

## Short Paper #2 Prompt

### Directions:

You're going to write three short papers this quarter (worth a total of 30% of your course grade). For each paper, I'm going to give you a question/prompt and you'll respond with 2-3 pages (double-spaced), addressing all aspects of the question and providing examples from class materials (readings, screenings, discussions, etc.) as needed. Be sure to give it a good look before turning it in, the more polished your short paper is, the higher your score will be. Each short paper is worth 10% of your final grade, so take this seriously. **Short paper #1 is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, November 4.**

2

### By Permissiveness Possessed

Barbara Ehrenreich writes about the middle-class fears, building through the 1970s, regarding "permissiveness" and youth culture, fears that as we've seen are fairly central to the supernatural horror film of the 1970s. Unease about the effects of the permissive post-WWII parenting styles wasn't too far afield from the "dread of affluence" that we read about a few weeks back. Films like *The Exorcist*, *The Omen*, *The Amityville Horror*, and *The Shining* all deal with children in relation to the supernatural, with context-based assumptions about childhood fueling concerns about "youth run amok" and the aftereffects of the social and cultural changes of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

*The Exorcist* and *The Amityville Horror* both involve offspring who transform into supernatural menaces: a teenaged girl becomes a foul-mouthed host to a demon while a young man, ostensibly possessed by the evil spirits in his Long Island home, murders his entire family, spurring the haunting that provides most of the film's rather campy plot. At the same time, the very baby boomers who had been the focus of so much anxiety in 1969 were now adults, marrying and starting families and establishing homes. Youth may have changed dramatically in the past decade, but so had married life and the composition of the family (more single-parent or blended families). The way they were living was very different from the way their parents had 20-30 years before in the more affluent period following World War II. In fact, parents like "George and Kathy Lutz" of *The Amityville Horror* or "Jack and Wendy Torrance" of *The Shining* were themselves the product of this permissiveness of which Ehrenreich writes, a permissiveness considered by many to be to blame for the general confusion and paranoia of the 1970s.

Choose either *The Amityville Horror* (1979) or *The Shining* (1980) and tell me, using specific examples, how these films locate horror in an overly permissive society, one whose excesses have acted like a Ouija board, leaving families and society vulnerable to supernatural attack. Briefly describe this concept of permissiveness and provide some context, from the Jenkins reading, to describe the late 1970s and the atmosphere in which maturing Baby Boomers, while not necessarily possessed in *The Exorcist* style, come to represent the demonic consequences of that decade's relaxed moral sensibility. Quote from Ehrenreich and Jenkins where needed and provide specific examples from your chosen movie.

hint

\* how the father changed \* from a good husband and father to a grasping dad.