

# Ferris Bueller's Day Off

(John Hughes, 1986)

## Component 1: Key Developments in US Film Focus Areas: Genre, Narrative and Context

### PART 1: Key Sequence(s) and timings and/or links

Opening Sequence / Monologue:

<https://goo.gl/q1DZXs>

The Parade:

<https://goo.gl/ukME0z>

### PART 2: STARTING POINTS - Key Elements of Film Form (Micro Features)

#### Cinematography (including Lighting)

##### Opening:

- The first time we see the parents is in POV shot, positioning the audience as the 'child' in the scene. A POV rack focus is also used when Ferris looks at Jeanie.
- When Ferris opens the curtains there is a shot from the outside looking in, solidifying Ferris' position as a privileged prince in his tower.

##### The Parade:

- The cinematography in this scene shows off Chicago's landmarks and the impressive architecture with a series of longshots down the parade route.
- The camera is placed in the crowd looking up at Ferris in wonder, we are part of the masses, and he is in an elevated position on the float and in society as a wealthy white male.

#### Mise-en-Scène

##### Opening:

- Establishing shot is of a classically suburban, upper middle class home, a 'white house'. This is iconographic of the American dream, complete with 3 new cars parked out front.
- Ferris' room is filled with the trappings of an 80's teen in consumerist America, a TV stereo, synthesizers and a computer. These were high value goods at the time (yet he

repeatedly complains he was not given a car).

- Performance and breaking the 4th wall, it becomes clear that this is not a realistic approach. The audience are invited into his world, he talks to us like we are his friends, meaning that we are implicated in his wrongdoing, we are passive observers yet just as guilty as him. Or are we his conscience?
- The text on screen 'Faking out parents', pushed the sense of postmodernism even further, Ferris is aware that he is in a film. The text is like a public service video, giving us instruction, Ferris is described as a 'great guy' by almost everyone in the film, this is his way of getting us to like him, we want to be his friend.

##### Parade:

- The American flag appears in almost all of the shots, at times it frames Ferris on the float but looks into the corners of the frame, in the reflection of windows.
- This scene is a celebration of America's greatness and diversity, an advert for the American dream, happy smiling faces of different ages, status and race all dancing together.
- Ferris is positioned at the centre of the crowd, the heart of this joyous mass hysteria, representing that the white middle class male is 'king' in this culture, the crowd worship him, he can 'do anything'. At the end of the scene Ferris brandished a silver cane - he is the ringmaster, a rock star, a hero.

#### Editing

##### Opening:

- Introduction of Jeannie is staggered, with a CU of the foot tapping, then CU of hands on hips before the reveal of the face, it is the edits here (It is not a slow pan/male gaze shot) that show she is introduced as the aggressor or antagonist, she is not sexualised like Sloane.
- There are a few scenes in the film that adopt a MTV/Music Video style montage, this montage actually starts with the MTV ad.

## Sound

### Opening:

- Music is used to appeal to the teen audience, to anchor the feeling of excitement and demonstrate how cool Ferris is in this scene.

### Parade:

- The choice of a Beatles song implies 'Beatlemania' a form of hero worship.
- The sound of the crowd and the music bleeds into Mr Buller's office, connoting that this celebration of America, of youth, cannot be stopped and is embraced by all generations.

## PART 3: STARTING POINTS - Contexts

### Social:

- In the 50's the teenager was 'born' and there was an element of fear surrounding that generation, in the 80's Teenagers do not need to battle parents, they have already won, teenagers were celebrated. However an obsession with labels and designer goods meant that status was tied into external symbols of wealth (which Ferris has in abundance).
- Generation X, were called 'latchkey kids' due to changes in society these teens had less adult supervision than previous generations.
- MTV was launched in 1981 and became the voice of the teen generation.

### Historical:

- 80's economic boom meant that teens found it easier to afford cars and such, led to selfish teens. Ferris is annoyed because he got a computer and not a car.

- The US was the most powerful nation in the world, and was winning the Cold War. This feeling of invincibility can be seen in scenes like 'The Parade' where the whole country appears to be unified.

## PART 4: STARTING POINTS - Specialist Focus - Genre & Narrative

### Genre:

- John Hughes is considered 'an auteur' of the teen genre.
- Teen films have a critical view of authority and High School, the character of 'Rooney' embodies this but the Ferris' parents are seen in a sympathetic light. High School is simply shown to be boring 'Buller, Buller....' but not dangerous.
- The appeal of teen films is that it allows the audience, whatever age they may be, to re-live their High School Years, and in this film, it allows us to re-live high school as the most popular kid in school.

### Narrative:

- Ferris offers us an alternative to the usual 'outsider' protagonist that usually guides us through High School, instead we have the POV of the most popular boy in school, and the direct mode of address used places us at his side, equally popular.
- A classic Hollywood Narrative structure is used, the happy ending offers the audience pleasure and reward.