

Film Review: The Reader

The Reader features an interesting story which begins in the 50's when a teenage boy, Michael, meets a woman in her thirties, Hanna. This innocent meeting slowly turns into a romantic relationship; she fascinates him, and although at the beginning I keep wondering why, he fascinates Hanna as well. It seems that for Michael it all is just an exciting sexual experience, however, I couldn't have been more wrong. As the story evolves, I begin to understand that I was, together with the millions of viewers in the world, made witness of a touching love story.



Michael begins to love her more and more, even though Hanna is very secretive. She says very little about herself, is easily annoyed and is always excluding him from her personal life. But still, the story pulled me in and I found it captivating. The more so when I realise why she is so very secretive. Michael starts bringing book by book and Hanna listens eagerly to every single word he reads out loud. Slowly I figured why Michael is made 'The Reader'.

After a few months of maintaining a happy relationship, Hanna suddenly disappears without saying a word or leaving a note. Michael is devastated and Hanna, as I understood later, remains the love of his life.

Years pass by and Michael is now a law student. With his tutor and fellow students he follows a war crimes trial. It comes as a shock when Michael sees Hanna again. It is all the more shocking when he sees her as a defendant and finally discovers her secret. Only now does he understand her motives. I was deeply touched by Hanna who even in the most important minute keeps her secret for herself, and so does Michael.

'The Reader' reveals the mysteries of the main protagonists' lives in a very subtle way. It never explicitly states what the secret is and we have to "read between the lines". Every layer of the story is like the page of a book. We have to read the first to be able to understand the last.

By Zuzana Chomova