

## Let The Right One In Study Notes



**Directed by:** Tomas Alfredson

**Certificate:** 15

**Running time:** 114 mins

### **Synopsis:**

Terrorised by bullies, lonely twelve-year-old Oskar befriends a new neighbour, a mysterious young girl whose arrival coincides with a series of gruesome deaths and attacks. Though Oskar realises that she's a vampire, his friendship with her is stronger than his fear. Swedish filmmaker Tomas Alfredson weaves friendship, rejection and loyalty into a disturbing, darkly atmospheric yet unexpectedly tender tableau of adolescence.

## Genre pleasures

It is often said that the horror genre has one of the most dedicated fan bases, drawing audiences time and time again.

1. Would you describe yourself as a horror fan? If so, does this identity mean that horror films from around the world are equally accessible to you, or do language differences present a barrier to your viewing experience?
2. How does the trailer encourage you to watch the film in the cinema?

One of the pleasures of genre films for the audience is the recognition of the familiar. Familiar conventions are drawn on and played out during the course of the film. The horror genre is no exception, with a wide range of conventions that are easily identified with horror. Looking for the familiar is only part of the pleasure: in order to retain audience interest, any film that is clearly working within a genre also needs to combine familiar elements in a new way so that audiences feel they are watching something fresh.

3. Using *Let The Right One In* as a focus, think about the horror conventions that are familiar to you, and anything you think is different or original in the way that these conventions are presented in *Let the Right One In*. Make reference to key scenes to support your points.

Familiar conventions	Different approaches

## Outsiders

Oskar and Eli find themselves drawn together, as they are both outsiders in one way or another. We see that Eli's resistance to the life she has to lead causes some friction between her and her father, and we might speculate that she is only an outsider because she has to be, just as Oskar is isolated because of the bullying that he experiences.

We see from the opening scene that Oskar is desperate to get revenge on the bullies who torment him. Eli sees Oskar act out how he would like to behave towards them, but Oskar doesn't have the courage to take real action. As the friendship between Eli and Oskar develops we see how they become increasingly important to one another. Eli, concerned by the scratch on Oskar's face, encourages him to fight back, offering to help him; yet, at this stage in the narrative Oskar is not fully aware of what Eli's offer entails.

4. How is the sense of 'being an outsider' represented visually? Think about character relationships and behaviour, and elements of mise-en-scène to develop your response.

## Narrative and representations of the vampire

The vampire is a familiar figure on the big screen. Numerous interpretations of the undead span the history of cinema from Nosferatu (Murnau:1922) to Christopher Lee and Hammer in their 1958 version of Dracula (Fisher: 1958) to some of Hollywood's leading men taking on the role of the vampire in 1994 with Interview with the Vampire (Jordan: 1994). The vampire remains popular with audiences, with each interpretation inflecting the genre with something new and arguably, of its time, for contemporary audiences.

Eli is a recognisable part of this tradition, with aspects of her behaviour clearly identifying her as a vampire. However the success of film internationally might be due to how audiences relate to her.

5. Think about your responses to the characters. Did you like them? Why, or why not?
6. Which aspects of the narrative appealed to you?
7. Think about how Eli's relationship with Oskar could be considered unusual for this genre. Is it possible to imagine a version of the film where Eli was not a vampire, and if so what other aspects of the narrative would you need to change or develop?

## **At Home with Vampires**

8. During the course of the film we see a very domestic view of vampire life. How does this domestic representation of the vampire impact on the sense of fear generated at various points in the film? Are we encouraged to be scared of the figure of the vampire?

Despite being a vampire Eli in many ways appears to be a typical adolescent, just as we see arguments between Oskar and his parents we also see Eli arguing with her father.

9. Consider the way in which the character of Eli's father is represented in the film. Does this conform to or subvert the familiar stereotype of the vampire? What does his behaviour mean for Eli?
10. How did you respond to the relationship between Eli and her father at different points in the film? Select two contrasting scenes and explore the emotions evoked, considering how the audience's emotional response is manipulated, and how this informs the narrative. Where do your sympathies lie?