

Pleasantville Paper

LONGER PAPER HERE!!! 2 ½ pages = B, 3 pages B+, etc.

In writing this paper, I would like for you to address at least 3 of the first 4 general topics. In addition, I would like for you to address the last topic.

1. Changing Color

- What does it mean to turn from black and white into color? What does black and white mean? What does color mean? Explore why people, places, and objects change color and why that signifies.
- Trace the development of one or several main characters (David, Jennifer, the Mom, the Soda Shop Guy). What is it that turns them from black and white to color? Who are they before, and who are they afterwards? What specific action, event or experience changes them, and why is this what needs to happen?
- How do people react to the changes in Pleasantville? What are some specific reactions that people make to try to stop or resist the change? What does this reveal about the problems with Pleasantville and what it takes to maintain a world like this?
- Why is the world in color a better world than the Black and White world? What do you think is the central message of the story?

2. The World of Pleasantville

- What is Pleasantville like? What are the characteristics of Pleasantville that make it different from the world as we know it? What is good about this world for the people in it? Why would someone like Pleasantville? Why, at least at first, does David like it?
- While it is different, how is Pleasantville also similar to the world as we know it? What aspects of our everyday life, what aspects of our collective existence, are revealed through their exaggeration in this movie? How is Concord like Pleasantville? If the movie Concordville were made, how would it look different from Pleasantville, and how would it look the same? And what types of actions, events, or experience would change objects and people from black and white to color?
- What, in the end, are the problems with Pleasantville? And how are these problems connected to problems that exist within the world that we live in?

3. Elaboration of Themes

- Discuss the critique of social roles in this movie. Of course, there is an emphasis on gender roles and how they restrict individuality. Can you go further with the idea of roles? How do various roles people play, in addition to gender, restrict personal growth, development, and individuality?
- Discuss the references made to racism and discrimination in the movie. How do the references to racism and discrimination in the United States help us to better understand larger themes in the movie and the challenge of personal growth, development, and individuality?

- How does this movie help us to understand the idea of routine? Think about Bill and his routines at the soda shop and how he initially and eventually reacts to the disruption in his every day routines. What routines dominate your life? Do you follow these mindlessly and without purpose – as Bill says “What’s the point? It’s always the same.”
- Discuss the role that art and artistic expression play in individual development and/or a culture’s collective development. (Art in a big sense, including not just visual art but things like music as well – remember the jukebox) Consider, for instance, the window painting that Bill makes of Betty, or the Mural that Bud and Bill make on the brick wall. What is the point of these? What are the intended effects on the viewer? The culture at large? What do the reactions of the town members to these works tell us about the relationship between art and community / culture?

4. Self-Analysis

- If you were a character in the movie, what would change you from black and white to color, and why? Why would this be a difficult change for you? How would more important (family, friends) and less important others react to your change? What relationships in your life would help and / or hinder you in making the change(s) you need to make? What values, morals, and ways of acting and living would you be challenging in making this change?
- What roles do you play? Yes, as a member of a certain gender, or age group, or social class, or race or ethnicity, etc. Perhaps consider these, but also perhaps consider... In your family? Amongst your friends? On the teams or other groups that you are a part of? To what extent are these roles helpful and inspiring to you, and to what extent to they feel restrictive and confining? How do these roles help and/or hurt in the development of your individual character? How do others force you to continue to play these roles? – like the Dad – “There will be dinner on this table!” Have you been type-casted?
- Going further on the idea of routines, what routines dominate your life? Do you follow these mindlessly and without purpose – as Bill says “What’s the point? It’s always the same.” How, or to what extent, can you, should you, break out of these routines? Are we collectively suffering from monotonous routines in life? How so?

5. Senior Psychology

- By the way, how does this movie connect to what you have learned in this class?