



FILM: **WICKED LITTLE LETTERS**

FDG RATING: 3.2 ☺☺☺○○

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Thea Sharrock: *director*  
Olivia Coleman: *actress, Edith Swan*  
Jessie Buckley: *actress, Rose Gooding*

DATE: May 19, 2024

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **WICKED LITTLE LETTERS**

The 2023 British dark comedy *Wicked Little Letters*, is based on an actual 1920 scandal in a small English town. Obscenely lewd letters are being sent, first to Edith, a devout spinster living with her exceedingly restrictive, rigid, religious father. The letters accuse his bible-quoting, daughter of very nasty acts. It's a fun, comical farce, with an outstanding performance by Olivia Coleman as Edith. We loved the twinkle in Edith's eyes as she walks along the seaside with her new neighbor, Rose, an Irish immigrant who has a very foul mouth and a bold, outspoken, unfeminine personality. Edith is clearly enamored by this brazen young woman who is freely spouting streams of blasphemous words. Edith is enjoying having a new friend. Rose is a single mother, has her preteen daughter, Nancy, living with her as well as her musician boyfriend, Bill, who is dark skinned. Clearly, Rose is turning her nose up at societal rules but she earnestly wants to protect her daughter so, although she wants to, Nancy is forbidden from playing Bill's guitar since it's not something a lady does.

A few discussion participants didn't like the overly crude language that filled the film. Others took it in stride. Most agreed the characters were fun to watch, especially Edith and her three quirky friends. All the performances were outstanding including Timothy Spall as Edith's rigid, overbearing, zealously religious father. Another standout was Anjana Vasan as Female Officer Gladys. She is expected to introduce herself using those words and at one point drops the "Female" declaring everyone can see she is a female. The obvious themes of a woman's freedom to work, vote (the story takes place during the suffragette movement), and move about in society, as well as breaking free from strict Christian controlling patriarchy, and, in the character of Rose, pure female defiance, all play out in a comedic style. One discussion participant said she laughed from beginning to end.

After Edith receives the 19th obscene letter, her father has had enough and goes to the constable to put a stop to these horrible profanities. Of course, the obvious culprit is Rose but Officer Gladys isn't so sure. She does her own investigating as more people in the town start receiving letters accusing them of ugly disgusting nasty acts. As the scandal gains more and more notoriety, we see Edith enjoying the attention since she is finally being seen rather than staying in the background repressed. Officer Gladys, with the help of some eccentric towns people, sets up Edit and catches her in the act of mailing the letters. Rose is put on trial, but when Edith takes the witness stand, she proudly points to her own excellent and ornate handwriting (she assisted her father painting signs for the town's businesses) which then incriminates her as the person writing the letters. When she is put into the police van she loudly cusses at her father and then tells Rose she will write her from prison. Rose replies, "I'll brace myself".

A couple discussion participants criticized the film for being predictable. Others praised the performances, the quirky characters, and liked that at the end, Edith has broken free from her father's restraints. One person thought that the "stagey" style was slightly reminiscent of Wes Anderson films which can have a colorful, vibrant artificiality.... in a good way.

*Wicked Little Letters* won over some of our hearts but not all, imprinting a mischievous 3.2 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!  
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