



Camden Council Library Services – Movie Club

The Breakfast Club (1985)

Discussion Questions

1. Each of the characters in [The Breakfast Club](#) represents a different stereotype. What are they, and are they 'realistic'? Are these stereotypes imposed or are they masks adopted by the characters? Is there a difference between the stereotype and the mask?
2. Do they alter the stereotype or masks they wear over the course of the film? If so, what contributes to the changes that occur with the characters? If not, how do they maintain their original ideas despite the highly emotional crucible of the library?
3. The students begin to form connections with each other and adopt roles within the group. Two relationships form and Brian becomes a mouth piece by writing his 1,000 word essay on the subject of "who do you think you are?" in which he gives the group the title of 'the Breakfast Club'. What roles do the five students begin to play as they bond? Are the roles in keeping with their stereotypes/masks?
4. Whose confession/reconciliation was the most affecting? Were there any that you felt were too self-absorbed, too indulgent to really be a cathartic? Was this intentional on the part of Hughes (to portray it as self-indulgent) or is that just the way you interpreted the scene?
5. Are you surprised by the confessions? That is, are the stories they tell what you expect, do they strike you as familiar, or are you surprised by their struggles? Why so? Does this detract from or add to the film?
6. "These kids have nothing in common, and they have an aggressive desire not to have anything in common. In ways peculiar to teenagers, who sometimes have a studious disinterest in anything that contradicts their self-image, these kids aren't even curious about each other." (Ebert, [Review](#)). Is this still a relevant view of teenagers? Why? Are the people or the film self-indulgent?
7. The characters discuss whether or not they are going to speak to or even acknowledge each other after the day. How did you respond to that discussion? Who was being more honest, why? Would some of the characters gain from acknowledging, would others lose out?

8. Adults are represented negatively in the film. Are there any exceptions? What makes them stand out among the adults? How does the film reinforce the negative view of adults? Is it a distrust, dislike, hatred that encapsulates the relationship between the teens and the adults? With the two adults that we really get to see, Vernon and Carl, does our perception of them change over the course of the film? Do we share or empathise with Vernon's statements to Carl in the basement about 'these kids'?

9. *...and these children that you spit on,
as they try to change their worlds are
immune to your consultations. They're
quite aware of what they're going through...*

- David Bowie

This is one of many John Hughes films that focus on the teen experience of the 1980s. Other notable examples are [Sixteen Candles](#) (1984), [Weird Science](#) (1985), [Pretty in Pink](#) (1986), and [Ferris Bueller's Day Off](#) (1986). Have you seen any of these? Are they simply the same story over and over, or do they focus on the nuance of the 1980s teen experience? How do they differ in what or how they represent this experience? Has the film dated? Is it still relevant?

10. Many classify *The Breakfast Club* as the definitive teen movie of the 1980s (Crook, [Review](#)), making it a 'generation defining' film. How does *Breakfast Club* stand up to other John Hughes films from the 1980s? What other generational films can you think of (perhaps of your generation)? How are they similar or different to *The Breakfast Club*? Some films that commonly come up are [Rebel without a cause](#) (1955), [The Graduate](#) (1967), [Bonnie and Clyde](#) (1967), [Easy Rider](#) (1969), [A Clockwork Orange](#) (1971), [The Big Chill](#) (1983), [This is Spinal Tap](#) (1984), [Fight Club](#) (1999), [The Social Network](#) (2010). See also: '[The Social Network](#)' and [12 More Movies That Defined a Generation](#); Susman, Gary, [10 Movies That Defined Their Generations](#); Zara, Christopher, [The Best Generation X Movies Ever: 7 Totally Zeitgeisty Films That Aren't On Your Sucky Listicle](#).