

## The Breakfast Club: You See Us as You Want to See Us

Dear Mr. Vernon,

We accept the fact that we had to sacrifice a whole Saturday in detention for whatever it was we did wrong, but we think you're crazy to make us write an essay telling you who we think we are. You see us as you want to see us, in the simplest terms, in the most convenient definitions. But what we found out, is that each one of us is a brain, and an athlete, and a basketcase, a princess, and a criminal. Does that answer your question?

Sincerely yours,  
The Breakfast Club

The Breakfast Club is about five very different students who must serve detention together. They are all given stereotypical roles of high school students of different social groups. Brian (played by Anthony Michael Hall) is the Brain. Andrew (played by Emilio Estevez) is the Athlete. Alison (Ally Sheedy) is the Basketcase. Claire (Molly Ringwald) is the princess. John Bender (Judd Nelson) is the criminal. They all appear to not care what anyone thinks of them (with the exception of Claire, and sometimes Andrew), but as we get to know the characters better, we learn that they all care what others think of them and make sure that people get the impression that was intended.



*Brian: The Brain*

Brian is the typical Brain of the (Brat) pack. He is very curious, and interested in learning about everyone else. He is a high self-monitor when it comes to his friends, girls, and most of all, his parents. When Bender asks him if he is a virgin in front of Claire, he puts up a front that he has had sex lots of times, because he wants her to be impressed. He also tries to prove that he is somebody too. When the topic of school clubs is brought up, he is eager to tell everyone that he is in the Physics Club, the Latin Club, and the Math Club. According to why he is in

detention, he got an F on a shop project, and his parents would not tolerate anything less than perfection, academically. He knows he is the smart one, and takes on the task of writing the letter to Mr. Vernon, the principal.

*Andrew: The Athlete*

Andrew is also a high self-monitor based on his behavior in detention. He is popular within the high school, a wrestler, and driven by his father's pressure to be the best. Andrew always makes sure he looks tough and



protective. For example, when Bender starts to describe Brian as “a neo-maxi-zoom-dweebie,” Andrew jumps in: “Why do you always have to insult everybody?” His actions that led to detention were his attempt to prove how tough he was—according to his father's standards. Andrew describes how his father feels: “ ‘You've got to be number one, Andrew. I won't tolerate failure in this family. Do you hear me?!’ ” Acting tough is his front, to appear like a winner to his father first, and everyone else second.



*Alison: The Basketcase*

Alison appears to be the lowest self-monitor, but she cares what people think about her too. She wants attention. She comes up with outrageous lies to get people to listen to her because her parents won't listen, and don't seem to care. She decides to tell everyone she is a nymphomaniac so they will start listening to her. She also breaks the silence by asking everyone if they want to know why she is in detention. And even while she is eating, she puts together weird combinations of food (and loudly) so everyone watches her. She dresses oddly because she knows people will look at her as she walks down the hall. When Claire gives

her a makeover, she is very defensive when Andrew first sees her. He looks amazed, and she immediately believes that he doesn't like the new Alison. He thinks she is beautiful, and lets her know right away. The best example of her need for attention, but not wanting to appear like she wants it is when she dumps out her purse, and then refuses to explain why she has so much stuff in there. She only begins to explain herself after Andrew begs to know what is going on at home that makes her want to run away.

*Claire: The Princess*

Claire is the most obvious high self-monitor in the movie. She doesn't like being the princess, but plays the part well. She is in the popular crowd, and must have an impeccable reputation to stay there. She manages to avoid personal questions as much as possible: "Look, I'm not going to discuss my private life with total strangers." Claire's virginity seems to be of major importance to everyone else in detention, and they continue to pressure her to tell of her virginity status, until she finally shouts out, "NO, I NEVER DID IT!" She is the most honest one, however, when it comes time to determine if any of them will still be friends come Monday morning, hence the name, *The Breakfast Club*.



*Bender: The Criminal*

John Bender, the delinquent of the pack, puts everything he can into his reputation for being an asshole. He says he comes from an abusive home, and has the scars to prove it. After he makes fun of everybody else's home life, the conversation continues:

Andrew: All right, what about your family?

Bender: Oh mine? It's real easy. "Stupid worthless no good goddamn free loadin' son of a bitch retarded big mouth know it all asshole jerk!" "You forgot ugly lazy and disrespectful—" "Shut up bitch! Go fix me a turkey pot pie!" "What about

you dad?" "Fuck you." "No, dad, what about you?" "Fuck you." "No dad what about you?!" "Fuck you!"

Brian: Is that for real?

Bender: Want to come over sometime?

Bender wants them to know how tough he has it and that is why he acts so tough to everyone. The way he dresses, the way he rips apart the books in the library, his locker, and how he talks back to Vernon, earning two months of Saturday detentions are all examples of Bender's need to appear like a criminal.

*The Breakfast Club* has taught me about how important perceptions are in society. Although most characters didn't let on that they cared what others thought about them, they reflected their given stereotype so that others would see them as they were supposed to see them. Whether it was a brain, an athlete, a basketcase, a princess, or a criminal, all the characters saw themselves as the role society trapped them in, and did their best to fulfill it.

