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English 15

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Seeing Through Different Eyes

This is a tale of five completely different kids from different families, cliques, and lifestyles that came together in the most unusual way on Saturday detention. “The Breakfast Club” tells a story of the lives of five complex characters “the brain” Brian Johnson, “the athlete” Andrew Clark, “the basket case” Alison Reynolds, “the princess” Claire Standish, and “the criminal” John Bender. These kids all get in trouble for one reason or another and get stuck with Saturday detention at Glenbrook High School. They have to bear each other for eight long Saturday hours because of their various “crimes” they committed and could not get out of. The movie focuses on their conversations during their detention and the conclusions they make about each other by the end of the story. After viewing this film the main focus is on class in youth culture as in the different social stratifications like the athlete, brain, princess, basket case and criminal and how this translates to class outside of teen culture as in the filthy rich, the educated, the regular middle class, and the poor low income people. The “Breakfast Club” displays class differences in a variety of ways such as the characters themselves, their clothes, the plot of the story, and setting. The characters in “The Breakfast Club” demonstrate differences in class that go way beyond class systems in teen life but in adult life as well.

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The character “criminal” John Bender is destroying a book in the library because that is where detention is held and Andrew “athlete” feels that he is obligated to be the “savior” against Bender in every way possible and gets angry at what Bender is saying and doing. Bender then says something very significant he says to Andrew “I don’t even speak your language”. This comment is very significant because it underhandedly refers to class because the characters are so similar but so different because they come from two totally different places. The genius of this film is the fact that these teens all label each other and associate names to what they supposedly know about each other which is nothing. However, they never take the moment to look at themselves and how they look to everyone else. The writer Cicely Richard wrote a article analyzing the movie and said that “The different characters define themselves and one another by the labels they are given” meaning they define each other by what other people think they are then what they actually are mentally and personally. Also another significant aspect of the movie is that in the beginning until about the middle toward the end of the movie the names of the characters were not introduced. The characters are known for the main part of the movie as the labels the movie put in front of them before their names. This is very profound if you think about it because in life how many times do people label each before knowing anything about the other person and place them in categories based on nothing real without knowing what’s inside. The dialogue in this movie said directly or indirectly shows how people separate each other in to different classes without knowing people much deeper than the surface.

The clothes they were wearing in this movie clearly illustrate the separation in the different classes. For example, the athlete Andrew is wearing a school wrestling jacket with jeans

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and sneakers signaling that he is the jock and not to be messed with. Another example is that Brian the brain and he is dressed very conservatively with a nice collared shirt and slacks and neat displaying his stereotype the nerd because “nerds” are known for dressing like that. Additionally, the character the basket case Allison stereotypically speaking looked like a basket case everything from her hair to her clothes and her mannerisms. Critic Fredrik Fevang said “but then you’d overlook the fact that these are high school kids that very often find themselves voluntarily or not in a role that they or their fellow students feel fit their appearance and social position. This quote from the review is exactly the point that needs to be made. The point is that the students but themselves in the role of the stereotype by using their appearance to portray that even the least likely character like John Bender who is anti mainstream wears clothes that fit him into a social position based on the “rebel-like” attire he wears. The clothing worn in this film is very significant when it comes to class because their clothes help tell the audience who they were in the social hierarchy.

The students at Glenbrook High that are attending Saturday detention are there for specific reasons or crimes that they committed on school property. The issue of class is so heavy illustrated throughout this movie it’s even displayed through the reasons why they are in detention. The writer of this film John Hughes brilliantly included this issue in such an insignificant aspect when you first look at it. For instance, the movie is about their time in detention and the focus is on time spent in detention rather then what they did to get in there but John Hughes delicately includes class. For instance, Claire the princess is in detention for two reasons the first is for her actual crime which was ditching school for shopping and the second

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reason was her daddy couldn’t get her out of the detention. Her princess attitude is even displayed in crime she complains to her father asking him why she couldn’t get out of detention and normally a kid would get yelled at for getting in detention in the first place her daddy is going to reward her with a gift for getting through the detention which is ridiculous but it gracefully demonstrates her princess role in the movie. The movie goes on to express the characters in a different light then their original character saying they are more then what people see. Nevertheless in reality and real life it’s much header to be scene differently especially in teen class systems. Film critic Matt Norris mentioned that “Most kids while saying they want to be seen as more than a stereotype will never take the risk”. The class differences in this movie represent real life in such a real way because in real life a lot of the time people fight to be seen as more but in the end they will always be put into a stereotype.

To conclude, “The Breakfast Club” displays class differences in a variety of ways such as the characters themselves, their clothes, the plot of the story, and setting. The characters in “The Breakfast Club” demonstrate differences in class that go way beyond class systems in teen life but in adult life as well. The dialogue in this movie said directly or indirectly shows how people separate each other in to different classes without knowing people much deeper than the surface. The clothes they were wearing in this movie clearly illustrate the separation in the different classes. The issue of class is so heavy illustrated throughout this movie it’s even displayed through the reasons why they are in detention. This simple teen movie portrays American society in a dark light meaning the fact that people classify others based out outward appearances as a part of life and Americans have gotten so used to it that its even in the media. Life is more than what people see so Americans need to take a step back and start looking at people through different eyes.