ruthlessly calls him out, Bender realizes he is no longer in power. Toward the end of the film, when Bender scrupulously escapes from the locked closet and blithely

smokes marijuana in the company of the other students, he begins to share things with the other students. Thus, they too begin to share their emotions and problems with each other. Bender has put things into perspective. For instance, he showed his true melancholy when he told Claire, that she could never compare herself to him: " You got everything and I got s—t." Bender also identified with Andrew when he was explaining the reason he is in detention and how his dad and coach constantly pressure him, Bender had a rather puzzled look on his face, and calmly stated, " I think your old man and my old man should get together and go bowling." Bender can relate to the adversity that Andrew faces, and he realizes that others also encounter difficult situations in life. John Bender's matured and learned about himself gradually throughout the film. He acquired a sense of character, and he was able to clearly see his identity in detention, i. e., what he shows on the exterior does not necessarily reflect his interior. Bender has also realized that the others deal with the same difficulties in their daily lives, and that they are not too different, despite the labels that have been branded with. Even though Bender may still be described by Vernon as a criminal, he is aware that he has the power to break free from this stereotype. He cannot be forced into that, nor any set role. Just as the four other students, he was able to relinquish his image and expectations, and act as he pleased. Similarly, others will see John Bender only as they want to see him.