

The Edukators



FILM SYNOPSIS

The Edukators is a film about three young Germans who are struggling to make the rest of the world understand their revolutionary beliefs.

With their own unique way of fighting against the bourgeoisie state, Jan and Peter break into the homes of the holidaying rich, and rearrange their furniture to make them feel paranoid and uncomfortable in their own homes. The Edukators leave notes for their victims saying 'Your days of plenty are numbered'. When Jules, Peter's girlfriend, is forced to move out of her flat owing to her debt, she also becomes involved in their bizarre political campaigns, and gets a little too close to Jan.

Things get slightly out of hand when Jules and Jan pay a visit to the house of Hardenberg, the millionaire who Jules owes 100,000 euros after crashing into his car. While they are busy rearranging the furniture and pushing the sofa in the swimming pool, Hardenberg comes home and catches them both red-handed. There is nothing else for it but to call Peter, kidnap Hardenberg and make a run for it.

The film takes the audience on a roller-coaster ride as ideals are tested, generations collide, passions rage and loyalties are shattered.

DIRECTOR

Austrian born director Hans Weingartner was inspired to make the film out of his own frustrations with life in Germany. On the film's official website he writes:

'The movie is about the last ten years of my life – wanting to be part of a political movement but never really finding one that worked. I believe we live in a time when young people crave political change, but don't truly know where to begin. Perhaps our societies have grown so individualistic that a collective dynamic is no longer possible.'

- What does he mean by a 'political movement'?
- Why might he be frustrated with the lack of political movement in modern-day Germany?
- What do you think he means by 'Perhaps our societies have grown so individualistic that a collective dynamic is no longer possible'?
- What other films has director Hans Weingartner made? Do his other films have a political slant?

GERMAN POLITICS

In an interview with the BBC website, actor Daniel Brühl who plays Jan in *The Edukators*, and who made his name in the 2002 German box-office hit *Good Bye Lenin!*, talks about his feelings towards making the film and how he believes young people will relate to the film.

'What I like about The Edukators is that the way it is shot is very realistic, but when you think about the characters it's not very realistic,' claims the twenty-six-year old German star. *'It's very utopian and naïve, the fact that these three young kids take so much risk to break into some rich man's house to move some things around and not steal anything. They're poetic rebels – a very cinematic invention.'*

The *Edukators* spout the political idealism of legendary left-wing politicians Baader-Meinhof (the Red Army Faction), with the violence replaced by an artistic mode of protest born in the mind of a Situationist. *'Young people in Germany are very frustrated that right now there is no political movement - everybody is very passive,'* Brühl argues. *'What is attractive about the Red Army Faction is that it was the last real youth movement, although I know that some people are very much into the anti-globalisation movement, and I think that is more interesting than the left-wing terrorism of the 1970s. We wanted to make it clear in The Edukators that we're not the 'new RAF'. We did not make a film about terrorists but young people who are angry and trying to make a change.'*

- How much do you know about Germany and German politics? The film was released in 2004/2005. Which political party was in power? Are they still in power? Why might young people feel the need to revolt?
- Do you know anything about the Red Army Faction that Daniel Brühl mentions? Do some research into the group. What are their beliefs? Would they still be relevant today? Discuss this as a group.
- What do you think The Edukators wanted to achieve by breaking into people's houses? Why didn't they steal anything?
- The Edukators are forcing their victims to think about life outside their comfortable existence and are campaigning for anti-globalisation. What does the phrase anti-globalisation mean?
- If The Edukators were to write their victims a letter, instead of just leaving a short note, what would the letter say? Write one of their victims a letter, telling them why they were chosen, highlight some of the things that are important to The Edukators and key messages that they want their victims to think about.
- Now pretend you are a victim of The Edukators who has arrived home to find all their furniture rearranged in a bizarre manner. Write a letter to national German newspaper, Die Welt, detailing what has happened. Would you be annoyed, frightened, amused or apathetic? Would you demand something be done about The Edukators?

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Weingartner has produced a film with strong characters that are easy for the audience to identify with, no matter what their age. Throughout the course of the film, the characters experience many situations that make them grow and develop.

The main three characters cannot accept the life that has been created for them (or they've created for themselves) and are determined to try and change it for themselves and others. They hope that by breaking into rich people's houses they will make them more aware of other people in society, who don't have as much as they do.

- Before you watched the film and from the little you knew about The Edukators, how did you feel about them breaking into the wealthy people's houses?
- How did these feelings change throughout the course of the film? Do you support what they are doing? Do you understand The Edukators' frustrations?
- Do you think that Jules has the right to be annoyed about having to pay Hardenberg the 100,000 euros for the damage to his car, even though she was driving without insurance and a valid driving license? What does the rest of the group think?

- If The Edukators had been caught by the police after abducting Hardenberg what do you think they would have said? How might each of their statements have been different? Choose between Jan, Jules and Peter and write a statement for the police giving their side of the story.

Working in small groups:

- In the chart below, make notes on each character, e.g. personality traits, lifestyle, beliefs, etc.

Name of Character	Description of Character
Jan	
Jules	
Peter	
Hardenberg	Millionaire businessman, ex-revolutionary, middle-aged, family man

- In the second chart, record what significant experience each of the characters goes through and note what you think they learnt from their experiences throughout the film. Who do you think learned the most and why?

Name of Character	Significant Experiences	Lessons Learnt
Jan		
Jules		
Peter		
Hardenberg		

Compare your charts; do you all have the same personality traits for the characters? Did everyone identify the same significant experiences the characters faced? What about what the characters learnt?

RETURN OF THE GERMAN CINEMA

Many critics believe that 2004 saw the introduction of a new wave of German cinema. Brought about by more innovative and creative films coming out of the country, an increase in Germans eager to support home-grown talent and an influx of cinema-goers around the globe intrigued to find out what life is like in Deutschland.

The Edukators was one of the films that marked the return of German cinema, when it was accepted into a competition for the prestigious Cannes Film Festival. It was the first film from Germany to be accepted by the event for eleven years.

The Edukators grossed around £4,617,120 in box-office sales across the world and was nominated for, and won, five awards.

German cinema still has some way to go to catch up with other countries. However, thanks to films like The Edukators and Good Bye Lenin! (Director Wolfgang Becker) the eyes of the world are focusing on Germany to see what is coming next.

- How much do you know about German cinema?
- What other German films have you seen?
- Identify what is described as the new wave of German cinema. Look at the work of contemporary directors like Hans Weingartner and Wolfgang Becker. Are there any similar characteristics?
- Actor Daniel Brühl who played Jan in The Edukators, was also the lead in Good Bye Lenin! and is obviously a crucial part in the jigsaw that makes up the new wave of German cinema. What do both the characters he played in the films say about contemporary German cinema?

Subtitles

The Edukators uses subtitles for easy translation. Do you enjoy watching films with subtitles?

- Do you find the narrative/plot is easy to understand when the film has subtitles?
- Can you still relate to the characters when you watch a film with subtitles?
- Write a short article for the Media Guardian, for BBC online or short news story for Newsbeat, advocating the benefits of subtitles. Why should people watch films with subtitles? Why are they used instead of dubbing a voice-over?
- Research the audience for each media outlet. How would the language be different?

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