

Sample

Bringing Up Baby Formal Analysis Essay

The screwball comedy *Bringing Up Baby* follows a mild-mannered paleontologist named David Huxley and a free-spirited woman named Susan Vance whose lives are intertwined through a series of wild adventures. As David's character is introduced, it is revealed that he is engaged to a fellow paleontologist in his museum. When Susan first meets David, he believes her to be a nuisance and wants to get rid of her. However, as conflicts in the film develop, they are pitted against one another and eventually realize they must work together. As these conflicts continue, both characters seem to fall more and more in love with each other and reveal their feelings towards one another when David's fiancée jilts him. This film, although it is not at first apparent, supports the status-quo of how heterosexual relationships work as David and Susan's actions are very conservative with regards to gender roles.

At the beginning of the scene, in a long shot, the leopard Baby is seen rubbing against Susan's leg in a long shot as she talks on the phone. This long shot continues as she ushers Baby into the bathroom and calls him a nuisance as he will not let her talk on the phone. The next shot then turns into a medium long shot in which Susan is trying to convince David to come over and help her with the leopard. The next shot although short, is a medium shot showing David telling Susan that the leopard is her problem. It then cuts back to a medium long shot showing Susan pleading and then turns into a long shot. In this new long shot, Susan is shown running to get David but inevitably falls and trips on a wire connected to the lamp. David, in a medium shot is shown to be worried about Susan as he stands up and says "Susan! What happened? Was it the leopard?" The scene then cuts back to Susan in a medium long shot as she is on the floor and back to David who is worriedly looking at the phone. Alarmed, David then asks Susan if the leopard had attacked her. At first, Susan begins telling David she is okay but after realizing what

happened, she tricks David by screaming, “The leopard, David the leopard!” Soon after, it is then revealed that Susan is knocking things over in order to imitate as if the leopard is attacking her. In the last few shots, David then trips, tells her he will be right over, and rushes out the door as Susan is now shown on the floor sighing and hanging up the phone.

Susan is first showing talking on the phone with David as she then ushers Baby into the bathroom for being a nuisance. Directly after, Susan is seen trying to convince David to come over and help her. Susan is deliberately acting helpless as a way of seeking David’s help and in order to see him. As the viewer continually watches, they become aware of the cuts between each character. These cuts emphasize the fact that each character cannot see each other and since Susan knows David is unable to see her, she uses this to her advantage to try and persuade David to help her with the leopard. As Susan walks and then trips, this indicates to the viewer that she is a bit scatter-brained and clumsy as she does not look around her surroundings and as a result, always finds herself in some sort of problem. At first, David is very worried about her and Susan begins to reassure David that she is alright. However, upon realizing that David cannot see her, Susan stops mid-sentence and begins shouting and throwing things around in order to make it appear as if the leopard is attacking her. This short realization that Susan has ties into being a ‘damsel in distress’ as she wants to be saved by David. Susan is playing into the stereotype of how females always need to be saved and David goes along with it since the next thing he does is tell Susan he will be right over. He then rushes out the door to try and save her. David, in trying to save her, plays into the ‘knight in shining armor’ stereotype who is trying to save Susan from herself and the problems that she faces.

The film *Bringing Up Baby* plays into a few stereotypes that when first watching the film, are not noted. In the specific moment mentioned above, Susan uses three different kinds of

stereotypes associated with females: one in pretending to be helpless, the second in being clumsy and scatterbrained, and the third in being 'the damsel in distress.' David, in an attempt to try and save her, plays into the 'knight in shining armor' as he rushes over to help her with the leopard.

Sample 2

Bringing Up Baby (1938)

Bringing Up Baby is a film directed by Howard Hawks produced through RKO Picture company. This film was released in 1938 and is recognized as one of the most influential screwball comedies. The film follows the life of David Huxley, a paleontologist, who seeks to make a good impression to Mrs. Random in order to get one million dollars donated to his museum. In the midst of his situation, David meets Mrs. Random's niece named Susan who creates chaos the day before his wedding. Susan falls in love with David, but positions David into unfortunate circumstances that triggers his disapproval towards Susan.

A specific scene that depicts gender roles is the phone call between David and Susan. The camera begins in a long shot with Susan speaking on the phone with David. The scene cuts to a medium shot in which Susan is seen trying to convince David to come over to her house. There is a hard cut to David that is shown in a medium shot. In this shot, David replies to Susan by strongly refusing to help her. To her response, Susan begins to make loud noises as if she is being attacked by the leopard. There is a clear sound of noise coming from Susan's line as she is on the phone with David. The sound is emphasized and clearly portrayed towards the viewer. The camera switches toward a long shot that shows David rushing to help Susan. The very last shots shows Susan on the floor in a medium shot as she smiles in relief.

Since the conversation is happening over the phone, there is no way David can tell what Susan is really up to. In David's responses, he recognizes that Susan is in trouble and knows that he has to help her. In his gullible response, David rushes out the door to go to help Susan. In the very end of the clip, Susan is seen lying on the floor as she celebrates her manipulation of David. The actions of David and Susan clearly illustrate the traditionalist ideas of men and women in society. The woman is seen as manipulative, while the man is often gullible in response. This is

evident when David and Susan are talking on the phone. As a viewer, we know that David can not see physically see Susan since they are both on the telephone and the cuts between the two characters show different locations. The loud noises being clearly emphasized in the scene also indicate the use of manipulation of Susan. Being able to hear the sounds through David's phone line show that Susan wants David to succumb to her. Since David is not able to see what Susan is really doing, she is able to easily manipulate David into doing what she wants. By having David being easily manipulated by Susan, it can be assessed that this supports the traditionalist view of the women chasing the man.

The film illustrates the use of gender roles through the actions of Susan and David. The women, Susan, is shown as manipulative in order to achieve what she wants. In contrast, the man, David, is seen as easily shaped individual that follows the orders of Susan. The gender roles in the film are shown to be very conservative and follow the traditionalist values that were established during the time of the film. By following traditionalist views the film does support the status-quo of a heterosexual relationship.