



SILVERSCREEN
PRIMARY
EDUCATION

**1980s Cinema:
Mullets, Ray-Bans &
Teenage Angst**

By Adam Pepper

Session 5



Welcome to Session 5 of this '1980s Cinema: 'Mullets, Ray-Bans & Teenage Angst' course!

Over these ten weeks, we will journey through over 20 years of cinema to find the secrets behind some of the most iconic, ground-breaking, popular and culture-changing stories and movies from this, the cheesiest and most action-packed of all decades!

We will study the directors, writers, actors, stories and history of the time to uncover how the 1980s created such a shift in film and storytelling, and gave us some of our most iconic film stars and characters.

We will look at their beginnings, their inspirations and the news they lived through to chart a path to some of the greatest and most rewatched films ever made.

Session 5:

After last week's muscles, spray tan, cool glasses, explosions and one-liners, this week we visit some other endlessly quotable 80s classics! Only this time, there are no bad guys or terrorists!

Only the school bully, cliché knucklehead or mean girl!

It's time to explore the emergence of the 80s teen movie and, in particular, the work of one man; John Hughes.

As Reagan settles into office, bringing about hope after the hatred of the 70s, it is the teen audience that finds themselves looking for their own stories and heroes.

In the 50s, teens rocked up to the Drive-In to watch mutant bugs and UFOs, eager to use the fear to snuggle up to their hot new love!

In the 60s, it was the time of rock 'n roll and rebellion! Elvis, The Beatles, cool fashion and the chance to get away from the jazz sound of their parents.

In the 70s, it was drugs, Hendrix, Woodstock, The Stones and hating on the war in Vietnam and the liars in office.

By the 80s, as Stallone remarked, 'Where was the hope?'

Enter John Hughes, with his ensemble collections of outcasts, loners, losers, geeks and dreamers.

What would being kind do to the average American teen? How about honest? Truthful? Sensitive? Hopeful?

Through his films, we got to explore these scenarios, placing ourselves within the ensemble. Am I more like Del Griffith? Uncle Buck? Kevin McCallister? The old man with the shovel from next door? A guy trying to raise his kids after he loses his job and his wife returns to work? Andie Walsh, desperately hoping she will get asked to the prom? Bueller? Bueller? Bueller?

Watching these movies now feels ever more prescient as our 2025 generation ask, 'Where is the hope?'

Useful information for Session 5:

John Wilden Hughes Jr. (February 18, 1950 – August 6, 2009) was an American filmmaker, producer, and screenwriter. He began his career in 1970 as an author of humorous essays and stories for the *National Lampoon* magazine. He went on in Hollywood to write, produce, and direct some of the most successful live-action comedy films of the 1980s and 1990s. He directed, wrote or produced such films as *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Weird Science*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, *She's Having a Baby*, and *Uncle Buck*, and wrote the films *National Lampoon's Vacation*, *Mr. Mom*, *National Lampoon's European Vacation*, *Pretty in Pink*, *The Great Outdoors*, *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, *Home Alone*, *Dutch*, and *Beethoven*.

Most of Hughes's works were set in Chicago at the fictional Shermer High School and were coming-of-age teen comedy films. Many of his most enduring characters from these years were written for Molly Ringwald.

While out on a walk one morning in New York City in the summer of 2009, Hughes suffered a fatal heart attack.

After his death, his legacy was honoured by many, including at the 82nd Academy Awards by actors he had worked with such as Ringwald, Matthew Broderick, Anthony Michael Hall, Chevy Chase, and Macaulay Culkin among others. Actors whose careers Hughes helped launch include Michael Keaton, Hall, Bill Paxton, Broderick, Culkin, and members of the Brat Pack group.

Hughes was born on February 18, 1950, in Lansing, Michigan, to Marion Crawford, who volunteered in charity work, and John Hughes Sr., who worked in sales. He was the only boy, and had three sisters. He spent the first twelve years of his life in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, where he was a fan of Detroit Red Wings right winger Gordie Howe. One of Howe's #9 jerseys, sent by Howe himself, was later prominently featured in Hughes's 1986 film *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Hughes described himself as "kind of quiet":

"I grew up in a neighbourhood that was mostly girls and old people. There weren't any boys my age, so I spent a lot of time by myself, imagining things. And every time we would get established somewhere, we would move. Life just started to get good in seventh grade, and then we moved to Chicago. I ended up in a really big high school, and I didn't know anybody. But then The Beatles came along and changed my whole life. And then Bob Dylan's Bringing It All Back Home came out and really changed me. Thursday I was one person, and Friday I was another. My heroes were Dylan, John Lennon and Picasso, because they each moved their particular medium forward, and when they got to the point where they were comfortable, they always moved on."

Films to look out for:

Risky Business (1983)

The Man With Two Brains (1983)

Mr. Mom (1983)

National Lampoons Vacation (1983)

St. Elmo's Fire (1985)

The Breakfast Club (1985)

Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986)

Planes, Trains & Automobiles (1987)

Uncle Buck (1989)

Home Alone (1990)

