

# Analysis of the film eternal sunshine of the spotless mind



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1. 14 December 2006 Analysis of the Film 'Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind Released in 2004, with a screenplay by Charlie Kaufman, this movie operates on many levels. Many may consider it of the romantic love story genre, but it has elements of black comedy, drama, science fiction, surrealism and realism. All combine to show that its overarching theme is love, a love which accepts the beloved, warts and all, and also, the journey made to reach this point.

The essential meaning of the movie may be summed up in the closing lines:

" JOEL: I don't see anything I don't like about you.

CLEMENTINE: But you will! But you will and I will get bored with you and feel trapped, because that's what happens with me.

JOEL: Okay

CLEMENTINE: Okay

JOEL: Okay [END]

Using the device of a reverse narrative, with one of the main protagonists, Joel Barish taking an active role as narrator, the action deals with love found, lost, found and lost, then finally and hopefully, discovered as everlasting. The story, moving back and forth in time, which is surreal, tells how Joel and Clementine have become unhappy and have reached the end of their relationship; he says she talks too much, accuses her of having sex with anyone, while she has had enough of trying to know and understand him. After a fight, during which Clementine tells him of Lacuna, and how she has had her memory erased, he is so angry that he sets this operation up for himself. Joel then takes the audience back and forth as the memories are erased, realizing that he does love her and trying to save his memories by hiding them amongst those of his childhood.

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Clementine supports him, trying to help him escape. When this is unsuccessful, he awakes from the operation and feels he has to go to Montauk, where they first met. Strangely, she is there searching for him. Joel could be described as a sensitive, introverted man, with some judgemental aspects to his character, but he wants to be understood and fears betrayal. In contrast, Clementine is outgoing, wants fun and enjoyment, is excitable and impulsive, yet she seeks the security of being loved for herself, and her overriding fear is of being judged. With such a combination, it would seem there is no hope for them. At this meeting, though they do not remember each other, they fall in love again. This suggests that deep down, below even the subconscious level, beyond memory, they have a connection which nothing can break. When they go home and play the audiotapes from the erasures, each discovers the hurtful and bitter things said about the other, and it appears they will separate. But the climax of the film shows that changes have taken place in both of them which allow them to choose to stay together, to work at acceptance, to take a chance.

Though there are many subplots, such as Mary and Howard, Patrick and Clementine, and so forth, this is always going to be Joel's and Clementine's story. Though Mary's action drives the drama forward, for by sending out the files and destroying Lacuna, she allows Joel and Clementine to examine their relationship and make their decision based on truth and not illusion.

It is worth mentioning how colour plays a role in helping the audience understand where matters are in terms of feelings, time and action. For example, the hair dye choices of Clementine reflect her feelings at given stages, like blue after the erasure, suggesting sadness and red when in the <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-the-film-eternal-sunshine-of-the-spotless-mind/>

first passionate days of her affair. When she relaxes into it, orange is her favorite, which might be a deliberate connection to the orange clementine fruit, sweet, juicy and nourishing, which could be how she perceives herself. The movie might be understood to have allegorical meanings in relation to an audience's own experiences. People may well have been through similar break-ups, and want to remove all

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memory of their 'ex'. The methods to forget here might be science fiction, but the reality of putting the past behind you, moving on, being cynical and so forth is a fact of life. The message is that this is virtually impossible.

Kaufman has used classical references to express universal truths and meanings about life, love and relationships. Mary with her Bartlett's Quotations is the 'voice' for his neat touches of irony and philosophical suggestions. Think how well this quote from Nietzsche's

'Beyond Good and Evil' fits with the themes:

" Blessed are the forgetful: for they get the better even of their blunders."

And of course, Pope's poem, 'Eloisa to Abelard' encompasses the title and the whole essence of Joel and Clementine.

" Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind

Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd."

The climax of the movie shows the acceptance of each other, the journey and changes each have experienced. The audience has been a party to the personal growth of two people who really do love each other and have come to see a way forward. This is what makes the film so appealing, there is something we can all relate to, a the hope of better times ahead.

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