

Babel

Note: This is an film containing nudity and sexual inference

**Brad Pitt
Cate Blanchett**

Synopsis

This film is all about communication within and across different languages, customs, the media and cultures, hence the biblical reference of its title. In the bible, the Tower of Babel was built to reach God so God made it impossible for people to understand each other, thus providing a picture of how different languages originate. Babel is a place of confusion and divergence.

In the film, several different stories run concurrently which are all interlinked.

The film starts with Youssef and his brother who are poor children looking after the family goats in the Moroccan hillside. Their father teaches them to use a powerful hunting rifle to kill the jackals which attack the goats. Bored, they take pot shots at a tourist coach in the far distance and accidentally shoot a tourist.

The tourist is an American, who is on holiday with her husband, Richard, after the death of their baby. They have two other young children back home in San Diego, America, being looked after by Amelia, a Mexican illegal immigrant. After she is shot, the guide takes her to his home village where there is a doctor. The doctor sews up the wound while Richard goes crazy trying to get help. He is hampered by the media blowing the matter up into an international incident, reporting that his wife has been murdered by terrorists. This Moroccan response makes it difficult for the embassy to send a helicopter to rescue her.

Meanwhile we see Amelia being told on the phone by Richard that she cannot go to her son's wedding in Mexico because she has to look after the children. After trying fruitlessly to get someone else to look after them, she decides to go anyway and take them with her. Her nephew, Santiago drives them all to Mexico where she thoroughly enjoys herself at the wedding, as do the children. After partying all night, Santiago, now thoroughly drunk, starts to drive Amelia and the children home. Things go badly wrong at the US border where they are stopped and questioned. Santiago, fearing the worst, makes a run for it in the car. Being pursued he leaves Amelia and the children in the desert, before driving off.

In Toyko, we meet a young teenage deaf mute Japanese girl and her father. Her mother is dead and she appears a 'typical' stropky teenager, claiming her father doesn't pay her any attention. We see her with her friends, hoping to attract the boys, but she reacts badly when the boys can't work out how to talk to her, taking off her underwear and flashing them in order

to get their attention another way. She keeps a dental appointment and makes a pass at the dentist who then throws her out. We later see her drinking with the boys and taking drugs and going on to a nightclub. She can't really join in because she can't hear the music and she is upset when her friend starts kissing the boy she fancied.

Each of the stories becomes increasingly desperate. Richard cannot get help for his wife and resorts to swearing and screaming. The boys are in terrible trouble and being pursued by the police because they shot her. Amelia is bedraggled and terrified trying to get help in the desert, whereupon she is discovered and arrested. The Japanese girl invites a policeman to her home, ostensibly to talk about her father's involvement in her mother's death (though he actually wants to confirm that her father gave the gun to a Moroccan guide) and when he arrives she strips naked and throws herself at him.

The stories then conclude. The helicopter arrives and Richard's wife is airlifted to a hospital to be operated on. There is a shootout with the boys and one is shot. Youssef gives himself up with a plea for the police to save his shot brother. Amelia is told that she will be deported and we see her back with her son and the Japanese policeman refuses the girl gently and comforts her when she cries. She writes him a note and indicates that he must read it later. We see him in a restaurant reading the note. We don't know what it says. The final scene is of the girl's father finding her, still naked, on the balcony and taking her hand.

Some excerpts to watch:

The scene in the nightclub

The tour guide praying while Richard watches

The tour bus scenes when the angry passengers want to leave

Santiago killing the chicken

The scene at the US border

Some questions to think about

There are many guns in this film. Look at the some of the times when guns are used. What is the film trying to say about weapons and their use?

There are also policemen in each of the different countries. How do the different policemen behave, how do they use their power, and how do they communicate?

What is the significance of the scenes with the deaf girls?

What role does not being able to understand the other person have in this film?

How do people get across language and cultural barriers?

What does the film say about communication within personal relationships?

What does the film say about the difference between cultures?

What does the film say about truth and lies?

What does this film tell us about love

What do you think happened to the characters afterwards?

Some Bible passages:

Genesis 11.1-9

Mark 7.31-37

Acts 2.1-13