

Clueless Film Critique

In the 25+ years since its initial release, *Clueless* has become a cult classic. The film, a loose adaptation of Jane Austen's book *Emma*, was the most influential coming-of-age movie of the 1990s. The movie's fashion reinvented 1990s fashion. The movie's soundtrack includes 1990s American pop punk, hip hop, rock, and covers of hits from the 1970s & 1980s. Iggy Azalea & Charli XCX have since lifted from the film's iconic imagery in the music video for "Fancy." *Mean Girls*, made 10 years later, was made in its image.

1. Tropes are frequently used in movies & literature. A trope is a familiar and repeated symbol, theme, motif, style, character or theme that permeates a particular type of movie/book. Teen movies have very predictable tropes in their characters & storylines.

Teen movie tropes	Character tropes in <i>Clueless</i>

2. One of the many things that *Clueless* is most remembered for is the over-the-top slang that sparked an entirely new vernacular among '90s-era teens. What did the following references mean?
 - a. "**As if!**"
 - b. "**Whatever!**"
 - c. "Wasn't my mom a total **Betty?**"
 - d. "He is kind of a **Baldwin.**"
 - e. "I'm **outie**"
 - f. "Your man Christian is a **cake boy!**"
 - g. "I was like totally **buggin'!**"
 - h. "She's a full on **Monet.**"
 - i. "Where you been all weekend? What's up? You been **jeepin'** around behind my back?"
 - j. "Nice **stems.**"
 - k. "This Josh and Tai thing was **wiggin'** me more than anything."
 - l. "**Surf the crimson wave**"
3. When they first meet Tai, Cher remarks on how "clueless" Tai is. How could you make the case that both Tai AND Cher realize their cluelessness and do some growing up over the course of the film?
4. On the eve of *Clueless*' 20th anniversary, NPR said, "*Clueless* set the stage for more dynamic female characters..." - where do you see strength, diversity, complexity, or relatability in the female roles in *Clueless*? (Cher, Dionne, Tai)

Modern Feminism

Feminism in '90s was redefined and reborn. The 3rd wave of feminism that emerged in the mid-1990s was led by so-called Generation Xers who came of age in a media-saturated, culturally and economically diverse world. In an essay called "Bitching and Talking/Gazing Back: Feminism as Critical Ready", Courtney Bailey outlines the new kind of feminist that was being embraced by mainstream pop culture of the time, saying:

'the mid 1990s marked the appearance of another image of the feminist in mainstream media – the young, fashion-conscious, pop culture-savvy, single woman. Various referred to as 'girl power' or 'lipstick feminism,' this woman is well aware of patriarchal conceptions of femininity and uses them in a parodic or exaggerated manner to her own advantage... Depending on the commentator, she is either an empowering figure or a sign of complicity with patriarchy and with the forces of commercialism.'

Gone are the days when the word feminist conjured a hairy, angry, bra-less lesbian in the minds of the audience.

-- "Feminism, Shakespeare & Pop Culture"

5. How could you argue Cher is a modern feminist?

6. Thoughts on the film:

- a. **Give the movie a star rating.** Now that you've done some active viewing and thinking about the movie, how many stars would you give it (on a 5-star scale)? Explain your answer in 2-3 sentences. (Your response could explain whether you thought the movie was good, what was memorable about it, etc.)

