

# Displaying the Moral Fiber: Exploring “Front of the Class” Film

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## ABSTRACT

This research is twofold in its objectives: first, to scrutinize the moral underpinnings depicted in the film “Front of the Class,” and second, to elucidate the educational ramifications derived from the themes portrayed therein. Employing a descriptive qualitative research methodology, this study delves into the dialogue exchanges among the characters, with particular emphasis on the protagonist. The findings reveal a spectrum of moral fibres in the film, including self-confidence, perseverance, earnestness, autonomy, amiability, patience, optimism, love, and humility. We recommend that educators leverage these insights to develop curriculum components focusing on moral education through cinematic narratives. Further, researchers should consider comparative studies with other films to broaden their understanding of the cinematic impact on moral development. These insights are anticipated to contribute to the broader discourse on moral fibres and extend practical benefits by enriching the educational experience for English students and fostering a deeper engagement with literary texts and cinematic narratives.

**Keywords:** Moral Fiber, Front of the Class, Film

## INTRODUCTION

Moral integrity is fundamental in human life, enhancing its overall quality. It enables individuals to cultivate their capabilities and discern right and wrong conduct. Muxidinovna (2024) aptly notes that morality encompasses a spectrum of actions, from small acts of kindness to more excellent gestures. Bentham posits morality as an art aimed at maximizing happiness, which is evident in the pursuit of collective joy and contentment (Muxidinovna, 2024)

Literature is a conduit for expressing thoughts, ideas, and experiences, engaging both cognitive and affective realms. Literary works transcend mere cognition, delving into emotions and fantasies and heightening sensory awareness (Kennedy, 2024). Through literature, individuals derive enjoyment and glean societal insights pertinent to their respective eras, akin to the reflections present in cinematic narratives.

Film, like drama, mirrors and interprets human experiences, grappling with societal issues and norms. It serves as a platform for storytelling, with characters embodying societal themes and ideologies (Robert, 2015). Often inspired by real-life events or literary works, films serve multifaceted purposes—from entertainment to education—imbuing audiences with moral, motivational, and philosophical messages.

In contemporary times, the societal moral fabric faces challenges, influenced by harmful cultural elements such as alcoholism, crime, and moral transgressions. However, films with motivational narratives offer respite and inspiration, exemplified by “Front of the Class.” This 2008 drama, adapted from Brad Cohen’s real-life experiences with Tourette syndrome, illustrates resilience in adversity. Cohen’s journey, navigating

internal and external conflicts, underscores the importance of perseverance and determination in pursuing one's aspirations.

Aspiring educators can leverage cinematic narratives like "Front of the Class" to impart valuable life lessons to their students. By analyzing its moral fibres, educators can instil in students the ethos of resilience and critical thinking, preparing them to confront life's challenges with fortitude. Hence, this research endeavour, titled "Displaying the Moral Fiber: Exploring 'Front of the Class' Film," seeks to elucidate the film's moral dimensions, offering insights to readers and reinforcing the significance of moral integrity in navigating life's complexities.

So, in light of the identified issues, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

Analyze the moral themes in the movie "Front of the Class."

Investigate the educational implications conveyed in "Front of the Class" regarding pedagogy and learning.

"Front of the Class" is a compelling 2008 Hollywood production directed by Peter Werner and penned by Tom Rickman. Centred on Brad, who grapples with Tourette's syndrome prior to diagnosis, the film delves into his journey marked by unconventional vocalizations that strain his familial and academic relationships. Despite attempts to suppress his condition, Brad's inability to control his tics leads to familial discord and academic challenges. However, a compassionate principal emerges as a beacon of hope, igniting Brad's aspiration to become a teacher. Despite facing numerous hurdles in his pursuit, Brad's determination ultimately lands him a teaching position in Atlanta, where he thrives despite initial scepticism due to his Tourette's. "Front of the Class" is a hallmark of Hallmark Hall of Fame's stellar dramas, captivating audiences with its blend of poignant moments, laughter, and invaluable moral lessons. Brad's unwavering optimism is a testament to the human spirit's resilience.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### • Ethics

Ethics involves discerning between behaviours deemed as either good or bad. It encompasses the notion of sacrifice, ranging from small acts of kindness to more enormous altruistic deeds (Muxidinovna, 2024). Bentham conceptualized ethics as the art of maximizing happiness, evident in fostering a joyful and fulfilling existence for all individuals (Muxidinovna, 2024). Smith (2022, p.330) further delineates ethics into three components:

**Affective Component:** This encompasses the emotional aspects surrounding moral actions, such as guilt or concern for others, which motivate moral behaviour.

**Cognitive Component:** Central to this aspect is the cognitive process of conceptualizing right and wrong and making decisions about behaviour.

**Behavioural Component:** This component reflects the conduct exhibited in situations where moral choices are confronted, such as resisting temptation or offering aid to those in need.

In literature, ethics often conveys the underlying message or lesson to be gleaned from narratives or events. The term "ethics" originates from the Latin word "mos," plural "mores," which also denotes customs or the way of life shaped by acts of kindness (decency) and avoidance of wrongdoing (Ruslan, 2004, p.102). Ethics pertains to evaluating what constitutes good and evil within human conduct, echoing Hornby's assertion (2011, p.285) that it involves principles of right and wrong and standards of behaviour. In literary

works, ethics typically mirrors the author's perspective on truths and moral principles.

### • Values

Values are closely intertwined with attitudes and encompass our beliefs regarding proper conduct and overarching objectives deemed worthy of pursuit. Smith (2022) delineates values into two categories:

**Instrumental Values:** These guide day-to-day behaviour and are akin to the principles instilled in organizations like scouting, encompassing loyalty, honesty, optimism, unity, self-respect, courage, and helpfulness.

**Terminal Values:** Represent final goals that may or may not be worthwhile pursuits.

Furthermore, values can be classified based on various considerations such as cultural, hierarchical, moral and spiritual, and social aspects (Wibowo, 2017). Shol (2006) elucidates that values serve as ideals or standards directing behaviour, influencing judgments about what is necessary and morally right or wrong. Historically, Moral education aimed to foster intellectual growth and cultivate moral virtues, reflecting societies' concerns over internal and external challenges within educational institutions and broader societal contexts.

### • Moral Virtues

According to Devi (2020), moral virtues can be categorized into five types: deontic, teleological, aretaic, intrinsic, and extrinsic. They result from a process of valuing that integrates divine and human virtues into life, guiding human cognition and creativity (Sandeep, 2015). Sandeep further divides moral virtues into two groups:

**Virtues of Being:** These innate virtues manifest in human behaviour and interactions, encompassing honesty, bravery, peace ability, confidence, self-discipline, purity, and hard work.

**Virtues of Giving:** These virtues necessitate practice and reciprocity, including loyalty, respect, love, sensitivity, humility, fairness, and humanity.

Moral education perennially seeks to instil these virtues, aiming to shape students' thoughts, emotions, and behaviours regarding moral issues. As contemporary societies grapple with internal and external challenges, moral education assumes renewed significance in addressing societal concerns and fostering virtuous individuals.

### • Previous Research

Several research papers have explored the literary analysis of moral virtues in films, offering insights relevant to this study. Here are two noteworthy examples:

**Wulandari's study (2015):** Wulandari, an alumna of the English Department at IAIN Salatiga, conducted a study titled "A Moral Fiber in the Charlie and the Chocolate Factory Film." Employing a descriptive qualitative method, she examined the moral virtues depicted in the film. Wulandari utilized the film as her research instrument, analyzing the dialogue among its characters. Her findings revealed the presence of moral virtues such as love, respect, self-reliability, loyalty, and trustworthiness.

**Anggraeni's study (2015):** As part of her graduation paper, Anggraeni undertook a study on the moral fibre of the film *Dangerous Minds*. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, she delved into the moral virtues portrayed in the film. The primary data source for her research was the dialogue extracted from the

film. Using content analysis, Anggraeni identified several moral virtues in the narrative, including love and affection, respect, bravery, kindness and friendliness, sensitivity, honesty, hard work, patriotism, and responsibility.

While both studies focus on exploring moral virtues in films, there are notable similarities and differences. For instance, they both utilize a descriptive qualitative methodology and analyze dialogues to uncover moral themes. However, differences exist in the choice of film and the specific moral virtues examined. This current study, “Front of the Class,” focuses on the main character, offering a nuanced exploration of moral virtues within the narrative.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **• Qualitative Approach**

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative method within the qualitative research domain. According to Meong (2009), qualitative research involves written or oral data, utilizing a descriptive approach to elucidate and analogize phenomena, focusing on the meaning and interpretation of these phenomena. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative inquiry does not rely on mathematical logic or statistical methods. Instead, it aims to preserve the intricacies of human behaviour and analyze their qualitative aspects.

Qualitative research inherently possesses descriptive qualities. The data analyzed, and the resultant analyses manifest as descriptive phenomena rather than nominal or numerical representations of variable relationships (Farida, 2014, p.22). Thus, qualitative research systematically explores issues, with data comprising oral or written accounts.

### **• Research Object**

The focal point of this study is the exploration of moral virtues within the film “Front of the Class,” directed by Peter Werner.

### **• Data Collection**

Data collection involves sourcing information from subjects relevant to the research inquiry (Arikunto, 1998). In the context of this literary study, the primary data source is the dialogue within the “Front of the Class” film. All verbal expressions, including words, phrases, and sentences articulated by the characters, serve as the raw material for analysis.

### **• Data Collection Technique**

Material analysis serves as the primary technique for data collection. Documentation, comprising the film itself, is utilized as the primary source of evidence. The researcher undergoes several steps to gather data effectively: first, watching the film multiple times for thorough comprehension; second, identifying and extracting relevant data pertinent to the study; and finally, documenting selected data for subsequent analysis.

### **• Data Analysis Method**

Descriptive analysis is employed to dissect the moral virtues depicted in the “Front of the Class” film. Given the descriptive qualitative nature of the study, textual analysis is the preferred method, considering that the data primarily consists of dialogues and verbal expressions. As elucidated by Vanderstop and Johnston (2008), textual analysis entails identifying and interpreting verbal signs. The researcher analyses

comprehensively by watching and scrutinizing the film transcript, subsequently descriptively presenting the findings.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### A. Moral Virtues Portrayed in the “Front of the Class” Film

#### Self-Confidence

Self-confidence, characterized by an awareness of personal boundaries and the uniqueness of individual development, is evident throughout the film. The protagonist demonstrates a sense of responsibility for their actions and refrains from attributing blame to others during challenging circumstances. This moral virtue is exemplified in the following dialogue excerpt:

Data (A):

Timestamp: 00:03:25-00:03:53

Police: *Sir, have you been drinking?*

Brad: *No, no, sir. I have a Tourette syndrome.*

Police: *Take it easy, son. I am going to need you to sign. So, what kind of job are you looking for?*

Brad: *Teaching. I am going to be a teacher. (Aha. I have expertise in that field, However, I never let it deter me.*

*Persistence*, defined as the courage to pursue virtuous endeavours despite difficulties, is exemplified in a poignant scene within the film:

Data (B):

Timestamp: 00:17:00-00:17:24

In this scene, Brad demonstrates remarkable persistence when faced with adversity. Despite challenges and societal judgment due to his Tourette syndrome, Brad bravely maintains his aspiration to become a teacher. His unwavering determination highlights his resilience and commitment to his dreams, inspiring viewers with the power of persistence in overcoming obstacles.

Brad: *I do not care if they expel me. I would not like that school. Elle: Well, it is that school or another school.*

Brad: *I don't like all schools. Why are we going here? Elle: To find some answers.*

Brad: *I cannot go to the library. They will throw me out. Please, mom.*

Elle: *All right. Come here. Sit over here. We may need to go down the right track.*

#### Determination

Determination is epitomized in a poignant exchange between Brad's mother, Ellen, and the headmaster, wherein Ellen passionately defends her son against unjust criticism:

This conversation underscores the profound determination of a mother to advocate for her child's well-being and dignity, inspiring us never to relent in the face of adversity and to uphold the honour of our loved ones steadfastly.

### **Commitment**

Commitment is exemplified through Brad Cohen's unwavering dedication to his dream of becoming a teacher. Despite encountering numerous challenges and setbacks, Brad's relentless pursuit of his aspirations ultimately leads to his triumphant success.

Data (C):

Timestamp: 00:21:43-00:22:19

In the following dialogue, Brad's steadfast commitment to his goals shines through as he perseveres to achieve his dream. His unwavering resolve is a powerful reminder of the importance of dedication and perseverance in attaining success.

Principal: *Well, I see you only have your Bachelor's degree. Are you planning to get your master's?*

Brad: *Yes, sir. As soon as I can*

Principal: *We do not require entry-level... but if you are serious*

Brad: *I am very serious. I want to make teaching my life. I make these noises because I have Tourette syndrome. I want to tell you about it. It is a Neurological signal to my body; it's like sneezing and irrepressible.*

Principal: *There are weeks and ... to get off. Brad: OK. Thanks very much.*

Principal: *Take care.*

### **Wisdom and Righteousness**

The essence of wisdom lies in its ability to illuminate our understanding, making seemingly complex problems appear manageable. A wise individual possesses insight that allows them to perceive the deeper layers of any situation, enabling informed decision-making.

Data (D):

Timestamp: 00:27:34-00:27:55

In this pivotal moment, Brad demonstrates wisdom and righteousness as he navigates a challenging situation with clarity and integrity. His discernment and commitment to doing what is morally right serve as a guiding light, inspiring those around him to follow a path of righteousness and sound judgment.

Girl: *Do not look now. OK, do not look now. This guy is behind us, and I need to discover his problem. Keep staring.*

Brad: *Ah. I get that look a lot. It is a look of envy. He thinks, "How can I make cool noises like that guy?"*

Girl: *You have such a great attitude about you.*

### **Independence**

Independence entails freedom from external influences or control by others. It embodies the ability to think and act autonomously, guided by principles and convictions.

Data (E):

Timestamp: 00:29:14-00:29:58

In this exchange, Brad exemplifies independence, asserting his autonomy and self-reliance in decision-making. His ability to remain unaffected by external pressures highlights his steadfast commitment to charting his course and staying true to his beliefs.

Norman: *Dianne is wondering when you are going to come by. I guess I have been pretty busy with the job-hunting. Have you had any?*

Brad: *Still interviewing*

Norman: *How is that going? Are they giving you trouble with yours ...*

Brad: *You can say the word, Dad? Tourette's, some of them are, some of them aren't*

Norman: *How is your money holding out?*

Brad: *I am not asking you for money.*

Norman: *I know that you never ask me for anything.*

Brad: *No.*

Norman: *But if ever you do get short, you know you get a job with me*

Brad: *I am going to teach, Dad. OK? I cannot let anything get in the way of that.*

Norman: *OK. Keeping your options up is OK if things work out. You know, there are other things besides teaching.*

Brad: *Not for me.*

### **Friendliness and Politeness**

Friendliness encompasses showing kindness and warmth towards others, akin to the behaviour of a true friend. Politeness, on the other hand, entails demonstrating respect and courtesy in interactions with others.

Data (F):

Timestamp: 00:32:00-00:34:30

Brad exemplifies friendliness and politeness in this dialogue exchange as he converses with his father. Despite facing financial challenges and uncertainty about his future job prospects, Brad maintains a positive

and respectful demeanour. His ability to remain affable and courteous under challenging circumstances underscores his admirable character traits, serving as a poignant reminder of the importance of kindness and civility in interpersonal relationships.

Headmaster: *Brad, are you deliberately making noises to disrupt this recital?*

Brad: *No sir, I suffer from Tourette's syndrome, which resulted in a syndrome of body movements and sounds that are not controlled.*

Headmaster: *But you cannot learn to control those sounds!*

Brad: *Excuse me, sir, it cannot be controlled. This syndrome is a disease, and if I am depressed, it would make me worse, sir.*

Headmaster: *So what should we do so you can be healed?*

Brad: *The disease is incurable pack, but will be reduced if I am not depressed.*

Headmaster: *So how should we behave to you?*

Brad: *Treat me like an average student. Who else, sir?* Headmaster: *Well, you can go back to your seat.*

### **Patience**

Patience is characterized by a calm and composed demeanour and a willingness to accept differing viewpoints without conflict. It entails understanding that differences are often best resolved through empathy and emotional control rather than impulsivity or obstinacy.

Data (G):

Timestamp: 00:39:32-00:40:34

In this monologue, the characters exhibit patience while navigating a challenging situation. Their ability to maintain composure and consider others' perspectives underscores the importance of patience in fostering understanding and resolving conflicts peacefully.

*"So, I decided it was not Tourette's. I just had yet to find the right school. I would keep barking and did not quit until I found that principal. I made a map of every school where I had yet to interview. Suppose the principal was not in. I would give my resume to a secretary or a janitor and ask them to drop it off when the principal returned. I did not care. I needed a job. I was not going to stop until I had"*

### **Optimism and Courage**

Optimism entails a willingness to tackle challenging tasks with a positive outlook, believing in the possibility of success even in difficult circumstances. It empowers individuals to persevere and make decisions confidently, even when faced with adversity. On the other hand, courage involves standing up for what is right, even facing daunting challenges and strong opposition.

Data (H):

Timestamp: 00:48:59-00:49:21

In the following dialogue, Brad exemplifies optimism and courage as he continues pursuing his dream job



despite numerous setbacks and rejections. His unwavering belief in the possibility of success and his determination to stand up for what is fitting serve as an inspiring example of resilience and bravery in the face of adversity.

Norman: *I guess you never heard from that school*

Brad: *No, not yet. They are still interviewing. I am not worried. Norma: OK*

Brad: *What is that supposed to mean? Norman: I just said, "OK."*

Brad: *I know what you mean. You think people would only hire me if they had a choice.*

Norman: *So you are a mind reader now?*

Brad: *You know what, Dad? This is going to be my last day here. Norman: Why don't you wait and see if you got the job first?*

Brad: *I am going to get the job, Dad. I have to stay focused.*

Norman: *Why can't you stay focused and realistic simultaneously? What is wrong with that?*

## **Love**

Love is an essential aspect of human existence, encompassing affection and care for oneself, loved ones, and humanity. It is a fundamental element of life, intertwined with our social nature and crucial for survival.

In the following dialogues, the theme of love is explored:

[Data (I):

Performed at: [Timestamp]]

In this exchange, the characters demonstrate expressions of love towards one another, highlighting the significance of love in fostering meaningful connections and enriching our lives.

Mother: *They are not going to hold the plane for you.*

Father: *OK, all right. Could you hug me?*

Jeff: *Good-bye, father!*

Father: *Bye, J-MN*

Brad: *I love you, Daddy.*

Father: *I love you too, son.*

The dialogue above reveals a profound love between Cohen and his father, showcasing their strong bond and mutual affection.

Humility is exemplified by a modest and compassionate demeanour, esteemed over a brash and confrontational attitude. It involves a propensity for understanding rather than confrontation and a capacity for tenderness, particularly towards the vulnerable. Those who possess humility are adept at forging new

friendships and maintaining existing ones, offering assistance when needed.

Data (J):

Timestamp: 00:54:36-00:55:09

In the following dialogue, the character displays humility through their actions and words, embodying kindness, understanding, and a willingness to support others.

Brad: *Yeah, mom. It is phenomenal, but it took me so long to get here. I still have to remind myself that I am just at the beginning.*

Ellen: *Honey. That is ... that is fantastic news, wonderful.*

Brad: *Yes, Mom, it is beautiful, but you know. They will give me a year-long contract, but I must prove they made the right choice.*

Ellen: *Honey, listen. Just take a moment to enjoy this. Oh my god. Did you call your father? He is going to be so proud of you.*

## **B. Literary Aspect in the Film “Front of the Class”**

In the movie “Front of the Class,” we delve into the literary element woven throughout the narrative and characterization, as in the following:

### **• Characterization and Character Development**

Characters play a vital role in storytelling, serving as participants within the narrative. While typically human, characters can also encompass various identities or entities from fictional works or performances. Characters can be classified into two primary categories: major and minor.

#### **A. Major Characters**

Major characters hold significant importance within the plot, driving the narrative forward. In “Front of the Class,” three main characters take centre stage:

Bradley Cohen

Bradley Cohen serves as the protagonist of the film. Despite grappling with severe Tourette syndrome, Bradley aspires to become a teacher. Initially harbouring disdain for books and schooling, he struggles to focus on his studies.

Brad’s Mother

Brad’s mother is a steadfast supporter who consistently encourages him to pursue his dreams.

Brad’s Father

Though initially appearing stern, Brad’s father demonstrates a deep care for his children. He provides guidance and advice, nurturing their growth into good individuals.

#### **B. Minor Characters**

Minor characters, while not always directly involved in the main action, contribute significantly to the

story's development.

Jeffie

Brad's younger brother, Jeffier, adds humour and kindness to the narrative.

Ron

Ron, Brad's adult roommate, exhibits patience and becomes Brad's closest friend. He offers unwavering support as Brad strives to fulfil his dreams.

Headmaster

The headmaster is an inspirational figure for Brad, encouraging him to pursue his passion for teaching despite societal judgments.

Diene

Diene appears as Brad's stepmother, though her role in the story is less prominent.

Nancy

Nancy, Brad's girlfriend, demonstrates patience, care, and understanding towards Brad's struggles with Tourette syndrome. She consistently supports him in his journey towards achieving his dreams.

## **Plot**

The plot, or storyline, encompasses the events unfolding within a story. It comprises micro-level actions, reactions, and macro-level beginnings, middles, and endings. Conflict is often central to plot development, arising from external and internal sources. The plot elements include Exposition, Conflict, Climax, and Resolution.

## **Implications of "Front of the Class" Film**

The protagonist, Brad, is a source of inspiration in the film, motivating viewers to pursue their ambitions despite obstacles. Despite having Tourette syndrome, Brad's ambition to become a teacher is unwavering. Despite rejection from numerous schools due to his condition, Brad persists in his pursuit, ultimately realizing his dream. His resilience and determination serve as a lesson, reminding us that no obstacle, including illness, should deter us from achieving our dreams. Brad's attitude encourages viewers to adopt a similar mindset in their own lives, emphasizing that disease should not hinder one's path to success.

The film embodies the themes of perseverance, optimism, and self-confidence, portraying the importance of these qualities in achieving one's goals. It underscores the significance of never giving up, maintaining a positive outlook, and believing in oneself, which are crucial in pursuing education and ambition. The relevance of these implications extends to fostering a solid learning spirit among viewers. By witnessing Brad's journey and the educational themes portrayed in the film, viewers are inspired to cultivate high ambitions and persevere in the face of challenges. The film encourages individuals to embrace a mindset of resilience, optimism, and mutual support, emphasizing the role of education in personal growth and societal contribution. In general, "Front of the Class" instills a sense of enthusiasm for learning and achievement,

motivating viewers to strive for excellence in their own lives.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of moral themes in the film “Front of the Class” reveals several noteworthy conclusions. Firstly, the central character, Brad Cohen, exemplifies resilience and determination in the face of Tourette syndrome. Despite being rejected from numerous schools due to his condition, Brad remains patient and unwavering in his ambition to become a teacher. He succeeds through perseverance and hard work, emerging as an award-winning educator. Furthermore, the film portrays a range of moral virtues, including high self-confidence, persistence, seriousness, wisdom, independence, patience, optimism, and humility. Brad and other characters exemplify these virtues throughout the narrative, contributing to the film’s thematic depth and emotional resonance. We recommend that educators incorporate ‘Front of the Class’ into teaching modules as a case study for discussing resilience and moral virtues.

Additionally, policymakers in educational sectors could consider integrating film-based learning into broader curriculum frameworks to enhance moral and ethical education. Finally, the film’s implications for the learning spirit are profound. It inspires viewers to cultivate high ambitions and never give up, maintaining optimism in pursuing their goals. By observing the attitude and behaviour of the main character, viewers are encouraged to recognize the importance of diligence and determination in achieving success. “Front of the Class” is a potent reminder that anything is attainable with dedication and hard work.

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