

Abstract Assignment: Bad Teacher is Bad for Teachers

COME 124 Principles of Mass Communication: Abstract Assignment

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Summary

In this article, Dalton presents an argument that the movie, *Bad Teacher*, which is a 2011 (romantic) comedy is ultimately a bad movie for teachers and their profession. She claims people who view this movie will be convinced that all teachers are bad and our schools' educational systems are broken and corrupt at all levels. Dalton is a scholar in critical media studies, with 20 years experience studying how teachers are represented in popular culture; and examines how depictions of teachers impact teachers and students.

Hollywood, through film and television has created both good and bad educators that normally have predictable stereotypes and actions relating to social class, race, and sexual orientation. Typically, there is a difference on how teachers are depicted on television versus film. However this film challenges these normal preconceptions. Dalton compares this film to the many other teacher films she has studied. It is not normal for the main character to be a "bad" teacher; normally the main character is a "good" teacher that either has to deal with a poor educational system and/or a "bad" teacher or teachers. This film, according to Dalton, depicts all teachers as bad; and they are working in a corrupted educational system.

Dalton reviews and recaps the entire movie, including all the actions of each character, she examines the film's plot, how the main characters are depicted and filmed and the aesthetic treatment of the story.

Here is my summary of the movie. Cameron Diaz plays a very bad teacher named Elizabeth Halsey. The whole story revolves around her. She is basically a gold digger who has no interest in being a teacher. At the beginning of the movie she is leaving her teaching job at the end of the school year because financially she doesn't need it. She is engaged to a man who has money. However, the engagement is broken off by the soon to be mother-in-law who suspects Elizabeth is only in the relationship for the money. Broke, jobless and homeless she goes back to teaching with a new goal to raise money to get bigger boobs in order to find a sugar daddy to take care of her so she can leave her teaching job. She has no interest in teaching her students. She plays movies during class, she has a stash of alcohol and drugs in her desk. She sleeps and drinks during class while the kids are watching movies. She then meets a rich substitute teacher at the school. She tries to hook up with him throughout the rest of the movie, while raising money for her boob job. She steals from a school funded car wash, steals a standardized state exam (in order to receive a large bonus if her class has the highest scores), she blackmails the examiner, she smokes pot, she steals other items, she swears a lot and dresses trashy at times. Elizabeth ends up having an ongoing confrontation with Amy (another female teacher) because the rich substitute teacher, Scott, likes Amy and not Elizabeth. Elizabeth is very manipulative and she destroys Amy and makes her look crazy. Elizabeth has a one night raunchy, dry humping, sex fling with Scott who was dating Amy at the time. Elizabeth sent Amy a recording of the one night stand. Amy gets caught and arrested with Elizabeth's drugs and alcohol in her classroom and eventually she has to relocate to another school leaving Scott. Scott finally asks Elizabeth out but she realizes she is not interested in Scott and maybe money isn't everything. She realizes she wants to be with the Gym teacher who has been hitting on her throughout the entire movie. This is how the school year ends. However, the movie ends at the beginning of the

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next school year, where Elizabeth is now the new school counselor; and she is still with the Gym teacher.

Dalton adds a lot more detail, description and examination to her scholarly journal about this film. She points out the use of camera angles, the wardrobe worn by Elizebeth versus other female teachers, the color of lipstick, and the color of clothes. All of which plays a role in how Elizebeth is portrayed as very dominant and sexy. Elizebeth's outfits were skimpy, short shorts or skirts, tight, very provocative with dark red lipstick. Amy was usually wearing baggy clothes, brown or earth tone color; she had more of a natural look, wore pants and blouses with prints. Only at the very end of the movie when Elizabeth was a counselor, did she have a different look with dark slacks, a white blouse and pale pink lipstick. Dalton suggested Elizabeth was an outsider, and her dress and appearance reflected this. I thought it was reflective of her character to just be a trashy gold digger who just didn't like to be a teacher.

In conclusion, Dalton implies this movie is very bad for teachers, students and the educational system. Also stating this movie could have some unintended consequences with regards to standardized testing and educational policies and it could be a "springboard for political action" causing society to lose respect for the teaching profession. However, I think Dalton is overthinking this movie and should consider the audience. I believe most people would consider the intent of this movie to be just entertainment. The film was written as a romantic comedy. Anyone who uses one tasteless, raunchy comedy filled movie with bad language, and a dry humping sex scene as a springboard to create political action or change, needs to do more research and consider the source. According to www.TheCinemaholic.com the question was asked if this story was true. The answer was no. The writers, Lee Eisenberg and Gene Stupnitsky, are the same writers of 2 seasons of "The Office," a TV comedy show. Diaz indicated in this same article that she just wanted to approach her role from a point of view that maybe teaching isn't for everyone. Therefore if it isn't then they should find another job, not everyone is cut out to be a teacher.