

*Inception, Interstellar, The Shining...* These movies are part of a list I started creating last year to rank all of my favorites. Attempting to rank them was challenging, but quickly I established two metrics: the immediate and lasting impact the movies had on me. After hours of consideration, I created a list of roughly my top 50 movies. The following day I shared the list with a few friends. Almost instantly other students recommended movies that should be considered for the list as well as the mistakes they felt I made in my current version. To my surprise, I was soon approached by a variety of students who were intrigued by my list. Each of their recommendations reflected their interests and self-perceptions. By the end of the school year, the list allowed me to interact with both teachers and students whom I didn't know before. The peak of the list's popularity came during the end of year academic awards ceremony. I received an award from my AP US History teacher for my achievement in his class. Notably, he stated that I had created a learning environment where others were more engaged and excited for class, something that would not have been possible without my movie list. He went on to voice his own opinions of my list.

The list gave me a way to easily express my interests to other people. Each movie highlighted a small piece of how I want others to view me. *Interstellar* ranked so highly because of my fascination with space and the abstract lens through which I try to view our existence. It is not easy to describe to another person such a complicated yet important part of who I am. It is rare that a movie completely represents the person I am, and in many cases, the small details in movies happen to be the most representative. The fact that many of these details are hard to understand at first is fundamental to the inner workings of the list. Without discussing the subtleties of your movie selections with others, it would be impossible to know what pieces of the movie an individual is choosing to represent

themselves. This ambiguity sparks conversation which leads to a connection. This fundamental aspect happens to be the most flawed aspect of the list itself. Since a conversation is required to truly understand the contents of such a list, it is possible to misunderstand the reasoning behind a movie selection if you read the list without discussion.

I now understand that my process for creating the list was just as reflective as the movies I included. As others began to create lists of their own, mine oddly kept traction among the other members of my school. For others, the lists were meant to get a laugh. Like anything else I commit myself to doing, I dove into this project with everything I had. My initial list of roughly 25 movies took me nearly three hours of intense consideration. Then, as recommendations began to pour in, I set up a system to methodically work my way through watching a new movie every week (which I still have not finished).

Swapping movie recommendations might seem simple, but it really is two people sharing who they are. Before I shared my list, I was almost exclusively known as the football player who transferred from [REDACTED]. Movies connected me to peers beyond my team and helped me find my spot within a new community. And movies made it easier to explain my past and the person I am today to people whom I had never met before. As I move forward in life, movies will continue to help me tell my story