



2008

Sixteen candles

Allison Harthcock

Butler University, aharthco@butler.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/ccom_papers



Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Harthcock, A. (2008). Sixteen candles. In C. Mitchell & J. Reid-Walsh (Eds.) *Girl Culture: An Encyclopedia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood. Available from digitalcommons.butler.edu/ccom_papers/25

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Communication at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scholarship and Professional Work - Communication by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@butler.edu.

Further Reading

- Carr, Diane, David Buckingham, Andrew Burn, and Gareth Schott. (2006). *Computer Games: Text, Narrative and Play*. London: Polity Press.
- Cassell, Justine, and Henry Jenkins, eds. (1998). *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Pearce, Celia. (2002, July). *Sims, BattleBots, Cellular Automata God and Go: A Conversation with Will Wright*. [Online March 2007]. Game Studies Journal Web site <http://www.gamestudies.org/0102/pearce>.
- Reid-Walsh, Jacqueline. (2007). "Harlequin Meets the Sims: A History of Interactive Narrative Media for Children and Youth from Early Flap Books to Contemporary Multimedia." In Sonia Livingstone and Kirsten Drotner, eds. *International Handbook of Children, Media and Culture*. London: Sage, pp. 71–86.

JACQUELINE REID-WALSH

SIXTEEN CANDLES. *Sixteen Candles* (1984) is a **coming-of-age** movie that deals with a teenage girl's angst and quest for acceptance. A John Hughes film, it stars Molly Ringwald as Samantha (Sam) Baker, a high school sophomore wanting to be acknowledged by her family and the socially successful senior boy she has a crush on. Because the characters in the film all seem like "ordinary" teens, the teen audience can relate easily to *Sixteen Candles*.

Taking place over just a couple of days, the film finds Sam's sixteenth birthday being overlooked by her family as a flurry of activity surrounding her sister's wedding takes priority. This birthday is very important in Sam's life, as she, like many American teenage girls, has very high expectations regarding the celebration of her **Sweet Sixteen**. In addition to sensing her family's rejection, Sam also has to deal with the sophomore nerd, "Farmer Ted" (Anthony Michael Hall), and his juvenile advances. Farmer Ted is also searching for acceptance by his fellow nerd friends. Farmer Ted promises his friends that he will "get with" Sam to prove that he is a "real dude," which leads to repeated encounters with an annoyed Sam.

Jake Ryan (Michael Schoeffling), Sam's secret crush, is a senior who is at the top of the social and financial ladder with the "right" friends, girlfriend, and cars. However, it is clear that Jake is not happy with his place. When he learns through a mishandled note that Sam might be interested in him, he repeatedly tries to express his interest in her, but to no avail. When Jake smiles at Sam at the school dance, she gets flustered and runs away. Jake tries to call Sam on her bedroom phone line, but is accused of being an obscene caller by her grandparents, who have displaced Sam from her room while the household is rearranged in advance of the impending wedding.

Uncomfortable with his social status, Jake spends the evening in his bedroom while a party, hosted by his girlfriend Caroline, rages in the rest of the house. After the party, Jake finds himself left with a horrible mess and a drunk girlfriend, but no closer to Sam. Always trying to fit in, Farmer Ted has invited himself to the party at Jake's, and in its aftermath the two have a heart-to-heart about Sam and their social roles in school. Jake trusts Farmer Ted to drive woozy girlfriend Caroline home in his father's Rolls Royce.

The next day finds Jake and Caroline mutually deciding to go their separate ways when Caroline is attracted to nerdy Farmer Ted, leaving Jake free to pursue Sam. Jake goes to look for Sam at the church where her sister was to be married. Sam, unaware of all that transpired over the course of the previous evening, comes out of the church to find almost

everyone leaving for the reception—forgetting her again. As the cars pull away, Jake Ryan is standing in front of his red Porsche waiting for her. When he waves, she thinks he is waving to someone behind her. She accompanies Jake to his house, where he has a birthday cake waiting for her. The closing scene of the movie is the iconographic image of Sam, in her bridesmaid dress, leaning over her birthday cake to kiss Jake while sitting on his dining room table.

Sixteen Candles was the first film in a trilogy of collaboration between Hughes and Ringwald, which also included *The Breakfast Club* (1985) and *Pretty in Pink* (1986).

See also Junior Chick Flicks

Further Reading

Bernstein, Jonathan. (1997). *Pretty in Pink: The Golden Age of Teenage Movies*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

ALLISON HARTHCOCK

SKATEBOARDING. Skateboarding is an extreme sport that involves a person riding a skateboard. Outside the skateboarding community there is much talk about the value of this sport as merely a mode of transportation. However, aficionados argue that the sport is not only a hobby, but also a form of art and an avenue of expression for many young people, including girls. Its origins trace to the early 1950s when skateboarding emerged as a land-based version of surfing on waves: from surfing sprang “sidewalk surfing,” only to later be renamed skateboarding.

Skateboarding, an activity that is generally associated with boy culture, has begun to become a girlhood phenomenon within contemporary culture. Although it is still dominated by boys, a 2002 study showed that 85 percent of boarders were younger than 18, and that 24 percent of the young boarders were girls (American Sports Data 2002). From the streets to online communities, girls are breaking new ground in taking up skateboarding.

Pioneers along the way included Peggy Oki, an original member of the 1970s groundbreaking Santa Monica-based Z-Boys. Oki was the first female skateboarder to join the Z-Boys, a group of skateboarders who essentially created and popularized skateboarding and the punk/skater subculture. Oki has since become a well-known artist. Her paintings can be seen in various galleries across California and the United States. As a pioneer for young female skaters, she continues to support local and international events involving young women and skateboarding.

The Internet has provided a space where several girl skateboarding groups have emerged as part of the skater subculture, using the Internet as a tool to inform, to disseminate comments and information, and to publicize events. The Internet has provided a public sphere for female skateboarder to receive notice, and has facilitated networking and advancement for female athletes. For example, in 2002, the Skirtboarders, a Montreal-based girl gang of skateboarders, established an online presence with their Web site, www.skirtboarders.com. This site offers video clips, images, blogs, and other content related to female skateboarding. Through these interactive tools, young girls are able to keep up with local and international events and news.

Other significant sites in the digital culture of skateboarding are Action Sports Alliance and MySpace. In 2005, a group of women formed the nonprofit organization, Action Sports Alliance (www.actionsportsalliance.com) to promote the advancement