

Good Will Hunting Audience Analysis

I am choosing to examine Robin William's audience analysis in his speech from Good Will Hunting. While I could easily talk about the language use, the imagery and the emotion he evokes with his words; or his cutting yet honest, brutal but gentle delivery, this speech, at its core, is an analysis of Will's character. It is clear that up to this point Will (Matt Damon) has held a certain degree of power over Sean (Robin Williams), and this speech is Sean's moment to reclaim it. For the speech to be at all effective, Sean has to know how to speak to Will in a way that he's willing to hear.

Sean speaks to Will about art and war and love within the frame of reference he's sure to have- what he's read in books. Sean understands that Will lacks a crucial amount of real life experience. He hasn't traveled, he hasn't been in love, and he's never opened himself up and been vulnerable to another person.

It's clear that Sean wants to get through to Will, wants him to understand the intrinsic difference of reading about and experiencing something. But it's also apparent that beyond this conversation he's not going to make any grand effort to aid Will in his own personal development. Isn't going to hold his hand and teach him empathy or vulnerability. Sean understands a great deal about Will and I think most importantly he understands that the way to get through to him is to be more knowledgeable than Will is. Will seeks to be the most intelligent and confident person in any room. But what is intelligence when it comes to loss? To grief?

At the end of his speech, Sean acknowledges that he couldn't possibly understand how hard Will's life has been just because he's read Oliver Twist. People are complex, and complicated, and traumatized, and no book can ever substitute for our understanding of an individual's life experience. What Sean understands most of all though, and what he knows paralyzes Will, is that it doesn't matter how willing Sean is to meet Will where he's at, to give him the space to be vulnerable or insecure. Will is terrified of vulnerability, is terrified of examining himself honestly and exploring who he really is.

The goal of Sean's speech is to encourage Will to be genuine, and honest, and vulnerable. This movie has been on my watch list for quite some time so I can't speak to how successful he is at doing so, but it seems that by the end Will is really listening to him. At the beginning of the clip he's talkative and arrogant, making jokes about Sean fetishizing the swans. Though as Sean speaks Will becomes silent and contemplative. You can see that he is seriously considering everything Sean has just said to him and reevaluating his choices. Sean knew how to speak in a way to make Will listen.