

The Scouting Book For Boys

Study Notes



Directed by: Tom Harper
Certificate: 15
Running time: 92 mins
Release date: 19 March 2010

Synopsis

David and Emily are best friends who have grown up together in a Caravan holiday park. They are inseparable but David has never quite expressed his true feelings for Emily. When Emily's alcoholic mother loses custody of her, Emily decides to run away rather than have to leave the caravan park for good. With David's help, she hides in a cave on the nearby Norfolk coast. Soon, however, David finds out some shattering secrets about his best friend and also has to fend off the police who are launching a massive manhunt. David slowly realises that his childhood is over and begins to dangerously crumble under the weight of the revelations and responsibility.

Before Viewing: Intertextuality

Different audiences may have had a variety of expectations for this film because of the way it was promoted and because of the prominent creative individuals involved such as Thomas Turgoose (famous for his roles in the Shane Meadows' films *This Is England* and *Somers Town*, as well as *Eden Lake*) and Jack Thorne (writer of episodes of TV series' *Shameless*, *Cast-Offs* and *Skins*).

- *The Scouting Book For Boys* was labelled 'a twisted Romeo and Juliet for the Skins generation' (Jason Solomons – The Observer) on its trailer, posters and DVD cover. What positive or negative impact do you feel the reference to *Skins* may have had on the expectation and reception of the film?
- Because of the highly charged roles Turgoose had been involved with up until this film, does his presence bring with it any expectations?

After Viewing: The Opening Sequence

The opening sequence of the film brings to mind many typical British attitudes, activities and cultural pastimes.

- Recall the opening sequence. What British idiosyncrasies and stereotypes does the sequence reflect?
- Is the sequence in any way ironic or a parody? Consider this in relation to the pre-credits sequence, the rest of the film and the song that plays over the images.
- At this point in the film, what tone did you expect the rest of the story to have?

Representation, Narrative and Character

The story takes place in a distinctly British setting: a caravan holiday park. Some complained that the film takes a dim view of people who permanently live on caravan sites and that the secondary characters are lazily stereotyped.

Now answer the following questions:

- Search online for some contrasting reviews of the film. Where was the film praised, and where was it critiqued, and by whom? Which responses seem most in line with your own feelings about the film? What do you disagree with in the reviews you have read?
- How are adults and officials represented in the script, the camera movement/placement and the mise-en-scène? Think specifically about Emily's mother and father, David's father, Steve and Detective Inspector Kertzer.
- Do you feel the representation of the police is problematic? If so, why and how? Could a careless representation of the police in the media be dangerous in the wake of real life abductions and murders?
- How pivotal is the caravan park setting to the narrative and the character's histories and motivations?
- Are David's character development and final irrational decisions believable? How would you describe your feelings towards David and Emily?

Activity – The Ending

The ending of the film has been both praised and criticised – Brave. Uncompromising. Indifferent. Anti-climactic. Even the film's fondest critics feel that the relatively slender running time meant that character development has been sacrificed, especially in the last 30 minutes.

- How did the film's climax leave you feeling?
- Devise an alternative ending for the film in the form of a script, a treatment or a filmed sequence. Pay attention to the unique musical and visual style of the film. What changes will you make? Will you give closure to more of the characters?
- Film some DVD extra 'Deleted Scenes' involving David that reveal more of his motivations for doing what he does to Emily.

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