

FILM GUIDE



The Public

A brutal cold snap hits Cincinnati and one of the city's most vulnerable populations – the homeless - are even more at risk. The staff of the public library, which serves as a daytime shelter for this population, is already challenged by the needs of these patrons. When they stage an Occupy-like sit-in, refusing to leave the library and go back out into the cold at closing time, things get even more challenging. When city government officials, the police, and the media get involved, the heat increases for the library's director.

Recommended for ages 13+

Themes: community; diversity, homelessness, mental illness, solidarity, moral choices

Director: Emilio Estevez | **119 min** | **Drama 2019** | **Country:** USA | **Language:** English

ACCESS | LEARN ABOUT THE FILM

Available through your local library, for rent on Amazon Prime, or for purchase. Emilio Estevez is a well-known actor with over 45 film credits and *The Public* is his eighth film as director. Many of his films address spiritual, moral and ethical issues of right and wrong. It's the first film directed by Estevez that does not star his father, Martin Sheen or his brother, Charlie Sheen. *The Public* includes a star-studded cast including Alec Baldwin, Jena Malone, Michael Kenneth Williams, Taylor Schilling, and Christian Slater.

The film was inspired by an essay written by Salt Lake City Librarian Chip Ward in 2007. Entitled [Written Off](#), the essay explored how the rise of homeless people in the library changed the role of librarians to become ipso facto social workers. [Learn more about how the American Library Association \(ALA\) supports librarians whose patrons include the homeless.](#) The film was shot in Cincinnati, and ironically, the movie's release occurred when the public library there was being taken over by activists who were upset about the city's plans to sell one of the downtown library buildings.

ANALYZE | CUES & CLUES

As you watch the film, keep the five key questions of media literacy in mind:

1. Who is the author and what is the purpose? (Educate, Inform, Entertain, Express, Persuade, Sell)
2. What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention?
3. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented?
4. How might different people interpret the message?
5. What is omitted from the message?

REFLECT | DISCUSSION

- This film takes on some big issues. What other film or television depictions of homelessness and mental illness can you name? Did this film differ from them in any way?
- Does this film challenge any stereotypes or change your perspective about the homeless, the mentally ill, addiction and recovery? What about of libraries and librarians?
- At one point in the film, a character says "The library is the last bastion of true democracy," Do you agree? Why or why not?
- What do you think the film's primary message is? How is that message conveyed?
- Where does the concept of foreshadowing occur in the movie?

CREATE | SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

- **Writing or Flipgrid Video* Prompts:**
 - Who was your favorite character? Why?
 - Which character did you dislike the most? Why?
 - What scene or moment was striking or important to you? Why?
 - What aspects of this film seemed realistic? What aspects were unrealistic?
 - What questions did this film raise for you?
 - What are the implications of this film for our libraries and communities today?

*Anyone can share thoughts and feelings about *The Public* using an easy-to-use video-based social learning network. Use a computer, tablet or mobile phone to watch, listen and respond to the comments of others. Then you can contribute your own comments about the film: <http://bit.ly/thepublic2019>

- **Create a Storyboard**
Materials: Storyboard templates, pencils
Become a screenwriter! Fill in a storyboard with some ideas of scenes that come after the final scene in the movie. Drawing on one of the characters and stories already introduced, answer the question “What happens next?”
- **Make a Movie Poster**
Team up to become public relations consultants (idea people) and graphic designers (visual artists). Together come up with an idea and rough sketch of a film poster that would inspire people to want to see the movie. Research movie posters online to see famous ones throughout film history. Then, use a scene, image, theme, or line from the film that you found memorable and place it on a page with other important information. What made certain scenes or imagery stand out to you?

ACT | LEARN MORE & TAKE ACTION

- What do you know about homeless people in your community?
- How can you find out how your community or state cares for its homeless population?
- Which libraries in your community have staff members who are experienced in meeting the needs of the homeless, people with mental illness, or those suffering from addiction?
- How can you contribute to addressing the social issues depicted in the film?

FILM TERMS TO KNOW

- **Drama:** This film genre offers a serious presentation of stories that portray realistic characters in conflict with either themselves, others, or forces of nature. A dramatic film shows us human beings at their best, their worst, and everything in-between, often with characters who are portrayed as heroes, villains or victims. Dramatic films often include current issues, social problems, concerns or injustices.
- **Tone:** A film’s tone can be identified by considering how the film makes the audience feel. A film can be airy, comic, condescending, facetious, funny, heavy, intimate, ironic, light, playful, sad, serious, sinister, solemn, somber, threatening, or righteous.
- **Shot:** A single uninterrupted section of footage. Shots can be described by how close or far they are from the subject, or by the perspective it shows the audience.
- **Cinematography:** The art and technique of making motion pictures. This includes how the film uses light, shadow, color, movement, framing and composition within the frame.