

Searching For Bobby Fischer:
The Movie That Makes Smilanich Weep

dichotomy (noun) - Division into two; binary classification
---Concise Oxford Dictionary

Chess: The royal game of life; the conflict between the spiritual powers of light and darkness; devas and asuras; angels and demons struggling for domination of the world; existence as a field of action of opposing powers and forces; manifestation and reabsorption. The black and white, or red and white, chequer-board symbolizes the alternating pull of all fundamental dualities and complements in manifestation, the negative and positive; night and day, sun and moon; male and female; obscurity and clarity; the light and the dark of the moon; time and space, etc., also the criss-cross pattern of life alternating between good and bad, fortune and misfortune...The choice of movements is free but is responsible for setting in motion an inescapable series of effects; both free will and destiny are involved.....

---J.C. Cooper, An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols

There was a boy, a chess player, once, who revealed that his gift consisted partly in a clear inner vision of potential moves of each piece as objects with flashing or moving tails of coloured light: He saw a live possible pattern of potential moves and selected them according to which ones made the pattern strongest, the tensions greatest. His mistakes were made when he selected not the toughest, but the most beautiful lines of light.

---A.S. Byatt, The Virgin In The Garden

All we have gained then by our unbelief / Is a life of doubt diversified by faith, / For one of faith diversified by doubt: / We called the chess-board white, -- we call it black.

---Robert Browning, "Bishop Blougram's Apology"

Chess is life.

---Bobby Fischer

What makes us men is that we can think logically. What makes us human is that we sometimes choose not to.

---Roger Ebert. in his review of *Searching for Bobby Fischer*

Dichotomies in *Searching For Bobby Fischer*

man/woman	age/youth	teacher/student
good/"evil"	black/white	rich/poor
logic/emotion	sunshine & light/rain	support/disdain
mind/heart	sports/"games"	

There are many others.....careful examination reveals much.....
ASSIGNMENTS FOR *SEARCHING FOR BOBBY FISCHER*

Journal Responses

Answer three of the following questions in complete paragraphs:

1. Who makes the hardest decision in the film? Why do they make the choice that they do? Would you make the same choice? Why or why not?
2. You are writing the script for *Searching For Bobby Fischer II: A New Beginning*. Give a plot summary: When does it take place? What characters are involved? What happens to them? What has happened since the first film? Next, cast the film, using any actors/actresses working today--make sure that you give reasons for your choices.
3. What is the significance of the first scene (the park birthday party) to the entire film? What about the last scene (Josh and Morgan walking together)? Are they appropriate, or can you think of a better opening/conclusion?
4. Explain the relationship of one of the quotations on the first page to the film.

You will be marked on thought and detail, as well as originality. You must complete THREE of the questions, though the fourth may be completed for bonus marks (25 marks each)

Personal Response

Write a personal response (approximately 2 pages in length) to ONE of the following questions:

1. Difficult decisions are made throughout the film that will significantly alter many lives--often these decisions are seemingly insignificant, other times very important. What is the hardest decision you have ever had to make? What was the result of the decision? Would you now change the decision in hindsight? Be thorough and precise.
2. Parenting is certainly one of the most challenging (yet rewarding) professions. Discuss a situation in which your parents/guardians made a decision/proclamation that you initially thought was unfair, but later realized to be a sound one. Do parents often "know best"? Why or why not?

You will be marked on thought & detail, organization, thoroughness, technical matters, and style (50 marks)

Dichotomies in Action--Major Essay Assignment

You will be assigned one of the dichotomies from page 1 of the handout, or you are to come up with one of your own. You are to trace the use of that dichotomy throughout the film *Searching For Bobby Fischer*. **What is Zaillian suggesting through the repeated use of this dichotomy? What is he saying about life or human nature in general?** Is your dichotomy intrinsically linked to another? Why is this dichotomy important to the movie as a whole?

You will be marked on thoroughness and attention to detail, organization, spelling/grammar, and style--all the usual major essay stuff. (100 marks)