

CALLING ALL FLYERS

PAPER PLANES



SOARING INTO CINEMAS
THIS JANUARY

**A STUDY GUIDE BY
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PAPER PLANES

"If at first you dont succeed fly, fly again"

Paper Planes (2015) is a feel good, comedic, family film that tells the story of Dylan Webber (Ed Oxenbould) a young Australian boy whos life changes completely after getting accepted to compete in the Aussie Junior Paper Plane Throwing Championships in Sydney. However, despite his success in the paper plane throwing industry Dylan has to face the problems of his severely depressed father, a result of the recent death of his mother. As his journey to competing at the World Junior Paper Plane Championships progresses Dylan learns the valuable lesson that although winning is good, fighting for what is right is most important.



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PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This study guide featuring the family film *Paper Planes*, has been created for any individual student looking further into the film. To aid in the understanding of this film, this study guide provides useful information as well as an overall summary of *Paper Planes*.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

Narrative

In VCE Media, narrative is used to describe the selection, sequencing and construction of the relevant events from a story, whether it be fictional or non-fictional. In narratives, the term 'story' refers to both the explicit and implicit events that contribute to the understanding of narrative.

CODES

Codes are technical, symbolic and written tools used to structure and suggest meaning in a media text. Drawn from the study of constructivist semiotics, codes function as the building blocks of meaning. They can be either:

Symbolic

Symbols are signs, shapes or objects that are used to represent something else. In film these are often associated with the mise en scene in terms of the use of colour, props, costume and performance (facial expressions and body language).

Technical

Technical codes encompass anything about the technical craft of creating a media product. For film, this often involves the use of camera, performance (the acting craft such as accents, etc.), mise en scene, editing techniques, lighting design, sound design.

Written

Any written aspects of the media product that conveys meaning. In film, this often includes the title sequence (font, colour), credits, any title cards used throughout, and dialogue spoken by characters.

conventions

Conventions are rules or commonly accepted ways of constructing a media text/product to suggest meaning. These rules may be related to the media products:

Form

Conventions of form are the technical characteristics common to a medium, such as the use of hyperlinks in web pages and the allocation of rewards to encourage players to move through a video game. In feature films, this relates to the aspect ratio, duration of screen time, editing, etc.

Genre

Conventions of genre include any sequence of codes that are common to a particular genre, and are often used to identify a film as belonging to a particular genre. Most recently in contemporary cinema, conventions often associated with genres are subverted and played around with, establishing genre hybrids such as the film *The Host* (Bong Joon-ho, 2006).

Narrative

Conventions of narrative can be understood as the fundamental building blocks and principles of storytelling that span across media forms such as literature, radio dramas, films and video games. Narrative conventions span the cause and effect sequencing of events; the opening, development and resolution of narrative arcs; the point of view from which the narrative is experienced from; whether the narrative has multiple storyline; the establishment and development of characters; the use of setting to convey meaning; the structuring (or rather re-structuring) of time.

DISCUSSING GENRE

Genre refers to the type, style or category that a movie falls into based on the codes and conventions in it. *Paper planes* is often referred to as a family film.

Paper Planes follows the theme of going from 'rags to riches' as Dylan (Ed Oxenbould) begins the film with very little until discovering his natural talent for paper planes throwing. This series of events is similar to those in *School Of Rock* (2003) as Dewey Flinn (Jack Black) begins the film with very little until discovering his natural talent for teaching music. As well as Daniel LaRusso (Ralph Macchio) in *The Karate Kid* becoming a karate master despite being beginning the film with nothing.

All these films follow the common theme of beginning during tough times, stumbling upon an unexpected opportunity, overcoming several challenges and learning valuable lessons at the end of the film ultimately living 'happily ever after'.



CHARACTERS

Dylan	Ed Oxenbould
Jack	Sam Worthington
Kevin	Juilian Dennison
Grandpa	Terry Norris
Kimi	Ena Imai
Jason	Nicholas Backopoulos-cooke

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Since ancient Greek Times, Aristotle analysed the theatrical performances as having three separate acts that rise to a climax before resolving the inciting incident. An opening, a development and then a resolution.

The opening is used to introduce the audience to the films characters and settings prior to the inciting incident. The second act features the protagonist on a journey through the film to resolve this significant incident which brings the film to act three: the resolution. Which in most cases are a happily ever after.

The following are the most significant stages in The narrative structure of paper planes using codes and conventions to communicate the main ideas of the film.



THE OPENING



TECHNICAL

The opening shots of films are used to show the audience where the narrative is taking place. In paper planes the opening scenes are in the interior of a paper factory, displaying the processes of creating plain paper in various long shots. This feature of a plain paper factory accompanied by the childlike exciting music, is used to indicate that despite this simple beginning there is more to come in the film.

SYMBOLIC

When focusing on the symbolic codes in the opening of the film, the paper factory implies the beginning of the film is repetitive and boring music as well. This gives the audience a bit of insight into the life The Webber family has been living prior to the start of the film.



INCITING INCIDENT



NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS

The inciting incident is during the class paper plane throwing competition, after Dylan's plane travels an abnormal distance and he is recommended to compete in the National Championship. This abnormal opportunity is what kicks off Dylan's journey in the film.

TECHNICAL CODES

As the camera cuts to his class cheering him on it then refocuses on Dylan, the long shot with highkey warm toned lighting accompanied by the cheering sounds of his class mates in the background creates a similar scene to those in films featuring victorious moments in larger scale competitions.

SYMBOLIC CODES

By creating this scene to be one similar to a large scale competition it alludes to the future events of competitions and events ahead of him.



RESOLUTION



NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS

The resolution of the film is after Dylan's plane flies at the World Paper Plane Competition. This is the moment that marks the end of Dylan's journey as well as Jack's as the cheering and heartfelt music shows a positive end to the film.

TECHNICAL CODES

The camera slowly came into focus on Jack, while also zooming into a close up, indicating this is a revelation as well as a personal moment for Jack. It then cuts onto a wide shot of Dylan running into Jack's arms, cutting to another close up to show Dylan finally embracing his father after a long battle they both fought,

SYMBOLIC CODES

This scene is a symbol of the Webber family finally closing the door to their past traumas and begging a new start.



ESTABLISHMENT OF DYLAN'S CHARACTER

Dylan is established as a positive and kind kid in the earliest scenes of the film. The opening shot of him packing his school bag implies he's independent and happy and despite being unappreciated by his severely depressed father, still caring enough to wake him up in the morning. The symbolic gesture of feeding the meat to the bird although the bird doesn't give him anything in return displays this message that he continues to care even when he gets nothing in return which is a perfect establishment of his character.



After following him to school though it's made obvious that he is overly ostracised and is an underdog in his class at school. This is implied as soon as he enters his school as he's obviously smaller and lacks the technology his peers are all glued to making him the odd one out in his class.

By using the kids glued to technology, it relates to the relatively new technology craze in kids that is still seen as an issue to this day. Dylan using an old Nokia phone and playing a retro game on it would be seen as a respectable trait for his character to have by most parents watching the film as he is not the normal kid 'brainwashed' by technology like most kids were becoming in the year 2014, when this film was created.



ESTABLISHMENT OF JACK'S CHARACTER



As the film progresses as well as seeing the development of dylans journey, his father Jack's story is also one that grows through out the narrative.

Jack's character is established initially as a mentally absent father. The opening shot of him passed out on the couch while Dylan's getting himself ready for school immediately depicts him as a severely depressed man which the audience later discovers is due to the death of his wife/Dylan's mother 5 months prior. Despite Dylan's obvious efforts to help his father as seen when he turns off the cricket and turns on music to wake him up, Jack is seen to be negligent towards moving on.

The cricket reruns Jack is seen to be watching is seen to be a symbol of living in the past, constantly replaying what has been and gone.



FILM SETTINGS

The settings in Paper Planes holds a strong connection to the story line, as he progressively goes through each competition in different places he faces many challenges and lessons.

In the film, the initial setting of the Australian outback/desert acts as a tool in constructing the image of how isolated Dylan and his father are from the rest of the world and their community.



The various settings throughout the film ranging from the deserted out back, Sydney then finally Tokyo, also helps in representing the steps Dylan takes to become reconnected with the world around him. As at the end of the film Dylan's embrace with his father in Tokyo showed their final closure on his mother's death representing the moment they began to move forward together. Similar to many light-hearted family films like Paper Planes the main character has to overcome different challenges at every different setting he is at, while learning valuable lessons along the way.



TRUMPING THE TECHNOLOGY BUZZ

Paper Planes was created in 2015, a time when good old fashioned creativity was slowly beginning to disappear in children lives, being replaced by various types of technology and screens. In an attempt to spark the creative interest in children once again Paper Planes was created to show children that joy and entertainment can be found in even the simplest things, in this case paper. This attempt in inspiring childrens creative minds worked, with many primary schools creating their own mini paper plane competitions all around australia.



THEMES IN MENTAL ILLNESS

Paper Planes, also touches on the topic of grief and depression in the family setting. The film represents a single father experiencing severe depression through out the film and is represented by a father who while caring for his son deeply, cannot properly function as a fatherly figure as he is battling a mental illness. This representation is an important asset to the film as if they represented him having an aggressive nature or showed him immediately having a change in mood when overcoming one hurdle in the film, depression in adults would've been misrepresented. The film shows the different challenges that are presented as an adult with a mental illness, and the slow development of his illness through the film, educating the audience on the reality of many grieving parents in an undramaticised way.

SOCIETY'S RECEPTION OF THE FILM

Paper Planes was perceived as a fresh and positive family movie by the public. With its unique approach to the world of competitive paper plane throwing, the film ignited the flame of creative excitement in kids all over Australia.

While the film grossed \$7.3 million in the Australian box office, worldwide the film only grossed a total of \$7.6 million which compared to popular family films, isn't that great.



"This slightly pious movie about winning a paper plane-folding championship is ultimately a relaxed, happy family affair"
-The Guardian

But why did it not do so great world wide?

Well, due to it being an Aussie Made film, Paper Planes did not do too well internationally because of the lack of interest in Australian media from the rest of the world.

How do we change this?

Drawing more attention towards aussie films is a difficult task, when looking at the funds going towards the creation of Australian films, it's easy to see how many of our films don't have as great a chance as the international movies we are all drawn to every day. By supporting films coming from our own soil the Australian film industry will get more money to go into creating more, better quality films. Putting us back on the worlds film radar once again.

THE DIRECTORS VIEWS

Robert Connolly is an Australian director and producer best known for his films, Balibo (2009), The Bank (2001) and The Slap (2011). To stray from his usual adult films, Connolly wanted to bring a fresh outlook onto Australian kids films with Paper Planes.



Connolly's aim was to create a film that while being entertaining for the adults, was accessible to all age groups, hence making the film rated 'general' for the whole family to enjoy.



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SCREEN AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION in association with SCREEN NSW and SCREENWEST and LOTTERYWEST present
a SATELLITE FILMS production a CATRIONA MCKENZIE film

DAVID GULPILIL and introducing CAMERON WALLABY and JOSEPH PEDLEY in "SATELLITE BOY"

Sound Designer LIAM EGAN Sound Supervisor PHIL JUDD Editor HENRY DANGAR Composer DAVID BRIDIE
Hair & Makeup Designer CAROL CAMERON Costume Designer MARIA PATTISON Casting Director FAITH MARTIN

Production Designer SAM HOBBS Director of Photography GEOFFREY SIMPSON, ACS

Associate Producer JUB CLERC Executive Producers COLIN McCUMSTIE TROY LUM Producers JULIE RYAN CATRIONA MCKENZIE

Produced by DAVID JOWSEY Written & Directed by CATRIONA MCKENZIE



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