

Stand and deliver character analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The characters in “ Stand and Deliver” went through a great deal in this movie and all brought something else to the movie. The star of the movie is Jaime Escalante played by Edward James Olmos. Escalante is the teacher of the students that quits his job with a computer company to teach at Garfield High School. He comes to teach computer science, but the school did not get the computers and he has to teach math.

He takes over the math class and expects a great deal of his students and challenges the faculty to allow him to teach. Mr. Escalante encounters some opposition to teaching calculus from Mr. Molina, the principal and Raquel Ortega, a teacher. Mr. Molina is the principal of Garfield High School played by Carmen Argenziano. Mr. Molina laughs at Mr. Escalante’s idea of teaching calculus, but he supports him when the program gets under way.

Raquel Ortega, played by Virginia Paris, is not as helpful as Mr. Molina and she doubts the abilities of the students many different times throughout the movie. The students in the movie are very important and there are many that are central to the movie. Angel Guzman, played by Lou Diamond Phillips, is the tough guy of the school that chooses to cut class with his fellow gang members.

Mr. Escalante reaches out to him and through the movie we see his transition into one of the brighter students while maintaining his gangster image. Ana Delgado, played by Vanessa Marquez, is the quiet girl that happens to be brilliant. She is almost forced to drop out of school so she can work at her family’s restaurant full time, but Mr. Escalante intervenes and

convinces her father to allow her to come back to school. Pancho, played by Will Gotay, is the least smart student in the class and lets everyone know it.

He considers not taking the calculus class to instead work at a factory and make money, but again Mr. Escalante convinces him to take the class and he passes the AP exam along with all the others. Lupe Escobar, played by Ingrid Oliu, deals with a great deal of responsibility at home and we see that she is responsible for getting her little brothers and sisters to bed and preparing her father's lunch. The other important characters in the movie are the agents from the ETS (Educational Testing Service). Dr. Ramirez, played by Andy Garcia, and Dr. Pearson, played by Rif Hutton, are sent to Garfield to investigate the possibility of Mr. Escalante's students cheating.

The ETS suspects the students cheated because of irregularities in the test, which they say many times in the movie, but they still come off as bad guys and Mr. Escalante even threatens Dr. Ramirez. Economic Culture The economic culture of these students was displayed throughout the movie to show that they came from poor families and neighborhoods. When people were trying to sell their goods on the street, such as bags of apples and having a taco stand, it was a symbol of a way of life and how people tried to survive. It was a traditional ritual for vendors to fill the streets in order to make money.

Another symbol of their poor economic culture was stealing, such as when Mr. Escalante came out to his car and found his stereo gone. While outsiders may view the students as thieves, they personally saw it as a way of life, and doing whatever was necessary to get money. The culture of the work was displayed in the students as they had to help their families in restaurants, fix

cars, and tend to the needs of children. Ana had to help with her family's restaurant. Mr. Escalante visited the restaurant to talk with Ana's father. Unfortunately, her father did not take into consideration that Ana could excel in life with a college education.

The father thought that since everyone else was working in the restaurant, Ana would be fine working there too. She decided to drop out, but ended up rejoining the class. One of the students, Pancho, was skilled in auto mechanics. His uncle offered him a job on the weekends operating a forklift that would have paid time and a half. This would have been a good money maker for him and his family, and making money was a big deal in the culture of these families. Since this conflicted with the class meeting time on Saturday, he thought about dropping out of the class. Mr. Escalante showed Pancho how he could go beyond merely fixing cars.

One of the ways this was done was through showing Pancho technology that designed cars. Mr. Escalante told him that he could go to college and make more money designing cars. Mr. Escalante also took Pancho on an eye-opening drive. When Pancho had to make a decision about which way to go, he yelled " go right, go right". Mr. Escalante continued straight and replied " all you see is the turn; you don't see the road ahead". When Jaime Escalante first agreed to teach at the school, he was expecting to teach computer science. He arrived on the first day of school to find that there were no computers in the school due to lack of funding.

Since he could not teach that class, he ended up teaching math. Mr. Escalante himself had a struggle with the economical culture within his family. He chose to teach, which was a low paying job in that neighborhood.

He could have found a better job which paid more, but he chose to teach these students because he believed in them. Political Culture As in every school system, there is a political structure among the staff. Jaime Escalante had to go through higher authorities to get permission to teach calculus, have additional meeting times for the class, and encourage the students to take the exam.

They reluctantly gave him permission, although no one believed that he would be able to teach these students. The political culture gave higher ranked officials in the school the power. When Jaime brought up the thought of teaching calculus, he was laughed at. When the idea was finally considered, the department chair was upset that her objections were not listened to, and she left. She had mentioned that the students could not handle being taught calculus, and she said that what little self confidence they had would be shattered.

Jaime Escalante wanted to challenge the political culture of the school to change the way things had been handled historically. The authorities in the school's political structure had been worried about their students' low test scores, but Mr. Escalante was the one who took action towards that. The graffiti on the side of a building that said " we are not a minority" was a symbol of their struggle in life and how they are viewed as outsiders. The students in the movie were oppressed, and ended up being motivated to fight it.

As Paulo Freire mentions in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, " they [oppressed] will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it" (45). They

wanted to show that they were just as capable of achieving goals as people of other ethnicities. Through taking the AP calculus test, they were able to do just that. Social Culture There are instances of social culture throughout “Stand and Deliver.” We see cultural symbols like the language used by the characters and the environment.

The cultural rituals are shown in the characters homes and at school. The cultural ideology is seen in the attitudes of the students and the attitudes of the faculty. The social solidarity exists between the students and Mr. Escalante. “Stand and Deliver” takes place in East Los Angeles and there is a great deal of cultural symbols within the community. East Los Angeles is a Hispanic community and we see that in the movie because there are many instances of Spanish speaking by characters throughout the movie.

Mr. Escalante’s first day in class shows that he has five or six students that do not even speak English and Mr. Escalante gives them Spanish instructions. When Mr. Escalante and his wife eat at a restaurant owned by a family of one of his students they say “mucho gusto” to her father, which in English means “pleased to meet you.” Mr. Escalante not only teaches math at the high school, but he teaches English to Spanish-speaking adults in the evenings and there are many people in his class. Even one of the agents from the ETS in the movie speaks Spanish telling them that he came from their neighborhood. The environment of East Los Angeles is full of symbols that deal with the culture of the characters.

We see a pinata store and even see a man pushing a taco cart. These symbols deal with the Hispanic culture, but there is another culture for these students and that is one of being poor. We see in the movie graffiti

everywhere and the buildings are rundown with fading paint. Mr. Escalante's stereo is stolen from his car and we see the secretary reporting a theft to a police officer. It is terrible, but these are cultural symbols for this neighborhood. The cultural rituals we witness in this movie are seen at school and in the character's interactions at home.

A great deal of the movie takes place in the classroom because Mr. Escalante makes his students show up an hour early for school and stay late everyday and he even makes them come in on Saturdays. This changed the idea of school for many of these students that were used to slacking off in school. The students are part of this ritual because they want to pass the AP exam and Mr. Escalante expects them to show up. We witness the students taking quizzes everyday and having a quiz every Friday. They even come to school during the summer for five hours each day.

At home we see one student's ritual. She is responsible for getting the kids to be bed because her father works at night and her mother works during the day. We see her pack her father a meal, tell him goodbye, put the kids to bed just as her mother gets home, and as she tries to do her homework her mother tells her to turn out the light so she can sleep. This is her ritual every night. The cultural ideology in this film is shown by the students and faculty. Many of these students do not take Mr. Escalante seriously because they do not think they can make anything of themselves.

One of Mr. Escalante's students is almost forced to drop out of school so she can work in her family's restaurant full-time. Her father's ideology is shown when he tells Mr. Escalante that she cannot go to college or finish high school and that no one else in her family went far in school and they are

doing fine. The faculty's ideology in this movie is quite frightening. When Mr. Escalante brings up the idea of teaching calculus, the principal laughs out loud at him because he does not think that these students have the skills to take calculus.

He also has many interactions with another teacher that constantly tells Mr. Escalante that these kids do not have the ability to do well and when the class is suspected of cheating she does not doubt for a second that they did it. The social solidarity in this movie exists between Mr. Escalante and his students. Mr. Escalante works together with his students to teach them calculus and pass the AP exam. He develops a bond with these kids and constantly tries to motivate them to believe that they can do it. Many of these kids come from broken homes and in taking an interest in their life it really makes a difference when you are getting them to learn (Teaching Today).

They show up for extra hours to learn from Mr. Escalante because they believe him when he tells them they can do it. Mr. Escalante is always there for them when they need him. When one of his students is told to drop out of school, he talks her father into letting her come back and in the end we see how much they like him when they present him with a gift for all that he had done for them. Since he believed in them, they believed in him. Historical Culture Historically, the culture is challenged by Mr. Escalante throughout the entire movie.

He comes to teach at a high school where they do not expect much from their students and he completely changes that. He tells the faculty to allow him to teach calculus, which had never been taught at their high school

before. He makes his students come to summer school, which had previously only been open for students who were behind in their classes. He constantly challenges the practices of this school and he succeeds in his challenges by expecting a great deal from these kids and not allowing them to give up because of their ethnicity or where they come from.

In keeping the standards high for his students he is the first to really challenge them and make them work hard, which is why he is so successful (Teaching Today). His constant motivation was the result of his attitude towards these students that they could succeed regardless of their background, which is why he was such an effective teacher (McCormack-Larkin, 410). Mr. Escalante did not let the past dictate what he did with his students. The most important thing that he did change was making these students think about making something of their life.

He was able to encourage the students to learn by the styles of his teaching. He was able to interest them in the subject. “ It is a teacher’s infectious enthusiasm for learning itself, as much as the student’s own curiosity about the teacher’s subject, that is apt to captivate a student” (Banner 11). Revolutionary Thinking This thinking by Mr. Escalante was revolutionary. He went against what everyone was saying and completely changed the way these kids thought about themselves. Paulo Friere speaks of revolution as, “ an equal effort by both sides leader and people not one more than the other” (Friere, 129).

Mr. Escalante is the leader and the students are the people because he presents his idea of teaching calculus and they follow him. What I learned “ Stand and Deliver” was an excellent film and has really impacted the way in

which I will teach when I become a teacher. Mr. Escalante always expected his students to do well even when others told him they could not. I feel that in teaching we have to expect our students to succeed if we want to be effective. It is my responsibility to convey my expectations to these students and encourage them to achieve this success.

Another lesson I have learned from “ Stand and Deliver” is to work hard in the classroom, but have fun while you are doing it. By having fun you build relationships with students and building relationships is very important in reaching students, especially those that are disadvantaged (Teaching Today). I will also remember to constantly use dialogue with my students because dialogue is used to learn and know (Freire, 17).

AcademicExpectations [pic] Jaime Escalante was a math teacher and throughout the movie he met many of Kentucky’s Academic Expectations.

Sarah is going into the field of Elementary Education and all of these Academic Expectations are going to be met by her as well. Program of Studies Dennis will be teaching at the high school level just like Mr. Escalante, but he will be teaching History instead of Math. Both will have to deal with Program of Studies and one that meets the needs of both is SS-H-WG-CS-4 (Teaching Tools). This Program of Studies states that students will analyze how regions and places can have distinct cultural characteristics (Teaching Tools). Mr.

Escalante was from the same place as his students and knew all about the culture of East Los Angeles and how it was mostly Hipic. While this did not necessarily deal with his teaching of math it dealt with his ability to interact with the students. Core Content for Assessment As an Elementary school

teacher, Sarah will be responsible for each content area, but social studies relates directly to Dennis as he is teaching history.

The core content area of social studies section SS-E-2. 1. 2 which says Elements of culture (e. g. language, music, art, dress, food, stories, folktales) serve to define specific groups and may result in unique perspectives, relates directly to the students in “ Stand and Deliver” (Teaching Tools). The students had to accept how their culture stood out from the surrounding areas. When they were accused of cheating on the test, they knew that their culture was perceived differently than if they would have been Caucasians. New Teacher Standard As Kentucky teachers, Sarah and Dennis will have to meet certain standards when teaching and in watching “ Stand and Deliver” we witnessed a very important standard.

New Teacher Standard 2: Creates/ Maintains Learning Climate, which states that, “ The teacher creates a learning climate that supports the development of student abilities to use communications skills, apply core concepts, become self-sufficient individuals, become responsible team members, think and solve problems, and integrate knowledge” (New Teacher Standards). Mr. Escalante gets the most out of his students because his classroom is a very effective climate. He supports them by constantly encouraging them and holding them accountable in everything they do.

Bibliography

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