

Controversial movie prompts polarizing reviews

Depictions of mental health and violence garner variety of reactions

by *Mattea Carberry*

The film "Joker," released on Oct. 4, has been met with both immense criticism and lavish praise.

The film depicts how the character of mentally ill Arthur Fleck, played by Joaquin Phoenix, morphs into the Joker as he consistently falls victim to the evils of society.

Some critics praise the film for revealing insights into the human condition, while others condemn it for carelessly justifying why people do bad things.

'Just because he's a protagonist doesn't mean he's a hero'

Literature and film teacher Brett Rubin doesn't think the film has much to offer in terms of bringing to light truths about society and humanity as a whole.

"I think the film thinks it has a lot to say, and yet I don't know exactly what it is saying and I don't know that it assumes responsibility for many of the choices or ambiguous plot threads or character motivations that never seem to be resolved or come together," he said. Rubin went on to explain that

he feels a lack of substance to Arthur Fleck's character, making it difficult to find much to connect with.

"To me, he comes across as a wholly reactive character and so therefore I don't really see anything tragic," said Rubin. "It's kind of an empty vessel. I don't see much to empathize with. I don't know that any of his decisions can ultimately be understood nor do we have the context to understand."

Sophomore Malcolm Waite thinks the controversy has been blown out of proportion and is merely a cautionary tale.

It is accepted by many that an earlier version of the Joker in "The Dark Knight" inspired the horrendous shooting at a movie theater in Colorado in 2012. But Waite thinks that people didn't get as upset about that film because in that instance the Joker was the clear villain and failed in the end.

"For this one the Joker succeeds and he is the protagonist, so in a way we're supposed to root for him. But just because he's a protagonist doesn't mean he's a hero," Waite said.

Junior Ava Blaugh thought the way the film blurred the lines between good and evil is what made it good.

"The whole perspective of the villain really stood out for me. You see the reasoning behind his terrible actions which makes them more justified even though they aren't, but it's better than just seeing the villain being just plain evil," she said.

Junior Catherine Richards agreed, noting the dynamic between Arthur and the society around him.



New "Joker" film stirs both strong support and opposition as it addresses mental illness and extreme violence | AP

"I thought it was really interesting seeing the progression in his actions and how the society he was living in impacted him," Richards said.

Sophomore J.P. Erickson also enjoyed the film despite feeling this recent depiction of the Joker is not completely consistent with who the character is and has been in past renditions.

"He's a very different character than any of the Jokers we've seen before, which is, in a way, what I liked about the movie because it was doing something different," said Erickson. "But at the end of the day, I don't think you could really call

this guy the true Joker based on what happens in the movie and the way he's portrayed as a character."

Senior Katie Miller similarly thought the way the film didn't follow the tradition superhero style is what made it especially captivating.

"I liked how they didn't make it like a superhero-type movie," said Miller. "It was more about him as a person and the way he is."

Many believe the popularity and success of the film can be attributed to the preexisting interest in the character of the Joker.

"There have been a ton of other critical darlings like the Joker and stuff like that with its themes,"

noted Waite. "But it's only because it's off a comic book character, which is oversaturated, that people are actually reacting to it because it could attract kids to it."

Rubin feels that "Joker" has captured the attention of audiences partly because the film exhibits similar themes found in modern society.

"[The film is] reflecting back to us some of the ugliness and some of the shallowness and self-absorption of some of the people who are currently creating a good deal of national discourse," said Rubin.

From the archives: November 1 is the infamous deadline for seniors applying to college early. However, Early Action and Early Decision are relatively new options for students. The article below was originally printed on October 20, 1995.

Seniors go early decision

by *James Joseph and Dou-Yan Yang*

Some seniors have decided to get a head start on the college admissions process by applying under early decision or early action plans. They hope to minimize the stressful college application process and perhaps to gain a small advantage over other students.

While their classmates will have to wait until April to receive acceptance or rejection letters, early decision and early action letters arrive in December.

Nearly 25 percent to 30 percent of the senior class applied early this year. Next year the number is expected to grow.

THE TWO alternatives to regular action, early action and early decision, both allow the student to apply in November and receive his answer in December or January.

Offered mostly at the Ivy League schools, early action is a non-binding agreement. With early decision, however, the student must attend the school to which he applies if he is accepted.

Mr. James Conroy, Post-High School Counseling department chair, explained the advantages of applying under early decision.

EARLY DECISION is being perceived and rightly so for being a little easier process. Schools are dipping a little,

going a little below regular decision standards," he said.

"People perceive their chances are better of getting in at a school they might go to. Still, early action is non-binding and they don't seem to be doing any dipping there," he continued.

"Some students just want to get the process over with. As a counselor, I feel that early decision is only for students who if they got in at their chosen school, would say, 'This is the school I would go to,'" he concluded.

SARAH ROSENZWEIG is applying under the early decision plan because she is sure of her first choice college.

"I really want to go there, and my other colleges I'm not so sure about," she said.

"I know this is my first choice college, and applying early lets the school know it is too. I know that if they accepted me, I would go there, regardless of who else accepted me, which is the same as applying early decision," she added.

Jennifer Nash thinks her odds of being accepted by her first choice university increase applying under early decision.

"It's the school where I want to go. It's my first choice, and I have a better chance of getting in if I go early decision than regular decision," Nash remarked.

ADAM DAVIS was influenced by his brother's experi-

ence applying under early decision.

"I'd rather have the certainty of knowing where I am going, so I wouldn't have to linger over the question," he stated.

"My brother went under early decision and his process was pretty successful, so we decided that we were just going to follow that," he concluded.

Following a visit to the campus, Suzanne Courtheoux decided to apply to her first choice college under early decision.

"I really loved the school where I'm going early. If I get accepted, then I won't have to worry about that later," she said.

NOT ONLY is there a greater chance of being accepted when applying early, but students who take either choice will not have to worry as much with other applications until they hear the decision in December.

Caitrin Moran, who is applying under early action, commented.

"I'm able to relax about it a little bit."

Other seniors remain envious of the chance to resolved the "Where am I going next year?" question early.

"I wish I was going early decision so I could have everything done. I wouldn't have to worry for the many more months," Michal Schwartz sighed.

Desks with graffiti: Where do they go?

Vandalized desks lead to extra work for custodians

by *Grant Feldman*

Ask students and they will most likely tell you they have seen something written on a desk at school. Sometimes it's a harmless, pencil-drawn doodle, and sometimes an offensive message carved into the surface.

But if anyone were to look over a period of weeks, these inscriptions do not last for long.

When twelve students in the hall and library were asked, not a single one knew where these desks go to have graffiti removed. Though it doesn't cross the mind of most students, custodians have a considerable amount of extra work removing graffiti every night.

"[The custodians] have to sand basically anything with graffiti," said Winnetka facilities manager Steve Linke. "We pretty much have a zero tolerance for graffiti. That way nobody has to make the decision if it's offensive to somebody."

Every night, as custodians clean rooms throughout the school, they scan for desks that have graffiti and remove them. They transport the graffitied desks to the basement using the elevators, and bring finished desks upstairs to replace them.

"They use a pretty fine-grit sandpaper so [the desk] looks dull, but it's still smooth, so it's good for [students] to write on paper on top of it," said Linke.

Several hundred desks are kept in the basement, which comes

in handy for replacing graffitied desks but also helps during large events like standardized testing.

"We always have a big supply of desks downstairs, and that way if there's graffiti on a desk in your classroom, it just gets swapped out at night, but we won't be short a desk," said Linke. "But it's still a lot of work; the custodians have to carry it all the way down to the basement, and bring another one upstairs."

English teacher Brett Rubin believes that students write graffiti to rebel against authority figures, but they don't realize the extra burden they place on custodians.

'I think there's far more productive and edifying means for students to assert their independence'

"I think there's far more productive and edifying means for students to assert their independence and authority than leaving a meaningless tag on a piece of furniture that doesn't belong to them and that will only require further labor from an individual who already works a great deal as it is," said Rubin.

Custodian Odie Sanchez agreed that the graffiti is a nuisance, but considers it a part of his job.

"I see graffiti sometimes every day, every week, every month," said Sanchez. "There is a lot of bad stuff written, inappropriate things about religion, and it's not just on the desks. There's things written on the floor, the walls, and it creates extra work for us."