

Film Theory Paper

When it comes to terms of representation/ideology of films, the film I chose was the 2005 fiction film, *Nanny McPhee*, directed by Susanna White. The ideology behind this film is two fold; parenting or teaching responsibility as well as class representation. The fact that this film is a fiction film gives the production team, writer and director more freedom to address the ideologies of this film through animation of talking and dancing animals by use of a magic cane. This film can be reviewed using societal and socioeconomic class differences and the Freudian Theory; referring to traumatic experiences and its impact on the childrens' behaviour.

In the fiction film, *Nanny McPhee*, Cedric is parenting seven children alone after his wife suddenly passed away. In the beginning of the film, the children have run off a 17th nanny that Cedric has found and the office refuses to work with him any longer. *Nanny McPhee* mysteriously speaks to him and shows up to teach the children to behave. The ideologies that *Nanny McPhee* teaches the children throughout the film includes five lessons; go to bed when they're told, get up when they're told, get dressed when they're told, listen/say please and thank you and do as you're told/obey parents. Theories swirl throughout the film as it becomes apparent that *Nanny McPhee* isn't a normal nanny although she passes herself off as a government nanny. A thump of her cane is all that is needed for some magical force to become apparent as she manipulates the children into continuing their actions without stopping, putting everyone in apparent danger as well as forcing them to stay in bed. At the end of the film, she even makes it snow in August. The film also includes hidden lessons that the audience would have noticed when critically thinking about the film. She begins the film as an unattractive lady with two warts, a big tooth, a big nose, a unibrow and saggy skin. As the children begin to learn

the lessons, one by one Nanny McPhee begins losing these unattractive qualities. For instance, after the first lesson is learned, go to bed when told, one of her warts disappears. In the end she is a beautiful, young, vibrant woman and I believe that is to connect with an overall lesson of the film; beauty starts with what's on the inside, meaning behaviour/mentality and will be shown through the outside/appearance.

When it comes to the class/power hierarchy, this is driven from the financial struggles of the family that is on the shoulder of Cedric and becomes quite apparent in the beginning of the film. Cedric works during the day as an Undertaker but is unable to financially support his entire family due to the untimely death of his wife. Needing support from Aunt Adelaide, she gives him a monthly allowance and recently set a deal in place for him to stop the monthly allowance if he cannot find another wife by the end of the month. Aunt Adelaide is the one with all of the authority in the film as at one point, as an incentive, decides she will take one of the children in exchange for a slight extension on the marriage deadline. The film seems to have a hidden lesson in this scene as Cedric was going to be defiant and not agree to the terms of her taking one of his children. Given the circumstances and the effects the stoppage of the allowance would have on his family because of this decision, it shows his pride and love for his family. The class representation of the film also shows the effects it has on people who could potentially gain from a desperate situation with an example being Mrs. Quickly. In the end, she only agrees to the marriage because of the potential wealth that could follow, despite the children.

The Freudian Theory is quite applicable to this film as it states that events in our childhood influence and shape who we become as adults personality wise. Using this theory of human behaviour, more specifically towards children, it is an understatement to say that that is

what is going on in this film as Nanny McPhee is reshaping these children. The childrens' attitude in the beginning was that they would do everything in their power to run off Nanny McPhee but she never goes. First of all, the fact that she never leaves gives the children a consistent guardian figure which is something they are not used to and was probably quite needed. Secondly, the fact that through her "powers", the childrens' plans would backfire, ultimately helping teach them her lessons. By the time she gets to her fourth lesson in listening, the children begin to like Nanny McPhee and go to her in time of personal issues, regarding Aunt Adelaide taking one of the children and/or issues with Mrs. Quickly. Overall, Nanny McPhee leaves these children with quite an influence on their childhood and probably the first to do so after their mother died. It might be a given but one can only speculate that these children grow up with these lessons in mind and become wise and well behaved adults.

Nanny McPhee is a very simple yet effective choice for film topics such as ideologies and representations when it comes to human behaviour and its influencers as well as wealth class differences. The attire used in the film is very outdated as well as the decor of the houses, however, I believe all of these details to be quite useful in creating the sort of lighthearted approach to heavy topics. Nanny McPhee is a fun film with a target audience being children and could influence those children into behaving better. One of the hardest hitting lines in the film is "If you need me but do not want me, then I must stay. If you want me, but no longer need me, then I must go." This line is the inverse and translation to the change in behaviour the children undergo throughout the film.