

Jessica Wolf  
Pleasantville Presentation  
Math 5  
November 13, 2013

Summary: Pleasantville is a 1988 American fantasy film written and directed by Gary Ross. The film features famous stars including Jeff Daniels, Toby Maguire and Reese Witherspoon. Pleasantville is about twins David and Jennifer. Despite the fact that they are related, the siblings are extremely different and often fight. One evening while fighting over a television show called Pleasantville, they are magically transported to the black and white world of the show. Pleasantville town is seemingly perfect and wholesome, however the inhabitants lack a sense of liveliness and happiness. The twins introduce concepts from their own worlds, which disrupt the mundane lifestyle of Pleasantville. Chaos ensues when they bring color to a once black and white community.

1. Do you think the Flatland was a critique of the American Dream? Do you think it was meant to shatter the American façade of perfection and hope, exposing issues of sexism, class and race?

2A. What are your thoughts on the treatment of women in Pleasantville? Please recall Jennifer's sexual relationship, her studies and her mother's unhappiness in her marriage. Do you think that women were purposefully shown in a subverted light?

B. Do you see similarities in the film to the treatment of women in the novel Flatland? Think about their one-dimensionality, humiliating peace cries, and lack of color.

C. How do you think women as seductresses play a role in both Pleasantville and Flatland. What do you believe the author/director was trying to communicate?

3. There are similarities between "color wars" in Pleasantville and Flatland. The Universal Color Bill eradicated color in Flatland, and the Mayor banned color in Pleasantville. Why do you think this was? Is color considered dangerous and disruptive?

4. I think "narrow-mindedness" is a theme throughout Pleasantville and Flatland. Both pieces seem to criticize singular points of view. Flatland spoke about this issue in terms of dimension whereas Pleasantville addressed this with color. What do you think the authors were trying to say about a closed mind, or inability to see the world from a larger perspective?