

Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986)

Knowledge Organiser

Institutional information	
Director:	John Hughes
Release:	June 1986 (USA), February 1987 (UK)
Production company:	Paramount
Country of production:	USA
Starring:	Matthew Broderick, Mia Sara, Alan Ruck, Jennifer Grey
Genres:	Drama; comedy; teen drama; coming-of age.
Other information:	Matthew Broderick was 23 during filming. Directed by John Hughes who wrote SIXTEEN CANDLES, THE BREAKFAST CLUB, HOME ALONE and many more.

Context:

Like all John Hughes films, set in Chicago.

Gently mocks the materialistic values of white, middle class teenagers; the 80's economic boom meant that teens found it easier to afford cars and such, led to selfish teens.

Questions how we define education; depicts education as a boring ritual.

Explores the disparity between intelligent teenagers and ignorant adults.

MTV was launched in 1981 and became the voice of the teen generation.

Generation X, were called 'latchkey kids' due to changes in society these teens had less adult supervision than previous generations.

The US was the most powerful nation in the world, and was winning the Cold War. This feeling of invincibility can be seen in scenes like 'The Parade' where the whole country appears to be united.

Narrative (The method and means by which you construct the events of a story into a plot)

Narrative structure: Three act structure. Five act structure could be applied.

Narrative viewpoint: Teen POV.

Binary oppositions: Adults seen in direct opposition to adults in many ways, especially in adults aiming to 'restrict' teens. This helps to drive the narrative through conflict.

Narrative style: Breaks the fourth wall.

Characters

Ferris Bueller: **Protagonist:** central to the film in so many ways. He's the physical embodiment of Generation X; entitled and materialistic but fortunately, charming, engaging and always entertaining. His use of monologue and direct address to camera is a direct manner of engaging the audience creating a direct relationship.

Cameron Frye: In many respects the opposite of Ferris but a recognisable characters from teen films; he is the dour conscience to Ferris' ambitious and risky personality.

Sloane Peterson: Ferris' girlfriend and another recognisable teen movie character. She often acts as the slightly more rational and empathetic character who aims to temper Ferris but also encourage Cameron. Perhaps the most 'normal' of the main characters. Often shot in a sexualised manner however, unlike the male characters.

Ed Rooney: **Antagonist:** he embodies the role of authority figure in a dramatic manner-a somewhat extreme version of this, especially compared to Ferris' parents.

Key Elements of Film Form (Micro elements)

Mise-en-scene: Establishing shot is of a classically suburban, upper middle class home, a 'white house'. This is iconographic of the American dream, complete with 3 new cars parked out front. Ferris' room is filled with the trappings of an 80's teen in consumerist America, a TV stereo, synthesisers and a computer. These were high value goods at the time and reinforce that Ferris is wealthy and this is an aspirational position for many.

Editing: There are a few scenes in the film that adopt a MTV/Music Video style montage, this montage actually starts with the MTV ad. Characters also often shown in staggered, jump-cut montages. For example, introduction of Jeannie is staggered, with a CU of the foot tapping, then CU of hands on hips before the reveal of the face.

Blocking/camera angles: Cinematography often shows off Chicago's landmarks and the architecture. Ferris is generally shot in medium close-ups. During the parade scene the camera is placed in the crowd looking up at Ferris; he is in an elevated position on the float and in society as a wealthy white male.

Soundtrack: Music is used to appeal to the teen audience with contemporary music used to anchor the feeling of excitement and demonstrate how cool Ferris is.

POV (cinematography): The first time we see the parents is in POV shot, positioning the audience as the 'child' in the scene. A POV rack focus is also used when Ferris looks at Jeanie. When Ferris opens the curtains there is a shot from the outside looking in, solidifying Ferris' position as a privileged prince in his tower.

Themes/issues.	
Conflict:	Seen both in the conflict between adults and teenagers and with authority figures and teenagers, conflict occurs throughout the film. The desire of teenagers to want to do some things with what they're allowed to do.
Education:	Depicted as being a boring ritual; Ferris learns more outside of the classroom.
Rebellion:	Throughout the film people rebel from their expected roles. Notice how some of the adults rebel too; consider why they do this and how rebellion is depicted.
Materialism:	The want and need for 'things' is key to Ferris, but does not dominate his desires.
Peer pressure:	We see many instances where peer pressure leads to decisions being made.
Fear:	Many characters experience fear, some are crippled by it. Consider who has fears and what people are fearful of; does it define them or their character type?

Key quotes:	
Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it. - Ferris	A classic quote from the film and one that outlines Ferris' outlook on life and helps to explain his somewhat selfish and apparently care-free nature. It also allows the audience an insight into his attitude towards the importance of experience.
I do have a test today, that wasn't bullshit. It's on European Socialism. I'm not European, nor do I plan on being European, so who gives a crap if they're socialists? It still wouldn't change the fact that I don't own a car!- Ferris	Another direct-to-camera monologue here from Ferris. He makes clear his attitude towards formal, school-based education here as well as his arrogant nature. As a character, as a person from Generation X, he's quite selfish and this quite provides the idea that he doesn't value a formal education as much as he values materialistic objects. He also broadly reflects the arguably ignorant approach that America in general had towards others in the 80s.
"I am not going to sit on my ass as the events that affect me unfold to determine the course of my life. I'm going to take a stand. I'm going to defend it. Right or wrong, I'm going to defend it." - Cameron	This quote shows Cameron's development through the film and shows how he's come to terms with the fact that his relationship with father has undermined his own destiny so far. It's a clear example of how the themes of fear, rebellion, conflict and peer pressure have affected Cameron and how they can be seen in his actions.
The question isn't 'what are we going to do', the question is 'what aren't we going to do?' - Ferris	A clear sense of Ferris' rebellion can be seen in this quote. He is carefree, unencumbered and wanting to experience things that he cannot do if 'imprisoned' in school.
"I weep for the future" - Restaurant Maitre'd	Here we get an adult, a person in power or responsibility outwardly expressing disdain for 'Generation X'.

Key scenes	
The Opening Monologue: (bit.ly/FBDOKS1)	This opening scene sets the tone for the film; humorous, rebellious and modern. Ferris breaking the fourth wall and use of text on screen suggests that Ferris knows that he's in a film. At the very least he knows the audience is there and this establishes a clear sense of relationship between Ferris and ourselves and we immediately warm to his engaging personality. Editing and the use of music are especially important to this scene also.
Skipping school and calling Cameron: (bit.ly/FBDOKS2)	School & the register are presented as being dull and repetitive. Editing and the lack of soundtrack help emphasise this. Note how Cameron is introduced; the opposite of Ferris' introduction. The colours are muted, lighting and low key directly contrast with the warmth and vibrancy of Ferris's poolside-lounging.
At the museum & nearly being caught: (bit.ly/FBDOKS3)	Another scene which uses montage style editing. We also have a lot of 'static' shots where neither the camera or the characters move. This is done, in part, to reflect the nature of the art that the characters are looking at. Cameron's performance as the film cuts between his face and that of a painting ever closer with each cut, reflects his emotions. The second half of the clip reflects the vibrancy of the city and Ferris' energy and ambition. There is some very clever use of camera movement, editing and performance in the taxi when they see Ferris' father.
The Parade Scene (bit.ly/FBDOKS4)	The closest the film comes to creating a scene that looks like a music video, the style which it borrows ideas from throughout. This scene allows us to see how Cameron is both worried about the future but somewhat accepting of it and Ferris's much more impulsive nature. Use of cinematography here is key; lighting is high-key, the scene is colourful, busy and full of extras, props and bright clothing. The mood is joyous and united; everyone in the city joins in and we see an unashamed form of celebration. Whilst Sloane and Cameron are shot in medium and medium-close shots, broadly at eye-level. Ferris however, is often shot from below and at a distance creating the sense that we are looking up at him in admiration.
Ferris rushes home (bit.ly/FBDOKS5)	A classic scene which has been parodied many times. Interesting to see that initially, Ferris' mum is more concerned with her job and her success rather than the reasons for Jeannie's arrest. This helps to emphasise the themes of capitalism and materialism. This scene is especially noted for its great use of parallel editing; we see 3 different narratives happening at once as the scene cuts between all three. Some interesting sound effects; a 'cartoonish' skidding noise and slow-mo sound from Ferris creates an exaggerated, comedic tone.