

# A Real Pain traces tragedy through all its phases

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*A Real Pain* follows the story of two cousins, David and Benji Kaplan, who decide to take a trip down to Poland to visit their grandmother's home after her passing. While the film seems like a story that delves into the mere experience of loneliness and detachment from family, it does not fail to touch on the larger picture.

Eisenberg's directorial debut is funny, welcoming, and warm at first glance because the relationship between the two cousins has been depicted quite naturally. But the film also lets the viewer understand that if they take their eyes away from the story's two protagonists, they will fail to notice that the film's setting is in constant motion.

Benji Kaplan's character – played by Kieran Culkin – personifies this prevalence of motion. He seems to be someone who gives into melancholia because that at least allows him to feel something. In contrast, his cousin, David, is uptight and struggles with expressing his feelings.

However, the comfort children of immigrants receive does not sit well with the Kaplans because they both resort to coping



with it in unhealthy ways, albeit differently. For Benji to process the passing of a loved one and the atrocities that his grandma experienced, he feels that it is absolutely necessary to understand the Holocaust history. In contrast, David buries the emotional toll that his own problems pose, which he deems as 'unexceptional'.

The end of the film leaves its audience in awe as it depicts Benji sitting at the airport all by himself, while David goes back to his family in New York. In this way, the film allows

the agonising feeling of loneliness to linger and juxtaposes it with acceptance of one's brutal ancestral history. It also reminds its audience of the guilt that comes with moving on in life while the people we love remain stagnant. Perhaps it's the depiction of time passing that *A Real Pain* is able to capture which sets it apart.

*A Real Pain* may not have reached its audience with much noise, but it still manages to leave its viewers with a life-altering feeling.

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