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Bridget Jones' Diary

Bridget Jones is in her thirties, single and worried about what is going to happen to her in life. Her diary records what she weighs, how many units of alcohol she has drunk, how many cigarettes she has smoked, how many lottery scratchcards she has bought and sometimes how many positive or negative thoughts she has had. Putting on a few pounds is occasion for misery, and she strives (and usually fails) to keep booze and fags under control. The lottery cards become a wish for something good to happen which will break her out of the rut she feels she's in. She's looking for love, but is unfortunately magnetically attracted to Daniel Cleaver, handsome and funny but not in for a steady relationship. Meanwhile there's the much less charismatic, but perhaps more suitable Mr Darcy.

Bridget's story (first detailed in Helen Fielding's newspaper columns and then in the resultant novels and films) tells us much about the obsessions of modern life and its relation to the senses. In particular, Bridget is worried about body image, what she wears and how she looks and whether that will be enough to get her a man. A date with Daniel is characterized by a set of painful touch experiences to get her the pleasure of being held, kissed and made love to by him. She must wax her legs, pluck her eyebrows, exfoliate her skin, massage her cellulite, dye her roots and tint her lashes before she is ready to go out with him. But the question behind all this physical sensation, both pleasurable and painful, is what all of it means. Bridget wants to be loved, but who will love her, and love her for herself and not as

a sexy bit of skirt? (This is meant literally – Daniel flirts with her on the basis of her 'bit' of skirt).

Bridget is very much aware of how shallow her life seems to be and is seeking for something more. She is good at making resolutions about her weight and her smoking and drinking habits. Like so many people, she wants to be healthier and to feel good about herself and to have more self-esteem. Her problem is that she doesn't have a clear how to do any of this. She keeps resolving not to have sex with Daniel because she knows he will just use her, but can't keep to this because she needs to know she is wanted and desired. Bridget is a modern day everywoman, but her diary reveals a deep insecurity about what it means to be a single woman in western society and what she should be searching for and getting out of life.

Some questions for discussion:

How useful are Bridget's friends in helping her decide what to do?

What would it take to get Bridget to love herself exactly as she is?

Where does Bridget get her ideas about what she should look like from?

How far do you think Bridget reflects the concerns of young people today?

What would it take for Bridget to keep her resolutions?

What do you think would bring Bridget lasting happiness?