

Reflection questions for Donnie Darko

1. Describe the character of Donnie Darko. How did you identify with him? What seems to motivate him?
2. How does Donnie's brush with death seem to affect him? How might it affect you?
3. "Every living creature dies alone..." What does this mean? How does Donnie deal with it? Is it true? How do we deal with it?
4. Donnie and Jim Cunningham are presented as opposites in the film. What bothers Donnie about Jim so much? What, in principle, is their conflict about?

Wrap-Up

While Donnie Darko is about many things, it is most obviously a story of a teenage boy dealing with some significant questions about life. Donnie never seems convinced that the world works the way that it should. The adults around him blindly follow the overly simple lessons of Jim Cunningham, his parents think he needs to be medicated to be normal and the only teacher he likes gets fired. Like the characters in The Destroyers who destroy part of their current reality to see what happens when things change, Donnie is constantly questioning his world, rebelling against it and fighting to live the way he thinks he should.

Throughout this mission, Donnie is motivated by the fear of being alone. Feeling so isolated and alone just doesn't seem right. Donnie, like all of us, desires significance. He wants to be a part of something purposeful, to be involved with a life that seems more right, more beautiful and more true than his current reality. "This can't be all there is," he thinks, "Maybe there is a different way to live." So, as he tells his therapist, he must do what Frank says in order to find out what this is all about.

Perhaps Donnie shows us a bit of ourselves. We wonder if this is the way life is really supposed to be. Is there anything more, anything better? When Jesus came to earth, his whole purpose was to tell people the good news that there is something more out there and it is available to all of us. God created us to live beautiful, fulfilling lives, and though we have rejected that life, He offers it back to us every moment. He wants us to be a part of his reality because it is better for us; it is the way we are supposed to live.

So, like Donnie Darko, it is good to question the way things are. There is a lot about life that is confusing and just doesn't seem right. Maybe there is a better way to do things. Maybe there is a reality that is deeper and more true than our own that we can be a part of.

Like every movie we show here at the Cinema and Spirit events we think that Donnie Darko brings up a lot of interesting issues that will prompt conversation. We don't necessarily endorse what goes on in the movie but we do think it's worth talking about.

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