

## **AP Psychology Film Assignment**

Students are to watch **1** of the following movies listed below. Descriptions for each of the movies can be read at the end of this assignment sheet:

As Good As It Gets	Lars and the Real Girl
Awakenings	Harvey
A Beautiful Mind	What's Eating Gilbert Grape?

### **The Basic Idea of the TASK!**

Although we did not get a chance this year to cover the chapter on psychological disorders (Ch. 15) I would like you to use your textbook to help define and describe the disorders in one of these films. Several of the movies also deal with topics that we have covered in the course. After viewing the movie you have chosen, your task is to connect the lives of the main characters, or events in this film, to some of the curriculum topics of AP Psychology.

You will describe these issues and/or disorders of the central characters in the film by writing an FRQ type response. Your work should be descriptive and illustrative, but not necessarily exhaustive. Be sure to fully define and discuss the issues, concepts or disorders.

**REMEMBER, THE TASK IS TO CONNECT THE MATERIAL TO ANY PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES, CONCEPTS OR DISORDERS, NOT TO SUMMARIZE THE MOVIE.**

### **HELPFUL GRAPHIC ORGANIZER**

If you are still struggling to conceptualize this assignment, please feel free to use this template below to help you detail proper descriptions, issues, concepts or disorders. After filling in the boxes, it would still be necessary to organize your thoughts into a multi-paragraph format. **Please do not turn in template to me.**

Below is an example from the film “As Good As It Gets” and the main character Melvin. For obvious reasons you may not use the example in on your assignment.

Statement/belief/opinion	Evidence from movie	Connection to class
In the film <i>As Good As It Gets</i> Melvin shows signs of obsessive-compulsive disorder.	Melvin demonstrates several behaviors associated with OCD. For example, he washes his hands with scalding water twice, and uses new bars of soap between washings. He walks down the sidewalk avoiding the cracks and any human contact. He locks and unlocks the door five times, and then turns the light on and off five times. He taps his toes on each side of the floor before he places his feet in his slippers.	Obsessions are intrusive thoughts that seem to bother a person even when the person doesn't want them to. Compulsions are repetitive behaviors designed to reduce the obsessive thinking. When Melvin washes his hands, it seems he might be getting rid of a fear of germs. The second washing is just extra security. Melvin's behavior with the locks and lights probably reduce his concern over some negative consequence, so they get strengthened through negative reinforcement.

You would turn this information into one of the five or six paragraphs that you develop in your paper.

I would suggest that you use the blank template below or a similar structure to take notes during the movie. Please feel free to make these boxes bigger than they are to accommodate your thoughts and idea.

Statement/belief/opinion regarding a particular movie	Evidence from that movie	Connection to psychological issue
---	--------------------------	-----------------------------------

Statement #1		
Statement #2		
Statement #3		
Statement #4		

**You must choose 1 of the movies listed below for this assignment.**

**As Good As It Gets**

**Genre: Drama/Comedy Year: 1997 Rating: PG-13**

**Actors: Jack Nicholson, Greg Kinnear, Helen Hunt**

**Topics: Psychopathology, OCD, Personality Disorder, Social Bias**

This film won the Academy Award winner for Best Actor and Best Actress. Jack Nicholson plays Melvin Udall, a cranky, bigoted, writer with terrible case of obsessive-compulsive disorder. His life is turned upside down when his neighbor, gay artist Simon, played by Greg Kinnear, is beaten in a brutal mugging. Hospitalized Simon entrusts his beloved dog to Melvin. In addition, Melvin seems to be falling in love with Carol, played by Helen Hunt, the only waitress who will tolerate him. The film addresses OCD, bias (homophobia) and attitude change.

**Awakenings**

**Genre: Drama Year: 1990 Rating: PG-13**

**Actors: Robin Williams, Robert DeNiro, Julie Kavner**

**Topics: Psychopathology, Neuropsychology, Treatment**

A wonderful movie based on Oliver Sacks' clinical cases performed in the 1960's at Bronx Psychiatric Hospital. It chronicles the newly discovered drug of L-dopa's and its extreme Parkinsonian effects on encephalitis lethargica and neuronal super-sensitivity. Also an interesting glimpse inside a mental hospital in the 1960s. Why do you think paranoia/psychosis developed after prolonged L-dopa treatment?

**Beautiful Mind, A**

**Genre: Drama Year: 2001 Rating: PG-13**

**Actors: Russell Crowe, Ed Harris, Jennifer Connelly**

**Topics: Psychopathology, Treatment, Schizophrenia, Marital/Family Dynamics, Stress and Coping**

Academy Award winner for Best Picture and Best Supporting Actress. Russell Crowe portrays Professor John Nash, a brilliant mathematician. There is a major plot twist - stop reading here if you don't want it spoiled... We learn that we are misled - situations and characters turn out to be portrayals of Nash's delusional thinking and hallucinations due to schizophrenia. We see him spiral downward in the throws of his psychotic thinking or the side effects of his medications. What do you think about the suggestion that he was able to self-challenge and treat the reality of the hallucinations, as at the end of the movie? What do you think this movie did for public perception of schizophrenia?

### **Harvey**

**Genre: Comedy    Year: 1950    Rating: NR-PG**

**Actors: James Stewart, Josephine Hull, Peggy Dow**

**Topics: Psychopathology, Psychotic Disorders, Substance Use Disorders, Treatment, Marital/Family Dynamics**

Academy Award winner and classic comedy with Jimmy Stewart hallucinating (?) that a six-foot rabbit named Harvey is his constant companion. Consider the portrayal of psychiatry and the mental asylum and the apparent ease with which one seemed to be able to commit a person. Also, one might think Harvey was a result of too much alcohol, but do we actually see Jimmy Stewart ever drink? Hmmm. Harvey's gentle and personable attitude towards everyone is considered a personality disorder is it a disorder to be too nice, too polite? Ah, if we all were so afflicted!

### **Lars and the Real Girl**

**Genre: Comedy/Drama    Year: 2007    Rating: PG-13**

**Actors: Ryan Gosling, Emily Mortimer, Kelli Garner**

**Topics: Psychopathology, Psychotic Disorders, Treatment, Marital/Family Dynamics, Social**

Lars is an office worker in a small town. He's an odd, reclusive guy, but nice and harmless. Exposed to the concept of a "mail order doll" (anatomically correct) by a co-worker, he orders a doll, not for sexual reasons, but as part of a delusional system he uses to repress bad memories. Lars introduces the doll as his foreign girlfriend, who is in a wheelchair. The resulting responses from his family and

community, as well as the very empathetic physician, make this a "feel good" movie. The film tries to show a sympathetic side to mental illness and model supportive family and community response. It "takes a village" to treat mental illness.

### **Mean Girls**

**Genre: Comedy   Year: 2004   Rating: PG-13**

**Actors: Lindsey Lohan, Rachel McAdams, Tina Fey**

**Topics: prejudice, discrimination, and conformity**

Raised in African bush country by her zoologist parents, Cady Heron thinks she knows about survival of the fittest. But the law of the jungle takes on a whole new meaning when the home-schooled 16-year-old enters public high school for the first time and encounters psychological warfare and unwritten social rules that teenage girls face today

### **What's Eating Gilbert Grape**

**Genre: Drama/Comedy   Year: 1993   Rating: PG-13**

**Actors: Johnny Depp, Leonardo diCaprio, Juliette Lewis**

**Topics: Psychopathology, Mood Disorders, Neuropsychology, Developmental, Marital/Family Dynamics, Stress and Coping**

Slice of life film, with Johnny Depp as the young adult caring for his family - a depressed, morbidly obese mother, a brother Arnie, with a severe mental disorder, two sisters and a father who has left them all while working at the town's slowly dying Convenience store. Gilbert's life, his future, is thwarted but it is his love and guardian angel nature for his family that keeps him going.