

Lars and the Real Girl

post-film reflection



Day 1 Socratic Seminar (30 pts)

DIRECTIONS: Socratic Seminar questions are meant to challenge your thinking. There is no absolute right or wrong answer, but each response does require an explanation. You and your partner will choose THREE questions to discuss and ultimately type your ideas. You should use one class period for the THREE questions. Be sure to use characters' names and refer to multiple examples in the film.

1. How does the imagination help us deal with reality? How does it distract us from reality? How can we know the difference? What if, as in Lars's case, we don't seem to be able to distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary? Can it still help us?
2. Though it seems hard to believe that a good-natured group of adults in this small town would indulge this behavior so thoroughly, there is a precedent for their concern in the film. Why are the townspeople so kind? Why do they go out of their way to help? How much do they know about each other? About Lars and his family?
3. What was your impression of the doctor in the movie? Was what she did ethical? Why or why not? Describe the role of Dagmar, both in Lars' life and in the town.
4. In what way would you describe Karin's love as relentless? Is it intrusive, and hence selfish, or is it truly appreciative of Lars?
5. Give some examples of love shown in this movie. What makes them so loving? Does it matter what people's first reactions are if they subsequently do the excellent thing? Consider what the women do toward the end when they bring food to Lars. How valuable is simply sitting with someone who is in pain?
6. Is Bianca real? What does it mean to be real? Is she a person? What does it mean to be a person? *(Only choose this question if you are willing to explore the philosophy or psychology of reality and personhood.)*
7. Are people like Lars socially inept or just honest enough to not be polite? If you hadn't learned to put on an act for people, would you ever behave the way Lars does? If we were more like him, would people be forced to be more real with us?
8. An essential theme of this movie is the virtue of catering to and condescending to take seriously the foibles and frailties of other people to the point that they actually become our own burdens. Is this Biblical? Can you think of some examples in your own life where you've resisted doing this and where you might try harder with someone?
9. Is this a fairy tale? Explain your answer. Be sure to include the elements of the fairytale in your discussion.
10. Why is Lars so reluctant to have a relationship with a real woman? Is he afraid of making another woman die in childbirth? Why does he create a relationship with Bianca?
11. In what ways does this movie demonstrate real Christian community?
12. Is our attraction to movies, fiction, music, or superstars or fictional characters any less odd than Lars's relationship with Bianca? Consider someone who puts a band sticker on his/her car, wears an Edward vs. Jacob tshirt, or spends hours in a fantasy football or baseball league.
13. How should we treat people with benign delusions? Is anything sacrificed in treating Bianca as real? Is anything gained? What do you think of children having imaginary friends?
14. Who is portrayed more favorably here, the psychiatrist or the pastor? Are they at odds at all? Is this movie meant to represent an ideal of coexistence between religion and science?

15. A good question for any movie that illustrates mood and anxiety disorders is to ask how it is represented. Give at least 5 examples of *film techniques* used to set mood/or give insight into the character's mood state.
16. What tone is the film attempting to set? What cues helped set this tone? In what ways do you think that the filmmakers achieved the tone well? Poorly? Or ambiguously?
17. What effect does the type of doll that Bianca is have upon the film? Could she have been a mannequin? A crash-test dummy? Why have the filmmakers chosen a "sex" doll?
18. What role does the setting play in the film? Would it have been a different movie it had been set in another part of the US or during a different time of year?
19. Write about several of the most memorable or striking images in this film. What images or scenes are you still unsure how to interpret? Explain why.
20. What was your initial reaction to Bianca? Discuss the reactions of others in the film. Which character(s) are you most like in regards to his/her reaction? Why?
21. What is Lars attempting to cope for with Bianca? What are your coping mechanisms? How do you deal with change? What purpose does Bianca serve in Lars' life? What sort of things do YOU use to replace real things?
22. Lars says Bianca was put on earth to help people. We learn how she helps Lars. How does she help Gus and Karin? The townspeople? Margo? Dagmar? Etc.
23. What enduring themes are explored? What lasting images, lessons, or messages did this film leave with you? Based on your viewing of this one movie, what might you presume to know about its directors?
24. A film can offer us the chance to experience a world different from our own. Did this work expose you to new attitudes, points of view, people, landscapes, or cultures? What did you learn? If you're seeing the film for a second time, how has your response to it changed? What do you think has caused that shift?
25. What flaws do you see in this film? If you were acting as an editor for this work, what would you have added, changed, or eliminated? What did you think of this story's ending? Was it satisfying to you? Why or why not?
26. Did you catch what passage from the Bible was read later in the film? Is Lars the only one in the film that needs to hear this message? What "childish things" do you still cling to? How have you been able to put them away? How have others helped you do this?
27. Do you think that this is a realistic film? Is the film trying to be realistic? A parable? One review derisively calls it "silly and whimsical." Do you agree with the sentiment, if not the tone, of this remark? Do you think the filmmakers intended this sort of reaction? What about the characterization of the small town and the members of the church? When is the unbelievable more true than the believable?
28. Why does the town react the way that it does? What does the movie have to say about community? Is this real community in your opinion? What do you think is done well? What could be done better?
29. I'm reminded of a refrain from Sir Paul McCartney: "All the lonely people, where do they all come from?" How does the film attempt to answer this question?

