
Breaking Away Movie Analysis: A Study Of The Film Directed By Peter Yates

Breaking Away Film Essay

In the film, "Breaking Away", written by Steve Tesich and directed by Peter Yates, four adventurous, yet negligent, best friends who have graduated from high school the year before, are uncertain of which direction their life is going in or which course of action they should take with college being an option they're all skeptical of choosing. They have an inseparable bond as children of 'cutters' (people associated with the limestone industry of Bloomington, Indiana) and as such are treated as outcasts by the frat boys attending Indiana University in a sort of town vs. gown arrangement. These four adolescents treasure their friendships with each other and detest the fact they are forced to move on with their lives at a pace they're uncomfortable with. Although they each have different ideas on how they want to spend the rest of their lives, in the film, they all go to the same quarry to swim, which serves as 'common ground' for each of the boys. This reminds of them how they will always stick together no matter what, and ultimately their bond supersedes everything else.

Dave is competitive bicyclist with a penchant for romanticism and the Italian culture. Throughout the film, he learns to speak conversational Italian, listens to *Le nozze di Figaro* by Mozart much to the chagrin of his conservative father, but his mother doesn't mind it at all. After winning a Masi bicycle, he associates cycling with the Italians and even races a team of them prior to the Little 500 race, conversing with them in Italian and even beating them, only antagonizing them further. After being subjected to their foul play during the race, Dave later concludes that 'everyone cheats' and ponders quitting cycling, that is until his father has team uniforms made for Dave and his friends and who thank him for the support. After being injured during the race, it was Dave's perseverance and his friends' willingness to step in for him that culminated in their winning of the Little 500. Throughout his endeavors, he even chases after Katherine; an Indiana university student, and dupes her into thinking he's an Italian foreign exchange student.

Mike is the typical 'tough guy' of the group and constantly clashes with the Indiana University frat boys, under the impression they believe he is inferior to them and an outcast. He believes that the 'cutters' deserve to be treated with respect, especially since their parents helped build the university. He is willing to go to any length to prove his worth to the frat boys that for so long have mocked the 'cutters' and kept up a rivalry that shouldn't even exist to begin with. He is against having to go to college and thinks it's a waste of time, and rationalizes that the 'cutters' didn't go to college and they managed to do fine without any sort of post-high school education.

Cyril is characterized as the lax, mellow and easy going person in the film, who generally doesn't involve himself in conflict and avoids any confrontation when possible. He plays a minor role in the film and is more of secondary character, although he is one of the four best friends. He gets beaten up by Katherine's boyfriend, Rod, when he confuses Cyril with Dave. Cyril tells Mike he doesn't want to start anything with the frats, but Mike stubbornly insists, owing to his hatred of college boys that attack the cutters in any way, shape, or form. After

brawling with the cutters, the frats are reprimanded by the principal, who then invites the cutters to the Little 500 out of pity.

Moocher is portrayed as the short, yet strong-willed grease monkey of the four who is devoted to them, and wants to get married but realizes that there's no way of supporting his family, so he gives up the idea. He resents the fact that he's short and is willing to fight tooth and nail, anyone who insults his diminutive stature. He supports Dave throughout the film and is seen as a confidant to which Dave confides his thoughts and feelings. He, along with Mike and Cyril, help Dave win the race, for which he is grateful.

This movie is categorized as a coming age film, telling the story of adolescents who are unsure of whether or not they should go to college and leave everything behind, or remain in their childhood phase for a bit longer. Eventually, Dave, the apparent protagonist of the story, realizes there's more to life and goes to Indiana University where he meets an attractive French foreign exchange student.

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