

Is the overall mood of  
"billy elliot" one of  
optimism essay  
sample



## **Is the overall mood of “ Billy Elliot” one of optimism Essay Sample**

The film “ Billy Elliot” is about a young boy who wants to be a dancer not a boxer, as his Dad wants him to be. Billy will do anything so he can dance and go to London. The story is set during the miner’s strike, which provides the backdrop to the film. The main themes in the film concern gender stereotyping, how people think that dancing is for girls and boxing and wrestling are for boys. There is also a different type of stereotyping, that working class kids don’t do ballet. It is also about escapism because the family are short of money and they have problems at home so the ballet for Billy is a way for him to get away from his problems.

I am going to explain why I think that the overall mood of the film is one of optimism. I am going to this by looking at the relationships that he has with his family and friends, how the political background is portrayed, the comical moments and the main scenes that are optimistic and contrast these with the pessimistic scenes. Throughout the film Billy encounters different reactions from his family and friends. Some of these reactions portray an optimistic mood for example the reactions of his teacher, Mrs Wilkinson and his friend, Michael.

Others are pessimistic especially the reactions from his Dad and brother. Billy knows that his Dad does not want him to dance so he hides it from him. Billy’s Dad finds out when he walks into the boxing hall to see where Billy is and sees him in the middle of all these girl dancing. He is very angry and storms in and shouts “ YOU, OUT NOW! “. Billy’s Dad is angry and

disappointed with Billy because he feels that he has betrayed him. This is a pessimistic scene because it makes you feel that he is not going to be able to dance again.

Later the family are sat eating and they have a conversation about Billy's dancing. His dad starts saying things like " lads do football or boxing or wrestling, not flaming ballet" showing that he thinks that ballet is just for girls. Billy tries to convince his Dad that ballet is as good as boxing. He says " Its not just poofs Dad, some ballet dancers are fit as athletes" trying to show his Dad that it's not just a girls sport. His dad is not having any of it and says, " From now on you can forget about the fucking ballet! ".

This must be the very lowest point for Billy as he has been trying to hide his ballet from his Dad and his Dad's reaction confirms what he expected. At this point both Billy and the audience are feeling very pessimistic. Unlike his family, Billy's teacher Mrs Wilkinson supports Billy though the whole of the film, she is the only one that believes in him from the beginning. She shows him that she does by saying that she would teach him for free and on his own after school. I think that he would have probably given up if Mrs Wilkinson was not there helping him and supporting him.

She supports him though all of the problems that he has at home and with his friends. At the beginning of the film the only really optimistic scenes are the ones with Mrs Wilkinson. These scenes have happy, up-beat music, bright lighting and show Billy doing things he likes, especially dancing. In contrast the early scenes with his family often have dark lighting, depressing scenery, with aggressive music and so are more pessimistic. His friends have

faith in him as well; especially Michael who has always thought that he is no good at boxing and that he should do something else.

When Michael finds out that Billy is dancing I think that he is happy although in the film you don't really see him that much and when you do Billy and him don't talk much about it. But at the end when it is Christmas Michael asks Billy to show him how to dance. Michael at the end of the film also goes to see Billy perform and he says that he wouldn't miss it for anything. Another person who supports Billy is the boxing coach who gives Billy the 50ps that he gets from the kids for the boxing and they support him when he is waiting to hear if he has got in to the Royal Ballet School.

It is not until the end of the film that the scenes with his family become more optimistic when his Dad begins to support Billy. A good example of this is when he goes back to the mine so that he can pay for Billy to go to London and be a ballet dancer, but it all goes wrong when Tony (his brother) sees him on the bus going back to the mine and tries to stop him. This is a very emotional scene and his dad says things like " Its for wee Billy" and then Tony says, " He's only 11 for fucks sake, a fucking little kid".

From being dead against Billy doing ballet, his Dad completely changes to going out of his way to help Billy. He sells his wife's things (her necklace and watch and ring), even though it must be very painful for him, to try and get some more money for Billy to go to London. Billy's brother Tony does not support Billy at the beginning of the film because like lots of brothers and sisters they don't get on very well. This must be very difficult for Billy as it

seems as if everyone is against him. At this point it is difficult to be optimistic about Billy's chances of carrying on with his ballet.

Tony's attitude changes during the film and near the end when his dad crossed the picket line, when he brakes down crying he seems to be feeling sympathy for Billy. When he is at the bus stop waiting for Billy to get on the bus he says, " I'll miss ya" as the bus is pulling off. In the scene when they are going to see Billy dance, Tony demonstrates how he is proud of him because he doesn't want to be late for the show and he tries to get his dad to hurry up but he will not walk faster. The fact that Billy's brother and Dad now are proud and supportive makes the film much more optimistic.

The film is set during the miners strike. This is important background to the film as it shows the conflict in the whole community and this is reflected in the atmosphere in Billy's house. The family are often angry and take it out on each other by arguing and shouting. The miners strike is portrayed as a tough man's world which makes the fact that Billy is doing something that his Dad thinks is " girly" seem even worse. This is shown by the contrast between the scenes when Billy is dancing and when his Dad is on the picket line.

The strike also causes other problems at home because they haven't got that much money to support the whole family. Because his Dad and brother spend most of their time on the picket line, Billy has to look after his Gran and so is always tired and doesn't have much time to himself. All these things mean that Billy's home life is not very happy. Dancing is a way he can escape from all this and feel that there are better things in life. As well as the

reactions of the people in the film comic moments are also used to show optimism and pessimism.

In the film there are a few comical moments but the main one that runs through the film is when his grandma says " I could have been a professional dancer! ". This is funny because when she says it the rest of the family ignore her or they tell her to shut up but she carries on saying it. Although this is comical it also helps make the film seem more optimistic because she is showing support for Billy. There are other comical moments, for example when Billy is trying to do one of the dancing moves out of the book he takes from the library and he falls over.

He also tries to do a pirouette in the bathroom so his Dad doesn't see him and the first time he falls into the wash basin and the second time he falls into the bath with water in it. Later on in the film another comic moment is when Michael answers the door and he is dressed in his sisters dress. These comical moments help to lighten the mood of the film and make it seem more optimistic even though many of them are about very serious issues like this last example. The music in the film is used to create different atmospheres for the different scenes in the film.

You can tell if it is optimistic when the music is happy, jolly and if it is pessimistic the music is dull, deep and it portrays a feeling of sadness and unhappy thoughts. An example of optimism is when Billy is running and dancing at the same time, after he has managed to do a pirouette for the first time. The happy, up-beat music in this scene is helping to create a happy mood to reflect that Billy is doing something that he wants to do but

as soon as he gets to the house and shuts the door the music stops to show that the dancing ends there.

An example of where music is used to portray a feeling of pessimism is when he is walking along the street to see Mrs Wilkinson and they play " Children of the Revolution". The use of this song shows that he is going against his Dads wishes. This piece of music is also an example of where the song is carefully chosen to match the lyrics, as well as the tempo of the music, to what is happening on the screen. Another example of using both lyrics and music in this way is " I like to Boogie" when Billy and Mrs Wilkinson are dancing together.

This is a very optimistic moment as it portrays both Billy and Mrs Wilkinson doing something that makes them feel good and also shows their close, supportive relationship. I think the ending is the most optimistic bit of the whole film when Billy's family have all gone to see him because they are so happy that he is a dancer. This is the complete opposite of what it was like at the start of the film when it looked like Billy's dream would never happen. At the same time as Billy is becoming a successful dancer everything else is going wrong for his family because the strike has collapsed and the pits are closing.

This helps to show that even though some things are ending, new beginnings are starting too and there is hope for all the family. The very last scene illustrates this when his Dad and other family and friends are proudly sitting in the audience to watch his first professional performance. The fact that this scene depicts Swan Lake is significant because it shows Billy growing up into

a "swan" and jumping for joy when he leaps into the air. He is also playing a role that is usually played by a woman and this reminds us of all the prejudice he has faced and overcome.

In conclusion I think that the overall mood of the film "Billy Elliot" is one of optimism. I think this because Billy succeeds against all of the odds and becomes a dancer. He does this without letting his family and friends, his background and the fact that he is a boy get in the way of him learning how to dance. The film shows that if you are determined enough you can succeed at whatever you want to do. I have described how the relationships he has with his family and friends, the music, the comical moments and the end all help to portray an overall feeling of optimism even though the film isn't always about happy things.

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