

Start the conversation...

Rebel Without A Cause (1955, PG) 11+ 107 mins

Films that glamourise

Iconic film about the quintessential troubled teenager; a moving but relatively mild depiction.



What's this film about?

James Dean's performance in this classic and brilliant '50s film has become the prototype for representations of troubled youth, angst and rebellion.

Dean plays ultimate moody teen Jim Stark, the new kid in town who is soon getting in all kinds of trouble, and whose father simply isn't tough enough to deal with him. Jim's friends are no happier - and their problems quickly turn tragic. And all this happens in just one frantic, memorable day. A must see!

Issues raised in this film

Alcohol: Jim is arrested for underage drinking and public drunkenness.

Peer Pressure: To prove he isn't chicken Jim takes part in an illegal drag race.

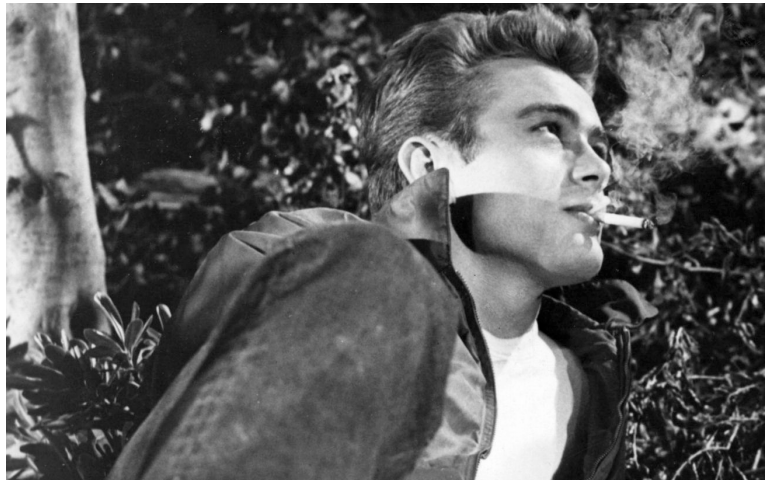
Smoking: Jim smokes throughout.

Before the film: Starter activity

The main character in the film, Jim Stark, is starting a new High School at the beginning of this film.

Have you ever been the 'new kid'? Did you try hard to fit in? How?

What problems do you think Jim will face in the film?



After the film: Discussion questions

1. Smoking is made to look cool by James Dean's iconic character. Do you think people's views of smoking are different today?
2. At the beginning of the film Jim gets drunk. Do you think getting drunk changes the way people act? Is the depiction in the film accurate?
3. Jim drinks, smokes, steals and fights. His behaviour becomes more extreme when confronted. What advice would you give him if he was a friend of yours?



Teacher notes to support the discussion questions

1. Far fewer people smoke today than they did in the 1950s because we know more about the dangers and it appears less cool. Do your students notice people who smoke on the TV and in films? What do they think of them?
2. Drinking can look like a lot of fun but it has a dark side to it too; young people who drink and/or are drunk are more likely to be a victim of crime, have risky sex and be hurt in accidents. You could think about the consequences of drinking (whether it's one drink or several) with your pupils and think how they could say no if offered alcohol.
3. Split students into groups of four. In each group students take the role the main characters of Jim, Judy, Plato or Buzz. As their character they can write how they might have helped each other to be better. Could Jim have walked away from the trouble with Buzz and his gang? How would he have done that? What role did Judy play? Could Plato have acted differently?

Signposting

If any of your students have been affected by, or need support with any of the issues raised in the project, then signpost the following organisations:

Smoking www.talktofrank.com/drug/tobacco NHS Smoking Helpline on 0800 169 0169

Drinking www.talktofrank.com/drug/alcohol FRANK 0800 77 66 00

Drugs www.talktofrank.com FRANK 0800 77 66 00

Sex & Relationships www.nhs.uk/worhtalkingabout Worth Talking About 0800 567 123

If this film has created a great debate, get your students' voices heard by writing reviews at www.filmclub.org