

BRADFORD WRITES!  
Fall 2024

## “It’s Not Just a Game Anymore”

By Ella Schmitt

When I was ten, I had been given twenty-five dollars as a birthday gift and decided to use it to buy myself a toy at Target. Walking around the toy section, I found myself surrounded by boring toys and games; that was until I saw it—*Clue*, retro version. As I grew up, this game remained my favorite, and when I found out that there was a movie, my love for the game grew. *Clue* is a good film because of the interactions between characters, which added humor to a board game about murder, and the surprising ending.

Six people are invited to a house for a dinner party. Nobody is allowed to use their real name, and nobody knows who invited them. Colonel Mustard, Mrs. White, Mrs. Peacock, Mr. Green, Professor Plum, Miss Scarlet, and Mr. Boddy are all greeted by Wadsworth, the butler, and Yvette, the maid. They all gather in the study and find out that Mr. Boddy has been blackmailing them. In response, Wadsworth tells them he had called the police, and they could all go free if they turned in Mr. Boddy. Mr. Boddy, however, threatens to expose the guests unless they kill Wadsworth, who has all the evidence, with one of the six objects he has given them (a wrench, a rope, a knife, a lead pipe, a revolver, and a candle stick).

Mr. Boddy turns off the lights and there’s a commotion; when the lights come back on, they find Mr. Boddy dead on the floor, along with the cook. Amidst the panic, they chose to let in a passerby whose car broke down. After locking up all the weapons, they split up into twos to search the house for more people because everyone denies being the murderer. While they are investigating, Col. Mustard and Miss Scarlet find secret passageways where they see the passerby dead.

A police officer later shows up asking about the passerby’s car and the guests lie, saying they know nothing about the man while the other guests hide the bodies that they have collected and decide to let him in. Everyone returns to searching until the lights are turned off, where the police officer and Yvette are found dead along with a singing telegram that rang the doorbell at the wrong time. When the

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power comes back on, Wadsworth declares he knows what happened, effectively concluding the movie with multiple endings.

The way that the characters interact with one another allows the board game to come to life. During the movie Mustard and Wadsworth have a light argument in which they say, “MUSTARD: Are you trying to make me look stupid in front of the other guests? WADSWORTH: You don't need any help from me, sir. MUSTARD: That's right! Mustard realizes what he just said.” By giving the viewers a look into the minuscule actions of the characters, it adds a layer of realism and relatability to the story that keeps the viewer engaged. Everybody is so concerned with their secrets being set out that they aren't focused on what they are saying. This irony adds to the comedy of the movie and makes it more enjoyable for those watching it.

Another example of the characters interacting with each other is when they have split up into teams of two and are looking for other people in the house. As seen in this scene, “Mrs. White and Wadsworth are at the doors of two adjacent rooms. They are looking at each other nervously. WADSWORTH: ‘Are you going in there?’ WHITE: ‘Yes, are you?’ WADSWORTH: ‘Yes.’ Pause. WADSWORTH: ‘Right!’ WHITE: ‘Right.’ They look in. WADSWORTH: ‘Um, I don't see any light switches in there.’ WHITE: ‘Well, neither do I, but there must be switches somewhere.’ WADSWORTH: ‘Shall I come in with you?’ WHITE: ‘No!’ (recovers) I mean . . . no, thank you.’ They start into their rooms and then jump out simultaneously, looking for the other.” This shows how nobody trusts anyone, but the way that this is presented is funny. By making light of a serious situation, it makes the movie appeal to a wider age group while adding humorous moments.

In addition, each of the endings allows for a different outcome which plays into the whole idea of *Clue*, where anything can happen. When the movie was first released, each of the three endings was released at different theaters, causing people to go to theaters all over town and sit through the movie again. At the time of release, the movie did not do very well, only making 14.6 million dollars at the box office (about \$42.7 million today), and it is believed to be because of the difficulty presented when trying

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to watch all endings. The movie did much better in the home video release due to it containing all three of the endings. A film critic who watched *Clue* at the time of its release, Roger Ebert said, “The way Paramount is handling its multiple endings is ingenious. They’re playing each of the endings in a third of the theaters where the movie is booked. If this were a better movie, that might mean you’d have to drive all over town and buy three tickets to see all the endings. With *Clue*, though, one ending is more than enough.” At the time of its release there had not been many games that were adapted into movies many people did not know what to expect. As Ebert insinuates *Clue* is not the best movie that has come out about a game, and while Paramount was trying to make more money they were hurting the movie and game by trying to get people to see the whole thing three different times.

It is surprising to see the “That’s how it could have happened,” and “But how about this?” slides followed by a slide that says, “But here’s what really happened.” As a viewer, being forced to see only one end at a time while having to sit and watch the whole movie again to see the other two endings would be frustrating. The home video release of *Clue* with all endings is good at capturing the board game aspect of the game being that it could be anybody and is a highly effective marketing strategy. The idea of a story being fluid, with many ways to interpret the ending, is enticing to someone looking for a new movie and contributed to the success of *Clue* after its DVD release.

Overall, *Clue* is an amazing and entertaining movie that keeps viewers engaged throughout the entire show. This is thanks to the character’s witty interactions and ingenious endings, *Clue* became a well-known movie with a strong, engaging plot. If the creators had not used irony and suspense to market the movie to such a wide audience would not have been any way as successful.

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