

Comparison of american beauty and virgin suicides



Comparison of American Beauty and Virgin Suicides BY kg3468 American Beauty and The Virgin Suicides: Living in Suburbia “ I hadn’t realized how many arcane pursuits there were out in suburbia. ” This quote by Robert Drew, begins the mysteries that lie under the rugs in a suburban home. The movies, The Virgin Suicides and American Beauty, expose the elements of confinement, loneliness, and image, which most suburban families try to disguise. Behind the picket fences, and beautiful homes, lies a secret, which these movies reveal in such a manner it baffles people who have never been exposed to these realities before hand.

Confinement is found in both films and set the stage for what suburban life can feel like to those who live in it. Confinement is defined as the act of restraining a person’s liberty by confining them. The characters in both films seem to be confined by different things. The main character of American Beauty, Lester Burnham, feels as if things in life he should enjoy confine him. He struggles the most with his marriage to his wife Carolyn, but she is too confined by her self-image. Lester spends everyday with a family who thinks he is less of a man than he should be, and in a job that does not respect him.

It is as if these aspects of his life detain him, and he takes extreme measures to be rid of his ball and chain. For example, quitting his job, and finding one with less responsibility, not to mention blackmailing his boss to receive a year’s salary as a parting gift. Wife Carolyn, and daughter Jane, also shows to be confined by the suburban life. Carolyn’s worry of her self-image, supply her with the perception that he cannot be happy unless everything in her life displays the appearance of perfectly.

Jane feels the demands of her parent's as imprisonment, with her mom burdening her with her own issues of self-image. More than once in the movie you hear mother Carolyn, appalled but what her daughter is wearing, and tells Jane how horrible she looks. The Lisbon sisters deal with their own confinement, in the movie *The Virgin Suicides*. "For most children, mothers and fathers set boundaries; for the Elision's, it's iron bars". Even before the youngest sister committed suicide, their Catholic parent's confined the Elision's, even though it didn't seem like the father agreed to it.

After Lug returned home hours late from the homecoming dance, their house became a prison. It is not emphasized as much but the parent's did not do this to the girls out of cruelty but rather out of desperation. Mrs.. Lisbon was confined by the hurt she felt everyday, after losing her youngest daughter. The people in the neighborhood were judgmental as to what led to the death of Cecilia, which made her feel like even more of an outsider. In the movie, you see other moms together gossiping and drinking, never once see Mrs.. Lisbon with a group of girlfriends. Mr..

Lisbon is also confined by the death of his daughter, but also by Mrs.. Lisbon. She wears the pants in the family, and almost completely controls what their daughters do. With that said, he does convince her to let them go to the homecoming dance, but that was only because he was going to be chaperoning the dance himself. Suburban Lonely could be used to describe the characters in both films. Lester Burnham is obviously lonely, because his own wife and daughter want practically nothing to do with him. He hates how obsessed with image his wife is, and it shows up in their marriage.

They are never loving or romantic to one and other, and it quite obvious he does not love her anymore. He begins to fantasize about his daughter's friend Angela, and dreams of being intimate with her. It leads him to find a new focus in his life, to discover the happiness he is so urgently yearning for. Carolyn his wife feels like her husband is not good enough for her anymore, and this causes her loneliness. She peruses a sexual relationship with the real estate "king" to fill the hole that has plopped since being in an unromantic marriage. Jane plans on escaping from seclusion in the literal sense.

Her plan is to run away to New York with the boy next door, Rickety. She cannot deal with her family, and the dysfunction that goes along with them any longer and just wants to escape. To be rid of Lester and Carolyn would end her loneliness. Since Rickety is the only person she opens up too, she feels that escaping from her family and taking control of her own life, would be her best choice for her. The Elision's all have their own loneliness, in different ways. The girls are kept room society, and not allowed to partake in normal events that happen in teenage life.

They are kept home from school during the punishment that follows the school dance. Through the narrators eyes you can see the mystery that lies behind the closed doors of the Elision's house. No one really knows the girls personally except each other, not even their parent's. Lug deals with her issues by having random sexual encounters on the rooftops for all of neighborhood to see, and to blatantly defy her parent's. While Cecilia ends hers by committing suicide. Mr.. Lisbon seems so UT of it and lonely in one scene as he is talking to the plants while waters them.

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Both Lisbon parent's do not seem to have much of a social life; this to makes them have feelings of separation from normal society. In the end, the "solution" to the girls' loneliness is to just end it all together, suicide. Image is an important role in suburban life. When you drive into the neighborhoods you see beautiful homes, with perfectly mowed lawns. Inside the house, is like a display of your family, so most of the time the home can feel like a museum to those who live in it. In American Beauty, Carolyn is overwhelmed with the image her family portrays.

She does not want others to see them for who they really are. She goes out of her way to make the yard, filled with roses, look beautiful. The décor of her house is fancy and it is as if she is just trying to fit in to the standards of the rest of her neighborhood or "keeping up with the Jones". In one scene, Lester tries to get Carolyn to loosen up and rekindle their love, but she panics when she sees that his beer may spill onto the couch, and the moment is ruined. Carolyn also tries to control what Jane wears so that she does not give off the wrong impression of their family.

Her obsession with image pushes her daughter and husband away. In The Virgin Suicides image is shown after the death of their first daughter. The priest even tells them that he listed the death as an accident, as if to protect the families image. The Elision's are not a rich family like the Abraham's, so you do not see the same fretting of self-image. The surrounding neighbors all worry about their own image, they all have magnificent homes with fancy cars, as the girls point out on the way to the dance. American Beauty and The homes.

That people are too wrapped up in appearances to notice what is really going on behind the closed doors of a suburban home. Also that people will put up with things that make them unhappy just to fit into the social norms of society, because divorcing or talking about their problems could just make things worse, but most of all make them look bad to society. Both Lester and the five Lisbon girls find their own escapes, but it is not in the most ideal of manners. These movies tell that confinement, loneliness, and self-image, are not a way to live life.

Worrying too much that other people think in the end, may ruin what a household has worked so hard at creating, a family. These films remind us that life is meant to live to its fullest, in the happiest of ways. People are only given once chance to live their life, and living it in the ways these families did may not be the most appealing of ways to experience life. Trapped behind the closed doors of suburbia, always trying to keep up with the Jones.

Works Cited Copula, Sofia, Dir. *The Virgin Suicides*. Paramount Classics, 1999. Film *Mended*, Sam, Dir. *American Beauty*. Trademarks, 1999. Film