

Candidate 1

An analysis of how naivety and circumstance affect the character of Lucien in "Lacombe Lucien".

'Lacombe Lucien' produced in 1971, is a film directed by Louis Malle, which was controversially met by the French public. The film explores the coming-of-age of a young adolescent, living under the Vichy regime during the closing stages of World War Two in France. The film culminates in the protagonist, Lucien Lacombe, becoming an ally to the Nazis through working for the Gestapo. Malle examines the themes of naivety and circumstance and demonstrates their devastating role in the life of an ordinary boy, as we learn of the tragic consequence of Lucien's involvement in the war.

The theme of naivety and circumstance is first introduced when we see how impressionable Lucien can be.

Lucien (regardant Laborit): Y en a du changement, ici...

Laborit (agacé): Il faut bien faire le travail! Ton père est prisonnier, Joseph est parti...

Lucien: Ah bon!

Laborit (haussant les épaules): Il est au maquis, ce feignant... (Il rit.) J'ai un fils patriote, figure-toi... (P16)

Lucien comes from a difficult family situation. He finds it hard to tolerate his mother sleeping with another man-Laborit. He doesn't feel like he is enough for his mother, which may be partly why he is disconnected from the world around him- he has no sense of belonging. His father is absent from his life as he is a prisoner of war. This perhaps justifies why Lucien acts in the way that he does as he has no male role model to look up to, so he just copies those around him instead. I think that Laborit plants the idea into Lucien's mind to join the Resistance. He boasts that he has a patriotic son and so we can deduce that Lucien wishes to join the Resistance to be accepted by his family, highlighting a prominent child-like quality of constantly seeking affection-his father after all, will be seen as a patriot. Had Laborit not mentioned the Resistance, Lucien may have never considered joining and his fate would be entirely different.

Lucien demonstrates his child-like mindset by trying to bribe Peyssac (the local Resistance leader) with a rabbit he has hunted.

Lucien pose le lapin sur le bureau de Peyssac.

Lucien: C'est pour vous...

Peyssac jette un oeil au lapin.

Peyssac (ironique): Je te remercie. C'est pour ça que tu es venu me voir?

Lucien (brusquement): Je veux entrer au maquis. (P15/16)

This illustrates Lucien's naivety as it shows he thinks that inducement will persuade Peyssac to allow him into the Resistance. Peyssac is astute to Lucien's tactic which is shown in his disinterested response to receiving the gift. Peyssac denies Lucien entry into the Maquis by telling him that he is too young. When Lucien doesn't seem satisfied with this response, Peyssac highlights to Lucien that he doesn't really understand what it means to be in the

Resistance. His rejection leads to him becoming an unwitting accomplice to the French Gestapo.

It's only because of circumstance, a bike wheel puncture, that he is caught by a collaborator after the curfew near the seedy Hôtel des Grottes -the local Gestapo headquarters. Lucien is then literally led down a path to his own self-destruction.

In the hotel Lucien is surrounded by people he considers above him in society – an aristocrat, a movie star and a champion cyclist.

Le jeune garçon semble flatté d'être l'objet de l'attention des trois autres. (P22)

The collaborators ply Lucien with drinks making him feel like a real grown-up, when in fact they are using him and corrupting his innocence. The alcohol is only used so that they can lure Lucien into giving them intelligence. Lucien is vulnerable to the glamour Nazi power can yield and unwittingly falls into the trap the collaborators have set for him. They make him feel valued and of importance- feelings we know he lacks in his ordinary life, especially after being rejected by the Resistance and his own family. The collaborators use his youthful naivety to their advantage and Lucien is blinded by their welcoming hospitality. He does not see that he is being deceptively manipulated.

Lucienne: Et comment il s'appelle, cet instituteur?

Lucien: Peyssac... Peyssac Robert. (p22)

This encourages him to disclose all the information he knows about the local Resistance leader- Peyssac- without considering what the consequences of this will be for him. This highlights that Lucien has no moral compass and is ignorant to the lives of others. Lucien shows his lack of understanding when he tells Lucienne that Peyssac is a free-mason and then asks what a free-mason is.

Il paraît qu'il est franc-maçon... C'est quoi, un franc-maçon?(p22)

This underlines that Lucien, like a child, is just regurgitating information he has overheard. He doesn't really understand the meaning and value of the information he is telling the enemy. Although it was Lucien's naivety that caused him to become entangled in the nefarious work of the collaborators, he may never have been embroiled in this if he hadn't been rejected by the Resistance in the first place, underlining the role that both naivety and circumstance play.

Lucien has an opportunity to turn his fate around. The maid at the Hôtel de Grottes informs him of what everyone else seems to be aware of:

Marie: D'abord, c'est les Américains qui vont gagner la guerre...Tout le monde le dit... Elle se couche sur lui, l'embrasse.

Tu m'entends? (Elle rit.) Les Boches, ils sont foutus... C'est les Américains, je te dis... (p46)

Instead of reacting to this information, he does nothing. Lucien cannot comprehend the significance of it as it won't affect his life at that moment. If Lucien was more engaged he would have been able to calculate the risks and decide that he could go back to living his life in the route in which it was destined to be lived- blissfully unaware, hunting in the wild with few responsibilities. Under normal circumstances he would work on the farm and be a respected member of the community. However, Lucien cannot look beyond the immediate future and enjoys the perks that come with being a collaborator – he is criminally powerful and can act out his impulses. Moreover, he is of some value to the French Gestapo and so feels worthy there. They have become his new “family”.

Lucien seeks to assert himself as a man. He speaks down to Horn and is condescending. He thinks that he is now superior to Mr Horn because of his because of the power and status offered to him by his involvement with the French Gestapo.

Lucien: Vous savez, Albert... Il faut pas toujours croire M. Jean-Bernard... C'est pas vraies histoires d'Espagne... (Un temps.) Il veut votre argent, Albert...
Horn: Vous croyez que je ne le sais pas? (P69)

He foolishly believes that Mr Horn has not already realised that Jean-Bernard is cheating him for his money, emphasizing that he has allowed the power to go to his head. He sneers at Jean-Bernard's proposal of seeking refuge in Spain.

With the newfound power Lucien experiences through his association with the collaborators, he is able to exploit others, namely Mr Horn. We watch Lucien discover lust for the first time. We learn that Lucien wants to pursue France, the daughter of the Jewish tailor he is terrorising. He invites her to a party; however her father refuses to let her go. So Lucien threatens him.

Lucien: Si elle vient pas, c'est vous que j'emmene chez mes amis! (p75)

Lucien refers to collaborators (Jean-Bernard, Faure etc) as his friends, underlining that he doesn't understand that he is being exploited. The fact that Lucien wants to become involved in a relationship with a Jew stresses his naivety and lack of knowledge to the Gestapo. It goes against the core values of the Nazi regime. It also demonstrates just how naive Lucien is – he really only does care about his own desires and needs. This highlights that Lucien does not truly believe in the principals of the German Police, he is simply a member because it suits him and gives him the freedom to do what he wants. Lucien is naive to think he will be able to have a relationship with a Jewish girl and come out of that situation unscathed during that period of time in France, especially because he is being protective of the people being targeted by his superiors.

Lucien's naivety is emphasised in the closing stages of the script. After Lucien kills the German police officer trying to take France and her grandmother away, he tries to break his ties with the Gestapo and escape to build a new life. Instead of facing the consequences of his actions Lucien shows his naivety by running away like a child.

France: Où va-t-on?

Lucien: Je sais pas...en Espagne. (P110)

He has no plans and this is highlighted when France asks where they are going. Lucien only says Spain because that is where the other people he knew were heading, yet earlier he had scoffed at Jean-Bernard's plans to go there. He does not think for himself and lets other people's opinions influence and shape him. He has carried out his action once again without thinking what he is going to do thereafter. He has no real plan and hasn't thought of how he is going to survive in the long-term as he only knows how to live in each moment. In the end he hides from the Resistance, like a child, in a deserted farmhouse in the woods with France and her grandmother. Lucien's return to the simplicity of rural life signifies a return to where he started. He has really gone nowhere yet has managed to ruin so many lives (including his own) in the process.

Finally, at the end of the film, we learn that Lucien was executed by the Resistance in October for his actions. During the film Mr Horn comments: "**C'est curieux, je n'arrive pas à vous détester tout à fait**" (P84). This is true for the audience also as we find it difficult to blame Lucien completely for his actions due to his naivety and the circumstances in which he finds himself.

Bibliography

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Candidate 2

In times of war and great trauma, the question must be asked 'What makes us human?' In the film 'Au revoir les enfants' and the poem 'Liberté', to what extent is this question central to our understanding of the works?

'Au revoir les enfants', a film by Louis Malle, is set in occupied France during the Second World War. The story follows a young Jewish boy, Jean Bonnet, who takes refuge in a Catholic boarding school in order to hide from the Gestapo. During his stay at the school, Jean creates a strong bond with one of his fellow pupils, Julien Quentin, who searches Jean's locker and discovers his true identity, inscribed in the front cover in a book. Malle focuses on how the boys' friendship develops into a close bond throughout the film and, by telling their story, develops the themes of loss of childhood innocence, friendship, and freedom to live life as you choose. These themes, also central to the poem 'Liberté' by Paul Eluard, not only deepen the audience's understanding of the issues in France at that time but also give an insight into the perennial theme of what makes us human.

Loss of innocence and the understanding that is gained as a child matures are at the heart of 'Au revoir les enfants'. At the start of the film, Julien's innocence and lack of understanding of other people's situations at this time is portrayed when he questions the definition of a Jew- "Qu'est-ce que c'est un youpin?"[1]. This suggests the idea of Julien losing his childhood naivety and the fact that he is, in his subconscious, questioning what it actually is that makes us human.

The idea of what makes us human is taught to the boys by Père Jean, the priest in the school and a father figure for the boys, when everyone is at the church in the middle of the film - "Aujourd'hui je m'adresse particulièrement aux plus jeunes... mes enfants, nous vivons des temps de discorde et de haine. Le mensonge est tout puissant, les chrétiens s'entre-tuent, ceux qui devraient nous guider nous trahissent. Plus que jamais, nous devons nous garder de l'égoïsme et de l'indifférence" - [2]. He explains that the boys must be careful what they say and always be kind to everyone, no matter their religion or status. This also highlights the young boys losing their naivety to the trauma of the war at the time and that they must be mature. Furthermore, he teaches that what makes us human is our compassion and kindness towards others.

Likewise, this message is also portrayed in the poem 'Liberté', where Eluard uses repetition to emphasise how freedom is always on his mind - "J'écris ton nom" [3] - and his hope that the war will be over is just as strong as the trauma of the war itself. This shows to the reader that the world has lost its naivety and has to face reality and be kind to everyone in order to maintain hope that the war will soon end.

Furthermore, Malle seems to imply that an important factor of what makes us human is the bonds and connections we have with others. He uses Jean and Julien's friendship to show this effectively. The boy's friendship is first truly expressed when Julien looks through Jean's locker without his permission,

only to discover a book, with Jean's real, Jewish name etched into the front cover- "Premier Prix en arithmétique - Jean ...Jean Kippel ...Kippelstein"[4]. This highlights to the audience that the two boys now have a secret which cements their bond and shows how their friendship is unlike any other. Julien's own view on humanity is made clear at this point. He does not seem fazed by the fact that Jean is a Jew; for Julien, what makes us human is our traits and personality, not our religion.

During a treasure hunt held by the school, their friendship is strengthened even more. The two boys bond in this scene when they find the treasure-"Les verts, on gagne!"[5]. This also emphasises to audience the deeper idea that during this moment, the boys are completely content and have almost forgotten about the war because of each other's presence and the positive impact that they have on each other. Malle wants his audience to understand that to be human, we must forget about trauma and have a positive mind-set in order to truly be happy and carefree.

Eluard also expresses the importance of friendship and developing maturity in the turning point of the autobiographical poem, where he shows that he has grown up wanting to be free and hoping that the war will soon end. This highlights that he has developed a mature mind-set and ponders the idea of humanity throughout the poem- "Sur les saisons fiancées" [6].

Following on from this, Jean and Julien's friendship is set in stone during the turning point of the film, when the boys take part in the treasure hunt. The juxtaposition of the childishness of the treasure hunt and the innocent nature with the thoughts about death coming from Jean gives this scene an eerie atmosphere and shows that Jean has an almost morbid attitude as to what makes him human- "je suis la seule personne dans cette école qui pense à la mort" [7]. This suggests that Jean understands the consequences of the Jewish Holocaust- he has experienced separation and death first hand through the loss of his family.

It is clear that by the end of the film, Julien has become totally aware of the irony of the Jewish Holocaust. Therefore, Jean has learned a valuable lesson in which he now understands fully that Jewish people are no different to himself: being a Jew doesn't matter in Julien's mind and what really makes us human is our bonds with other people and maturity gained through trauma.

In the final scene of the film, the dialogue is deeply moving and emotional when the pupils have to say goodbye to Jean after he is taken away by the Gestapo- "Au revoir"[8]. In this moment, the boys are not only saying goodbye to Jean, but also goodbye to their innocence and childhood as the war has forced them to be mature beyond their years. This highlights how the pupils have developed their personalities and ways of thinking throughout the film. This solidifies the idea that what really makes us human in times of great trauma are the strong bonds we have with others and the compassion people show one another.

To conclude, the horror and trauma of the war forced the boys in the film to grow up and leave their childhood innocence behind. Jean and Julien had to adapt a mature mind-set and develop their own opinions in order to deal with their situation but the friendship between the two of them made it significantly easier. This draws us towards the final idea that what truly makes us human are our friendships and true bonds with others.

[1] Malle, Louis, *Au revoir les enfants*, Paris, Stella Films, 1987, 0:54:15

[2] Malle, Louis, *Au revoir les enfants*, Paris, Stella Films, 1987, 1:06:35-1:07:01

[3] Eluard, Paul, *Liberté, Poésie et Verité*, France, 1942, line 4

[4] Malle, Louis, *Au revoir les enfants*, Paris, Stella Films, 1987, 0:35:34

[5] Malle, Louis, *Au revoir les enfants*, Paris, Stella Films, 1987, 0:40:13

[6] Paul, Eluard, *Liberté, Poésie et verité*, France, 1942, line 19

[7] Malle, Louis, *Au revoir les enfants*, Paris, Stella Films, 0:50:18

[8] Malle, Louis, *Au revoir les enfants*, Paris, Stella Films, 1987, 1:24:45

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Film

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Poem

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Word count: 1042

Commentary on candidate evidence

The candidate evidence contained in this pack has achieved the following marks for the coursework assessment task.

Candidate 1

The candidate was awarded **30 marks**.

Content

The candidate has chosen a concise title, which makes clear the focus of the analysis. The main source is a film that clearly supports analysis, and the essay could be designated as a media portfolio, although the candidate has stated that it is literature, presumably having read the screenplay. She takes an analytical approach throughout and offers a series of reasoned and relevant arguments. She demonstrates throughout a very good understanding of the focus of the study.

Style

The candidate presents detailed evidence from sources to support the analysis and the conclusion drawn. She includes a number of relevant quotations which, for the most part are appropriate, although one or two may not have a clear connection to the argument. There is a range of critical terminology – *we can deduce; Lucien, like a child...; underlining the role...; Lucien's naivety is emphasised; this is highlighted....* The candidate maintains an appropriate register, although there is one instance of the first person singular being used.

Organisation

The candidate writes in a well-organised and structured way, with quotations highlighted in bold to make it easier for the reader to grasp the point being made. The writing is coherent, although there are one or two instances of confusion relating to the identity of characters, and the work is entirely relevant to the focus of the analysis as described in the title. The candidate presents and evaluates a series of arguments and draws a conclusion that relates directly to the title.

Candidate 2

The candidate was awarded **15 marks**.

Content

The candidate has chosen a title that is somewhat wordy, over ambitious and not entirely clear. The initial statement makes an assumption which has to be justified and combining the first question 'What makes us human?' with the second 'To what extent...?' is setting the candidate a very difficult task. Ironically, given the complexity of the title, the piece of writing actually falls below the minimum recommended length. The sources chosen do support analysis and the candidate does demonstrate some understanding of the focus of the study but the arguments presented are not fully developed and at times, the link between the evidence chosen and the conclusion drawn is not immediately obvious. Given that, the candidate refers to two separate works in the title it is unfortunate that the poem is only mentioned in two very short paragraphs with quotations which do not support any of the assertions made.

Style

The candidate does present some evidence from the sources but, as already stated, it is not always appropriate. There are a number of quotations but they lack relevance to the arguments which the candidate is attempting to present. The candidate maintains an appropriate register, with the exception of '*He does not seem fazed*'. The candidate uses some critical terminology – *this also highlights; this message is also portrayed; this also emphasises; this suggests that...* but, given that this is a media essay, some reference to, for example, cinematography, editing or lighting would have been beneficial.

Organisation

The work does have some sense of structure, although the insertion of a paragraph about the poem between two paragraphs on the treasure hunt scene is awkward. The candidate does attempt to make a link between the final conclusion and the title without actually answering the question 'To what extent is this question central to our understanding of the works?' The writing is largely coherent, although the link between the two sources is asserted but not demonstrated. The candidate does attempt to present arguments but not always successfully, for example paragraphs 2, 3 and 7.