

Rebel Without a Cause (Ray, 1955)
Knowledge Organiser

Institutional Information

1. **Director** – Nicholas Ray
2. **Year of release** – 1955
3. **Production company** – Warner Brothers
4. **Star marketing** – James Dean and Natalie Wood

Narrative

1. **Narrative** –the method and means by which you construct the events of a story into a plot
2. **Narrative structure** - Follows a five act structure
3. **Narrative viewpoint** – Teen POV. A mistrust of authority figures, parents are overtly criticized for being too weak, or too dominant, they can't win at all. But this message clearly appeals to the target audience.
4. **Binary Oppositions** – create conflict – key oppositions are children vs. their parents and teenagers vs. adults

Key Characters

Jim Stark	Protagonist. 'The Outsider'. Struggling with finding his place in the world. Wants to do what's right.
Judy	"He hates me." Craves love and affection from her father. "I'll never get close to anybody". Later falls in love with Jim.
John 'Plato' Crawford	Another 'outsider' character. Bullied and alone. His father is absent His mother leaves him for long periods of time. He too craves love and affection. The first gay teenager on film? Plato's sexuality is only ever inferred. Never commented on explicitly.
Buzz	The film's antagonist. The bully. A teen film genre character type. Provides an opposition to Jim for much of the film. Highlights Jim as the 'outsider'.
Frank Stark	Represented as unable to connect with his son. Unable to stand up for himself. Until the end: "I'll stand up with you."

Key Element of Film Form

Mise-en-scene – Use of the colour red in costumes.	Judy's dress and lipstick symbolise at the start her desire to stand out and be noticed. Jim's red jacket creates a connection to this idea and also comes to symbolise danger. Plato later wears the red jacket. It foreshadows his death. All three central characters wear red. Teenagers standing out.
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Context

1. Set in a suburb of **Los Angeles** in the early **1950s**
2. **1950s** – Considered the birth of the teenager
3. Young people had more money (a disposable income); products such as music, film and fashion were targeted at this group. They were powerful consumers and therefore a powerful 'voice' in consumerist America.
4. Better education, which led them to question the world.
5. It was a time of peace, so young men were not at war, a confusing era for young men who could not identify with their war time fathers or have a war to fight and prove themselves.
6. This new social group was considered by some as **threatening, unruly** and **out of control**, the film reflected and responded to this concern.
7. This film offers a **sympathetic representation of teenagers**, blaming the parents for their delinquency.
8. More people were **speaking out against inequality** and **civil rights** in this time. The film demonstrated the **desire for young people to do the right thing**. Jim wants to confess and desires justice, it is **the older generation that get in the way** of this, and they do not listen.

Key Quotes

"You're tearing me apart" – Jim	Significant line in the film. Shows the impact that his relationship with his parents is having on him.
"How can a guy grow up in a circus like that?" - Jim	Jim talking to Ray (Police Officer) at the start of the film. Gives the audience an insight into his family life.
"What does he know about man alone?"- Plato	This line gives the audience an insight into how Plato feels. He too feels alone in the world, abandoned by his parents and craving love and affection.
"Don't I buy you everything you want?" – Frank Stark (Jim's Dad)	Shows that his father associates buying his son material possessions with being a good parent. He can't understand why his son is misbehaving.
"If only you could've been my dad." – Plato	Plato sees Jim as a replacement father figure. Someone who looks out for him and is kind to him. Further supports the film's theme of parent/child relationships.
"You, you say one thing, he says another, and everybody changes back again." – Jim	All Jim really wants—and he really demands—from his parents is that they communicate. Tell the truth. Allow him to understand what they mean and, perhaps, come to a more incisive understanding of themselves in the process.
She'll outgrow it dear. It's just the age...It's the age when nothing fits." – Judy's mother	This is a close as any adult in the film comes to understanding the teenagers in the film and society in general.
"One thing I know is I never want to be like him." – Jim	Jim is angry with his father. He doesn't feel a connection with him and doesn't look up to him as an example of how to live his life. His worst fear is turning into him.