



Camden Council Library Services – Movie Club

Planet of the apes (1968)

Discussion Questions

A fun quote to begin:

From Robert Ebert's original [review](#), April 15, 1968:

It is not great, or significant, or profound. Occasionally it is distractingly cute, as when the apes rewrite one cliché after another: 'man see, man do', for example, or 'To apes, all men look alike.'

Ebert concludes:

There are some good action sequences; some amusing twists; some easily digestible sociological and philosophical points, and a thoroughly satisfying surprise ending. It is quickly paced, completely entertaining, and its philosophical pretensions don't get in the way.

1. The design of Ape City is different in the novel than it is in the film. In the novel the city is a highly sophisticated, technological world. In the film it is more primitive technologically, with a basic style and layout. The change was done due to budget, the futuristic setting being deemed too costly. How does this change of set design impact the story? Think about things like believability, as well as Cornelius' discovery in the Forbidden Zone.
2. Speech is emphasized as a sign of intelligence. In both the novel and the film humans have lost their ability to speak, and with it their ability to reason. This makes Taylor and Ulysse (the protagonist of the novel) stand out. What is the link between speech and intelligence/reason? Is there a link between speech and a place in society?
3. The apes exist in a caste system: gorillas are workers and warriors, chimpanzees are intellectuals, and orangutans are bureaucrats and political/religious leaders. What are the characteristics of each of these castes? Are they accurately conceived and realised? Are there parallels in 1960s or our own society? Where do humans fall into the caste system of the apes?
4. Zaius informs a gorilla guard that Zira is trying to see if humans can be domesticated. This receives a hearty laugh. Why would she be interested in domesticating humans? Is this a cover for other reasons that cannot be shared with the likes of Zaius, or is Zaius hiding the truth from the guard? What is the real goal of her research? What, if any, parallel exists with our society?

5. What are the flaws with the trial scene? What are the charges against Zira, Cornelius, and Taylor? To what extent does Zaius wield control or manipulate the proceedings? Why would they not allow Taylor to speak?

6. Zaius claims he was aware of the past when human's ruled. He also makes every attempt to cover or explain away Taylor's 'peculiarities'. He is also concurrently the Minister of Science and the Chief Defender of the Faith. Towards the end of the film he tells Taylor, "There is no contradiction between faith and science... true science!" What are the links between his actions and his roles? Does one title contradict the other? Is his statement to Taylor accurate?

7. Before the final reveal, Zaius warns Taylor that he may not like what he finds further in the Forbidden Zone. He also refers to man as a walking pestilence and that he had dreaded the coming of Taylor for his whole life. How is this similar to Taylor's misanthropic speech at the beginning of the film? Despite Taylor having similar views of humanity to those of Zaius he seems to gain a sense of value in his species, most clearly shown with his anguish at the fates of his fellow crew and his affections towards Nova. This is changed with the irony of the final scene, where he is confronted with the final confirmation of his opening speech. How can we account for his change of perception?