

Diversity Literacy Week 3 – Disability

Group Assignment 1 - Children of a Lesser God (1986)

Directed by Randa Haines

“Children of a Lesser God tells the story of a speech teacher at a school for deaf students who falls in love with a deaf woman who also works there. Sarah Norman is a troubled young deaf woman working as a cleaner at a school for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in New England. An energetic new teacher arrives at the school and encourages her to set aside her insular life by learning how to talk. As she already uses sign language, Sarah resists his attempts to get her to talk. Romantic interest develops between James and Sarah.”

Extract from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children_of_a_Lesser_God

Please read the questions below before the film starts. Think about the questions as you watch the film and then as a group discuss the Group Assignment questions at the end and together formulate an answer. This is an academic piece, proper referencing required.

Clip 1 [19:27-42:22] James has met Sarah and finds her intriguing. He’s decided that he wants to teach Sarah to speak. In this scene he first approaches the Principal with the idea.

- *Why does Sarah refuse to speak? What does James insistence that she learn how illustrate about the construction of disability? How is the intersection between disability, gender and sexuality illustrated in the library scene?*

Clip 2 [59:17 – 1:08:37] Sarah has just been upset by seeing how proud James is of his students who have just performed a song in the school concert, where they use their voices. She breaks a mirror, almost injuring a parent. The Principal of the school calls James to his office.

- *How does this clip illustrate the construction of disability? Think about what the Principal says to James, how James treats Sarah when he wants her to move in with him and the way everyone treats Sarah and James in the poker scene.*

Clip 3 [1:20:10-1:30:18] Sarah and James are attending a party at Marian’s house. Marian is a professional woman and someone Sarah greatly admires.

- *Why is Sarah agitated after the party at Marian’s house? How does the argument she has with James illustrate how power operates in constructions of disability?*



Group Assignment 1 (1500 words)

- Through a clear definition of 'social construction' and 'intersectionality' explain why you as a group thought that we might have chosen this as a film which particularly illustrates these concepts.
- Having watched the film and discussed the concepts above reflect on how you have been part of the construction of disability. Give clear examples.