

Pleasantville analysis essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ The life where nothing was ever unexpected. Or inconvenient. Or unusual. The life without colour, pain or past” (Lois Lowry). Pleasantville is a 1998 American fantasy comedy-drama film written, produced, and directed by Gary Ross. A brother and sister, David and Jennifer, are sucked into their television set and suddenly find themselves stuck in a 1950’s television show called “ Pleasantville. ” David and Jennifer suddenly find themselves in this strange city, as Bud and Mary Sue Parker, completely transformed and therefore black and white.

“ Pleasantville” is a film that can be classified as a dystopian, a satire, and a bildungsroman story. A dystopia is a futuristic, imagined universe in which exists an oppressive society, and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through technological, moral, or totalitarian control. Pleasantville is a dystopian story. David and Jennifer are both transported into a “ perfect” world within a black and white television show where there is no fighting, no questioning of authority, and there are no fires. The people in Pleasantville do not know anything about the outside world.

“ What’s outside of Pleasantville? ” (Ross). The geography class does not learn about “ world” geography. The whole world lives on Main Street. When asked where Main Street ends, the teacher simply answers that the end of Main Street is the beginning of the Main Street again. In Pleasantville, women take care of the house while men work. When George Parker, Bud and Mary Sue Parker’s father, comes home from work and says, “ Honey, I’m home”, his wife is supposed to come to the door to welcome him, but she does not.

Had she been home, she would have made dinner, and welcome him, as usual. In this city, everyone follows the same routine everyday, everyone looks the same, because they are all black and white, and the pages of the books are blank, because books are a symbolism of knowledge and the people in Pleasantville are not allowed to know ones more than others. Satire is defined as a literary term used to ridicule or make fun of human vice or weakness, often with the intent of correcting, or changing, the subject of the satiric attack.

The events that occur in Pleasantville classify this story as satire. The show portrays a very stereotypical image of the 1950s, where women stay home and take care of their children, while the husband goes to work. The lives of the people who live in this society are perfect. Women of this time period are supposed to look beautiful at all times, never have a bad moment, and are not to worry about anything, especially social problems. " I came home like I always do. And I came in the front door. And I took off my coat.

And I put down my briefcase and I said " Honey. I'm home. "... Only no one was there. So I went into the kitchen and I yelled it again. " Honey I'm home. " But there was no one there either. No wife. No lights. No dinner. So I went to the oven you know because I thought maybe she had made me one of those " TV dinners... " But she hadn't. She was gone. And I looked and looked and looked but she was gone (Ross). The men of Pleasantville act as though not getting their dinners at the same time, and made by their wives, is unbelievable.

Throughout America's history, there has always been the problem of racism and discrimination, especially towards "colored" people and women. The "true citizens of Pleasantville", or the people that are still black and white, decide to have a town hall meeting for change. The people divide themselves, as the "coloreds" on the top of the courtroom, in the balcony, and the black and whites, on the bottom. Through this scene, Ross is making fun of the ignorance of our world, and reminds the reader of the injustice of this society.

Although humans always need an enemy, even when everything is perfect, one always fears change, and when something starts to change it is seen as "bad". Bildungsroman is a novel whose principal subject is the moral, psychological, and intellectual development of a usually youthful main character. As time passes by, Bud Parker begins to realize that the perceived happiness in Pleasantville is not nearly as fulfilling. Bud's evolves from dreamy outcast to leader of the changes that take place in Pleasantville. Mary Sue Parker, Bud Parker's sister, evolves as well.

At the beginning of the film, she is mad at Bud because she thinks that all of this is Bud's fault. Mary Sue decides to go out with Skip just for sex, however, at the end of the film, Mary Sue's starts to read and gain knowledge, she decides to stay in Pleasantville and start a new life there. This decision shows a drastic change in character, which is somewhat unexpected considering she is the one who first introduced change to Pleasantville. Bud and Mary Sue are not the only ones who change, the firemen have no other experience than fetching cats out of trees for neighbors.

Bud teaches them how to put out fires, which gives them more knowledge, and a general idea of what their job should be. Betty Parker, Bud and Mary Sue's mother, starts as the typical 1950's stay at home mother, but evolves in emotions and grows quickly. She changes from black and white to color after Mary Sue recommends masturbation. She initially wants to cover up herself, because she is ashamed of her new color, but later on, she realizes that being different is not bad, and that she does not have to do what other want her to do.

She gains knowledge, making her grow as a an individual. The town of Pleasantville soon begins changing at a rapid pace. Double beds become available in stores, students engage in sexual displays in public, colored paints available to buy, and the women in Pleasantville become tired of their household duties and begin to think. The people start discovering other peoples outside Pleasantville. The people are not black and white anymore, and at the very end, Pleasantville becomes colored.

These and many more events are the ones that classify Pleasantville as a dystopian story, a satire, and a bildungsroman. Pleasantville's citizens' development as people, and the change of a whole society. They realize that there are other places outside of Pleasantville. The firemen learn to put out fires. There are double beds available in stores. The students begin engaging sexual displays in public. George Parker says " Honey. I'm home" and his wife does not respond to his greetings. " And that is how change happens. One gesture. One person. One moment at a time" (Libba Bray).