

The Graduate (1967)

Cast

Dustin Hoffman as Ben

Anne Bancroft as Mrs. Robinson

Katharine Ross as Elaine

William Daniels as Mr. Baddock

Murray Hamilton as Mr. Robinson

Elizabeth Wilson as Mrs. Baddock

Crew

Directed by Mike Nichols

Written by:

Calder Willingham

Based on the novel by Charles Webb

Buck Henry

Plot Summary:

Benjamin Braddock returns home to California after successfully completing college. He gets a hero's welcome from his parents but Ben isn't quite sure what to do with the rest of his life. He is soon seduced by Mrs. Robinson, the wife of his father's partner, who methodically pursues the inexperienced young man. Soon, they are meeting regularly in hotel rooms. Warned by her to stay away from her daughter Elaine, his father goads him into taking her out on a date. He finds he quite likes Elaine but when she learns he's been having an affair with her own mother, she'll have nothing to do with him. He's smitten however and pursues her.

IMDB Trivia:

- With box office receipts of just over \$104 million, this was the highest grossing movie of 1967. By the third year of its release, "The Graduate" was the third highest grossing movie of all time, to that date.
- Robert Redford screen tested with Candice Bergen for the part of Benjamin Braddock, but he was finally rejected by director Mike Nichols. Nichols did not believe Redford could persuasively project the underdog qualities necessary to the role.
- None of the older characters are called by their first name in the film. Only the younger characters of Benjamin, Elaine, and Carl are addressed by their first name, thus increasing the sense of a generation gap.
- The film takes a different visual approach before and after Ben falls in love with Elaine. According to Mike Nichols, the first part is meant to have a cold, glassy, plastic look, while the romantic scenes were done with long lenses and diffused shots (although he later noted it was time to retire that pictorial style for good).
- The movie's line "Mrs. Robinson, you're trying to seduce me. Aren't you?" was voted as the #63 (of 100) movie quote by the American Film Institute and as the #5 of "Premiere's" '100 Greatest Movie Lines' in 2007.
- Mike Nichols said that the use of images to suggest Ben is "underwater" and out of his depth in life (the fish tank, the pool, the scuba outfit) was deliberate, although he didn't care if anyone understood this or not. He also used glass barriers to represent people cut off from each other and from the life around them.
- In his review, Roger Ebert called the songs by Simon & Garfunkel "unmemorable". He joked about it years later.

Questions to Consider While Watching This Movie:

1. Is this film a comedy?
2. Is there any significance to the movement of the camera and the camera shots in the first half of the film (before Ben meets Elaine) versus the second half of the film (after Ben meets Elaine)?
3. Notice that all of the 'adults' have no first names, like Ben or Elaine (the 'kids'). Do you think this is intentional?
4. How does the film score and/or musical choice affect your viewing of the film? Do you think certain scenes would have a different impact with different music?
5. Do you think Ben & Mrs. Robinson's affair would have played out any different if the families were poor/not as wealthy? What if the genders were reversed?
6. How does Elaine's outlook on life/her future/the world differ from Ben's outlook? Do you think Elaine is more mature than Ben? Why or why not?
7. Think about the pacing of the movie. Scenes are long and drawn out at first, compared to the hectic nature of the final half-hour.
8. How does the end shot of the film (the bus) make you feel as a viewer? Does it give you hope for Ben & Elaine's future? Why or why not?
9. Should this film be considered a classic?