

Why call it a "chick flick"?

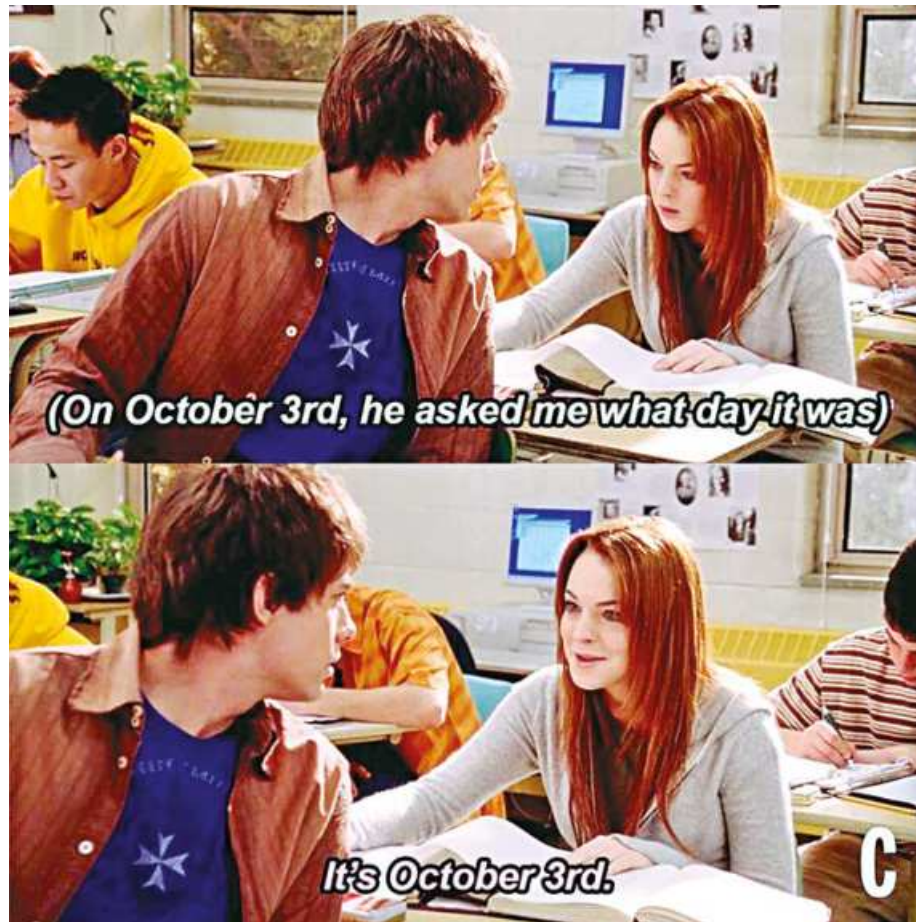
TASNIM ODRIKA

After a busy week, I like to take a night off and relax by falling asleep to movies and the majority of the movies I enjoy seem to fall under a category coined as "chick flicks". Recently I came across an Instagram post that questioned the coinage of this term. Somehow, before this, I had never quite considered why a particular set of movies are deemed as "chick flicks" or why a lot of people seem to look down upon it.

A simple Google search showed me that the term "chick flick" is essentially an informal and derogatory term that describes "a film which appeals to young women". Although films marketed towards a single gender might be problematic in itself but that is going to require a whole different article discussing how such adjectives may further perpetuate gender stereotypes. My issue with the definition of "chick flick" lies in the negative connotation held by the term.

Top chick flick movies include movies such as *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Bridesmaids*, *Mean Girls*, *Clueless*, and so on. A little digging would show you that the common factor in all of these movies is that they either have a mostly female cast or led by a female protagonist, and the plot also mainly discusses the issues faced by women.

The main themes of these movies circle around love and relationships (both platonic and romantic) and portrays how the main character navigates around these issues. Due to this, many might argue and say that such topics and the usual formulaic



plotlines of these movies are shallow which results in the negative remarks about these movies.

Then again, what deep message do movies such as *Superbad*, *21 Jump Street*,

or *The Hangover* hold? These are all light-hearted movies and yet they fall under the genre "comedies" with no other adjective used to describe them. Furthermore, if you look at the list of

the top movies termed as "chick flicks", which includes the ones listed above and also movies such as *Legally Blonde* and *She's The Man*, you will notice that in fact, none of these movies are shallow, and they actually deliver powerful messages to young girls.

I am not here to criticise any of these movies. My only question is, why do we need to use an extra adjective with a negative connotation to describe comedy movies with a female protagonist/cast?

This question seems to be answered by the famous feminist journalist, Gloria Steinem, who wrote in a March, 2017 opinion piece published in *The New York Times* regarding this same issue. She writes, "I realized the problem began with the fact that adjectives are mostly required of the less powerful. Thus, there are 'novelists' and 'female novelists', 'African-American doctors' but not 'European-American doctors'. As has been true forever, the person with the power takes the noun, and the norm, while the less powerful requires an adjective."

It's about time to let go of this whole idea that anything enjoyed by women is something to look down upon. If completely letting go of the term "chick flick" is not possible, we can at least start scraping off the negativity surrounding it. Anyone can enjoy a chick flick.

Tasnim Odrika has only one personality trait and that is cats. Share ideas for new personality traits with her at odrika_02@yahoo.com

How reading goals take the joy out of books

AYSHA ZAHEEN

Growing up, reading was therapeutic for me. I always thought of reading as something I did out of love. Sheer enjoyment, really, was always my purpose. Ever since I was a little girl, I would get two or three books a month, and I'd voraciously read through every word, remembering everything to my heart's content.

Then I grew up, and gained access to social media. The thought of connecting with readers from every corner of the world seemed hearty, so I joined various readers' groups. That is when I came across the concept of reading goals, and it was almost as if I was never a reader at all, a thought that hit hard given I always thought of myself as a good reader, if nothing else. I started buying books in bulk, reading only half of them at the best of times, forgetting the rest within a few months. It wasn't till a year and half passed that I realised that even though I had read more books in those months than ever, I had retained the least. I had fallen for the concept of reading goals, to only grow to detest it.



ILLUSTRATION: EHSAN MOSTAFA INAN

I find reading goals a redundant effort if the aim is to get into reading. It is more about quantity than quality. If we keep reading books, we are only creating inputs that will be registered as short-term memories. These will not even go through our working memory to become long-term,

let alone leave behind an impact reading usually entails. It is better to read a book every month and be able to retain the contents for long than to read five books a month and wonder what they were even about after a year.

I have seen readers who were simply

in love with reading become unhealthily obsessed with the concept of reading. Whilst profuse reading is seemingly romantic, nothing should occupy the life of an individual to the point where it does more harm than good. Again, not reaching reading goals can be discouraging and may dishearten the reader entirely. We are supposed to derive pleasure from reading, not disappointment at one's own self.

Reading as a hobby is extremely straightforward and simple. Thus, complicating it further by attaching superficial goals to it is a superfluous attempt to challenge oneself. As a reader, one should not feel inadequate for having read fewer books than another person.

There is no denying that there are readers who can readily extract said pleasure even through reading goals, but I find it rather counterproductive and diminutive when it comes to attaining the actual essence of reading.

Aysha's brain unclogs at the sight of a crown of raven curls. Don't ask her what it is because she won't tell at zaheenaysha10@gmail.com