



Camden Council Library Services – Movie Club

Edward Scissorhands (1991)

Discussion Questions

1. Edward is the outsider—he has no connection with the town apart from Peg who finds him in the castle. Everything about Edward is unusual, even his family structure. The rest of the town are nuclear families and close friends who attend communal barbeques and Christmas parties. Edward's only 'family' is his 'father' with no siblings, mother or any other familial bonds. How is Edward represented as an outsider? What visual and personal elements distinguish Edward from those surrounding him? Is he the only truly individual person in the town?
2. The novelty of Edward's hands and his abilities are what originally attracts the town to him, but also what they denounce him for later. How does this transformation of opinion occur within the town? How do the town's people 'justify' their change of perception of Edward?
3. On top of his isolation, Edward is also unfinished—his scissor hands were place holders until actual hands could be made. These more than anything came to shock, dazzle, and frighten the town residents. Yet, they are also what came to define Edward. What does this say about otherness, the outsider, and conformity? Parallels have been drawn between Edward and Tim Burton, Edward being "Burton's surreal self-portrait of himself" (Gleiberman, [Edward Scissorhands \[Review\]](#), 1990). Is this an accurate reading of the film?
4. The town is a parody of suburban life. What sort of clichés and stereotypes does Burton conjure to create this town? The most striking and ironic feature is the abundance of artificial matter within the town—topiary shrubs and plastic Christmas Trees over organic plants; gaudy colours; outlandish outfits. How does Burton contrast the artificiality of Edward with the artificiality of the town?
5. How does the film use and ultimately view gossip? From the moment Edward arrives in town the phones start ringing and the tongues start wagging. And this continues throughout his stay. We also see the women of the town pressure Peg into holding a barbeque for the town to meet Edward by accusing her of 'hiding' her guest from them, considering this incredibly rude and only pardonably through hosting the barbeque. What other social sins are committed in the film? Who are the guilty party?

6. How did you feel about Jim dying? Critics have asserted that it changed the tone of the film and was out of character for Edward. What is your perception of his death? What bearing did it have on the story?
7. The police psychiatrist tells us that Edward, being raised in isolation, has not developed a moral compass. This is confirmed when Bill tries to teach him ethics at the dinner table. Edward says he would give the money to his loved ones (the wrong answer) but Kim says she would do the same. However, she herself was guilty of not confessing her actions in getting Edward arrested. She also becomes complicit in Jim's murder. How does the film present ethics and morality? What does it say about Edward's outlook on the world in contrast to that of the town? Whose morality is supported in the end?
8. What is the significance of the snow Edward creates? It, like himself, is artificial but then so is the town for which he makes it. It is implied at the end that most of the town is oblivious to Edward being the source of the snow. Do we think the town knows about Edward and decided to ignore him as long as he stays away?