
A Look At The Repercussions Of Going Against Your Conscience In Wald Disney Production's Film Pinocchio

Pinocchio (1940) is the tale of a simple woodworker, Geppetto, who wishes that his little wooden creation would become a real boy. Pinocchio himself is immature and naïve to the ways of the world, and another character, Jiminy Cricket, is appointed as his “conscience”. He then goes on an adventure, and must choose whether or not to follow his “conscience” in the escalating series of events he finds himself in. One of the earliest Disney animated films, Pinocchio still stands today as an emotionally satisfying and beautifully depicted example of linear narrative. The narrative itself lends to the theme that choosing to go against your conscience can have dire consequences for your life and the lives of those you love.

The film begins emphasizing the theme in the first act. In the exposition, Jiminy informs us that he is going to be sharing a story of a wish that came true- which tells us as the audience, as we look back, that we’ll eventually see some positive consequences of Pinocchio’s actions. However, the inciting incident of the film leads us to believe otherwise. What really sets the stage for the theme is when “Honest John” and his sidekick Gideon begin to lead Pinocchio astray. Pinocchio’s choice to disregard Jiminy and follow Honest John and Gideon brings us the first major consequence he faces as a result of his actions- he is kidnapped. The turning point emphasizes the theme and leads the audience to believe that Pinocchio has changed his ways and understands that consequences can be dire if he doesn’t follow Jiminy.

In the second act, we see additional obstacles placed in Pinocchio’s path. Despite promising to follow his conscience, he again decides to disregard Jiminy and make the wrong choice. This time, the consequence doesn’t seem that bad- Pinocchio smokes, drinks, and plays pool with other boys. Of course, this cannot last, and once again, Pinocchio is punished. Unlike the last time he realized his mistake, his repentant attitude does not absolve him of negative consequence, and he must go to great lengths to make amends. The obstacles and climax of the second act helps the audience see that repeated missteps compound the negative results that actions can have.

The final act shows us that Pinocchio finally understands that his actions have serious consequences. The falling action occurs as he comes to this realization, is able to save his father from the belly of a whale, and perishes in the effort. During the resolution, Jiminy’s foreshadowing at the beginning of the film is fully realized- Pinocchio is rewarded by being resurrected into a real boy, and Geppetto’s wish comes true. The falling action and resolution considered together show us that once Pinocchio is fully cognizant of the fact that his actions

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have consequences, he is not only able to make correct decisions and avoid negative effects, he actually receives positive effects as well.

All in all, Pinocchio is a brilliant example of linear narrative serving to add to a particular theme. The first act begins to show the audience that actions can have consequences. The second act adds to the first by giving additional examples and raising stakes. The third act and resolution provide a final, powerful reason to believe in the theme. Jiminy and Pinocchio make a strong argument for the idea that choosing to go against your conscience can have dire consequences for your life and the lives of those you love.

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