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THE PALEY CENTER FOR MEDIA

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What We're Watching



Greetings from The Paley Center for Media's Education Department!

Teen Transmitters Takeover!

For eight weeks, What We're Watching is being taken over by the Paley Center's Teen Transmitters internship cohort!

Each week a different pair of interns will share their thoughts on the 2023 media landscape along with personalized recommendations. This week you will hear from Jordan Armstead, a senior at the NYC Museum High School. Enjoy this unique educational opportunity to hear directly from young voices about media that impacts them!

As always, if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out to us at eduny@paleycenter.org.

Happy viewing,

Rebekah Fisk, Director of Education

Carlos Pareja, Manager of Education

Joseph Cupo, TT 2023 Summer Educator

What We're Watching: Female Rage

For centuries of film, anger has been fetishized or scrutinized as the characteristic of an insane woman. The thought of a woman being shown to hate her situation, whether that is her marriage or her inferior position in society, was absurd and scandalous. Recently, the term female rage has been coined as a genre that represents a new set of media showing women experiencing violent outbursts due to the restrictions of their lives. What is so revolutionary about this phenomenon is that many female viewers enjoy seeing female characters express their feelings of anger or despair by screaming, throwing chairs, and, in some cases, murder. Thus, women perceive the character's tenacity as a means to fight against the "keep the peace" and "stay quiet" facade that society imposes on them. Female rage is my new favorite genre and here are my favorite moments reflecting it in film that you may find to be deeply personal and thought-provoking.

This Week's Recommendations:



Hidden Figures (2016)

Age Recommendation: 10+

Where to Watch: Disney+

Hidden Figures is based on the lives of Katherine Johnson (played by Taraji B. Henson), Dorothy Vaughan (played by Octavia Spencer), and Mary Jackson (played by Janelle Monae). These women were some of the first African American mathematicians and engineers who worked for NASA in the 1960s. Their work helped launch astronaut John Glenn into orbit and reestablished the United States' competitiveness in the Space Race. In this scene, as the only black woman working amongst an all-white crew, Johnson must travel a long distance from her workspace to a colored bathroom, only to return to an angry boss reprimanding her for taking extra break time. Johnson reaches her emotional limit and teaches the whole office a lesson saying: "...I work like a dog day and night. Living off of coffee from a pot none of you wanna touch." With tears streaming down her face after months of stress from her balancing act, it all comes down in front of her stunned white male coworkers. Now, this scene is a little controversial when it comes to applying this to female rage. This scene does not stem from the usual white women's issues of not becoming a famous actress or a cheating boyfriend. Johnson's outburst is due to the frustration of segregation that forced her to walk in the rain for a bathroom because colored people were not allowed in white spaces. Due to this difference, critics have argued that the "coffee pot scene" should not be considered female rage, but an anger special to black women only. Despite arguments, *Hidden Figures* should still be watched as three black women faced segregation and discrimination while balancing their families and demanding jobs.



Pearl (2022)

Age Recommendation: 17+

Where to Watch: Showtime

Pearl, produced in 2022 as a sequel and backstory for the movie *X*, features a young farm girl named Pearl who is in search of fame and an escape from her family's farm. As the film goes on, the audience quickly realizes that Pearl is not sane as she abuses animals, tries to kill her disabled father, gets "busy" with a scarecrow, and goes on a killing spree involving everyone that she believes is trapping her. *Pearl* is meant to be a critique of the extremes that people will go to for fame, but Pearl's feminine rage goes beyond that. The dream of being an actress satisfies the need for attention and freedom that Pearl is constantly denied. Pearl's mother almost blames her for wanting a life away from cleaning after her paralyzed father. Pearl's fiancé, Howard, has a secret taste for violence that he releases by leaving Pearl and constantly joining wars. Pearl's lover, the projectionist, promises an escape but once he realizes that Pearl is a little "off," he ends up using her for her body and trying to leave. The projectionist's betrayal is the last straw for Pearl as she shouts: "I'm not staying on this farm!" before repeatedly stabbing a pitchfork into the man's heart. Although the audience is not exactly rooting for Pearl, they may be inclined to understand where she is coming from. Years of being trapped, belittled, and left behind has influenced Pearl's mindset of doing anything to escape her oppressive reality. In a way, she is owning her independence and permanently silencing all those that consciously and unconsciously demanded her to stay on the farm. I recommend this movie if you want to be thrilled while

learning if Pearl makes it off the farm. If so, with who? Does she get caught and punished for her crimes? What would you do to escape your reality prison?



The First Wives Club (1996)

Age Recommendation: 13+

Where to Watch: Available to rent

The First Wives Club is one of my favorite revenge movies because of how iconic it is. Set in 1969 in New York City, *The First Wives Club* is about three ex-wives that have been screwed over by their misogynist husbands. This scene features Annie MacDuggan-Paradis (Diane Keaton) and her husband who was trying to divorce her over her supposed blandness. Her ex-husband, Aaron Paradis agreed to meet with a couples therapist at first and then proceeded to have an affair with the therapist. Over the course of the movie, the audience sees the gaslighting and passive-aggressive manipulation that Annie endures, up until the end. Annie loses all hope for her marriage and focuses on her friends' mission of getting revenge on their husbands while forming a stable foundation for their new independent lives. This scene takes place in the hotel room where Annie and her husband (according to Annie) "made sacred love." The therapist visits the hotel room, unaware of Annie's presence, exposes the affair, and then tries to use what Annie discusses in therapy against her. Annie proceeds to scream sarcastically: "I'm very sorry I ever met you, and I am sorry that I allowed myself to love you for all those years. I'm sorry that I did nothing but be there for you, every minute, of every day and support you in your every move. I'M SORRY!!!" I cannot fully describe

how emotionally satisfying this scene was, especially with the connection to women who have loved men who have abused them. For a comic relief story with profound realities of women and sweet vengeance, *The First Wives Club* is for you.

Female rage is so hard to convey without encouraging some negative stereotypes of women. This new age of feminine rage is demonstrating the anger, frustration, and annoyance that women go through in their daily lives as they experience arrogance, discrimination, and harassment. Please enjoy these justifiably pissed-off women, and be sure to reflect back on your own feminine rage experiences.

Additional Recommendations:

Jennifer's Body (2009)

Age Recommendation: 17+

Where to Watch: Max

A high school thriller about a high school girl turned into a flesh-eating succubus that lures men to their doom after a satanic ritual goes wrong.

Maleficent (2014)

Age Recommendation: 8+

Where to Watch: Amazon Prime

Disney produced this feminist live-action rendition of the famous "Sleeping Beauty" story, focusing on the villain and her personal relationship with Aurora.

Euphoria (2019-present)

Age Recommendation: 17+

Where to Watch: Max

A dark, yet comedic high school drama showing students going through very adult situations with teenage emotions.

Midsommar (2019)

Age Recommendation: 17+

Where to Watch: Hulu

A psychological thriller about a girl going with her boyfriend to a Swedish midsummer festival after the death of her family, only to find something suspicious going on with the locals.

Promising Young Woman (2020)

Age Recommendation: 17+

Where to Watch: Amazon Prime

A psychological thriller of a woman luring and killing men that take advantage of women in search of the people that caused the suicide of her best friend.

Enjoy,
Jordan

Photos—*Hidden Figures*: 20th Century Studios; *Pearl*: A24; *The First Wives Club*: Paramount Pictures

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