

THE EDUKATORS

(German)

Activity Guide by Amanda K. Plummer

Title: The Edukators
Director: Hans Weingartner
Country: Germany
Year: 2004

Starring/Character:

Daniel Brühl: *Jan*
Julia Jentsch: *Jule*
Stipe Erceg: *Peter*
Burghart Klaußner: *Hardenberg*

Writers: Katharina Held, Hans Weingartner
Length: 127 minutes
Language: German
Location/Time of Action: Berlin, Germany, circa 2004

More information:

<http://imdb.com/title/tt0408777/>
<http://www3.ifcfilms.com/theedukators/>
<http://www.theedukators.com>
<http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/edukators>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Edukators

SUMMARY:

The Edukators is about three young people living in present-day Berlin. Jule is a student who is horribly in debt as a result of an automobile accident. Early in the film she is evicted from her apartment, despite having finally paid six months worth of back rent. Her boyfriend, Peter, invites her to move in with him and his friend Jan.

Jan and Peter are more than friends; they are partners in a political/social activism scheme. Calling themselves “The Edukators,” they break into the homes of extravagantly wealthy people. Instead of burglarizing the homes, they rearrange the valuables and leave a note with a lesson. The one at the beginning of the film reads, “Your days of plenty are numbered.”

Jule learns of this secret life when Peter goes to Barcelona for three days, leaving her alone with Jan. Together, Jule and Jan break into the home of Hardenberg, the businessman whose car Jule crashed into. They leave Hardenberg a lesson that reads, “You have too much money.” Unfortunately, they also leave behind Jule’s cell phone.

Jan and Jule return to Hardenberg’s house the following night to retrieve the phone and are interrupted by Hardenberg. He immediately recognizes Jule. Jan and Jule panic, knock Hardenberg out, and kidnap him.

It is worth watching the film to the very end of the credits. They last about 2 minutes.

SOME BACKGROUND:

Hardenberg claims to have belonged to the SDS along with Rudi Dutschke, Karle Dietrich Wolff, and Frank Wolff. SDS stands for *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*, or Socialist German Student Union. This was a real organization, and the people he refers to actually lived and belonged to this group.

The SDS was the college/student branch of the Social Democratic Party. It was established in 1946, and was disbanded in 1970. The SDS was re-established briefly in the late 80's, shortly before the re-unification of Germany, but does not seem to have survived beyond 1989.

In the 1950s and 60s, the SDS found itself increasingly at odds with its parent organization as the Social Democratic Party supported the re-arming of Germany, particularly with nuclear weapons. The members of the SDS participated sit-ins, and a variety of other demonstrations. In 1968, the year Hardenberg refers to, the SDS organized and staged a series of large demonstrations in universities and factories, protesting German involvement in the war in Vietnam, and the production of nuclear weapons.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Jan and Peter claim to be educators. Who are they teaching? What is their intended lesson?
2. Hardenberg accuses the young people of being terrorists. Are they? They claim to be activists. Where is the line between activism and terrorism?
3. Hardenberg appears to change his opinions a great deal while the Edukators are holding him hostage. Do you think he is sincere? Or are his statements calculated? What are his goals?
4. There is one English language song in the entire movie, "Hallelujah" by Leonard Cohen. It is used in place of dialog for most of the last 12 minutes of the film. How does the music move the action differently from dialog? Keep in mind that in the context of *this* film, this song is a foreign-language selection. Why might the filmmakers have chosen to drop in a foreign song at this point in the movie?
5. "The best ideas survive."
"Some people never change."
What ideas survive?
Which characters change?
What lessons do the characters learn along the way?