

**SAMPLE
DRAFT**

Good Seeds

By

Michael Metzler

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Contact Info:

Good Seeds

An original screenplay concept by

Michael Metzler

Drama: John Care, a beloved teacher, ostracized by the local school administration, seeks solace on his farm with students who choose to continue their unorthodox education.

As the story unfolds, the teacher's connection with students deepens, and their collective conflicts with the outer world (i.e. parents, press, local school administrators and board) become heightened. In a complicating twist, John is informed by a local grad student that he has the last living oak tree in the United States on his property. The tree soon becomes haven for the "class" meetings, a symbol of their precarious growth, and similar magical realism strains are found throughout the story.

Because John has committed every fiber of his being to his pedagogical belief that the best learning is through an unbridled and pure pursuit, he refuses to limit his students' exploration. From perception and language to history, ethics and aesthetics, the students are encouraged to question what they believe they know. John's loose approach, encouragement of his students' skepticism, disdain for the outer world, and a questionable relationship with one student make him a target of the community's wrath. In the spirit of Socrates and Jesus, however, John welcomes his persecution. While he may not be considered a success in the end, he leaves a clear legacy.

Think *Dead Poets Society*, *Mr. Holland's Opus* and *The Man Without a Face* meet *Breakfast Club* and *History Boys* with a large dose of *My Dinner with Andre* and a touch of *Oleanna*.

This film is a unique portrayal of teaching and learning, stripping it down to the art form of the conversation. Through Socratic dialogue, the students become enriched, mature, frightened, and enlightened. But none of their questions will be answered. AND none of the filmgoers' questions will be answered. The audience will experience the 'grey' world of the students' pursuit right along side them, and only upon the film's end will their pursuit begin. This design should ensure that this film will be a favorite among high school students and teachers for years to come (and for all those who found similarly curious students trapped inside them during high school), for the end of the film is the beginning of the dialogue.

1 SUPER OVER BLACK 1

FADE IN

"Mihi quaestio factus sum."

FADE TO

"I have become a question for myself." - Saint Augustine

FADE OUT

2 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING FACADE. EST. DAY. 2

A typical high school building facade. There is no sign of life outside the building -- no tardy students hustling to class, no chit-chat. Vacated cars fill the parking lot. An empty school bus pulls away. A bell rings.

3 INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY. DAY. 3

There is a certain numbness and sterility to this place. A tenor of drudgery, not classroom chaos. The hallway is vacant. No signs of student creativity can be found. Just stretches of lockers, cinder-block walls, and shiny, tile floors. The only hint of enrichment in the halls includes a few mass-produced stock photography inspirational posters and some hand-made 'fund-raiser' posters for several clubs. Marketing items have infiltrated - Box Tops for Education, Campbell's Soup Labels drop box, the US Army, etc. The rules, limitations and stasis have created a den of internalized oppression where there is no rebellion in the air, only a dulled acceptance of the plight.

Teachers' voices are heard wafting from classrooms.

SCIENCE TEACHER-MALE

And once you collect your data,
fill out the bottom half of your
lab report. This should be done in
black ink.

PE TEACHER

Today, we're having a quiz on the
rules of table tennis.

ENGLISH TEACHER-FEMALE

I'll remind you that using the
5-paragraph structure is a good way
to organize your writing...
especially for the state test. Not
for your college essay, and not for
most other situations, but it'll

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ENGLISH TEACHER-FEMALE (cont'd)
work here. You'll need two number
two pencils with good erasers. No
cell phones. No talking. James,
pull up your pants.... I don't need
to see that.

MR. HARRIS-HISTORY TEACHER
You guys have been having far too
much fun lately, and you need to
get a lot more serious if you're
going to do well on your
tests. Laura, lose the gum. We've
been over this about fifty times,
people, but we're gonna keep doing
it until you can get it. What does
your book say about McCarthyism?

No response.

Well, what does the book say about
what contributed to the era?

STUDENT-MALE
Wasn't there a blacklist, Mr.
Harris? I think it'd be cool to see
that list.

MR. HARRIS
We don't have the list here. We
have the book. Now, what does the
book say about....

Interruption by 'Morning Announcements'. As with many modern
schools trying to be more relevant, two energetic students,
one boy and one girl, have been selected to read them. They
are suitably enthusiastic, running counter to the spirit of
some of what they read.

BILLY
Good Morning, Edenview High. Here
are your daily announcements with
Billy 'Never Trust a Guy With Two
First Names' James...

SUSIE
...and Susie 'The Clothes Matcher'
Hatcher.

BILLY
Congratulations to Coach Buck.
After leading the boys basketball
team to the state championship in
March, he has been named state

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BILLY (cont'd)

Coach of the Year. Coach Buck will have an all-expense paid visit to the National Basketball Coaches Conference in San Antonio this summer.

SUSIE

Congratulations to the Raiders Math Club which placed tops in our region. They're off to states, but need some money for hotels. So, they're selling lollipops at lunch. Buy 'em and lick 'em like the math club licked their competition...

(giggling)

Wait...That didn't sound right.

BILLY

The Jostens rep will be at lunch today and tomorrow to finalize class rings and caps and gowns for seniors.

SUSIE

Navy recruiters will be at lunch today. Nothing like a man in uniform, right girls.

BILLY

The Robotics and Debate...oh..and Chess Clubs have been canceled due to lack of interest.

SUSIE

Tickets for spring prom go on sale Friday. No underclassmen unless you're somebody's date. No late ticket sales (you snooze, you lose). If your date is not from Edenvue High, you must register their name at the main office.

BILLY

Principal Adams has asked us to make the following special announcements... There has been too much abuse of hall passes, so teachers will be limiting them to one pass per class period. Dress code reminders: boys, get your pants up; girls, no spaghetti straps or midriffs. If you violate

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BILLY (cont'd)

these policies, you'll have to wear one of the dreaded 'big shirts', and your parents will be notified. Vending machines are off limits except during lunch periods, and Gatorade has just joined Coke and Mountain Dew on the list of banned drinks. Juice and water will now be available for purchase. The spring pep-rally will take place during 7th period on Friday. No latecomers will be allowed in. Those choosing not to attend must go to study hall and, because of too many people last time, room 310 will be open this time. Reminder: It's a silent study hall...

SUSIE

...so, go to the pep-rally where you can make noise.

BILLY

...There will be no more WOOF-WOOF chants allowed. Some community members who like attending find them disturbing.

SUSIE

And one final announcement from Billy and me. What's up with not flushing in the bathroom, people?! I mean, come on. We're not animals. (beat) This is Susie...

BILLY

...and Billy...

SUSIE

...signing off and reminding you: Once a Raider, always a Raider!

These environs are in stark contrast to the high school. This is a rich and vibrant learning community. Spring has sprung and campus is abuzz. There is laughter, sunshine, frisbee-tossing, studying, serious and animated people thoroughly enjoying their serious conversations.

5 INT. EMPTY COLLEGE BIOLOGY LAB. DAY. 5

MARY GREEN, biology grad student, leans on lab table, stares at laptop screen and jots notes on legal pad. She slams laptop closed, grabs notepad and enters adjoining office space. She gathers files and books and dumps her stuff hurriedly into backpack. She is intent, passionate, enthused, as she checks map on her phone. She pauses, smiles, grabs jacket and portable lab kit and exits.

6 INT. COLLEGE LECTURE HALL. DAY. 6

Mary Green, encumbered by supplies, peeks head into lecture of her adviser, Professor PAUL PETERSON'S full lecture. He doesn't notice her at first.

PAUL

So, if we're going to consider evolution in its entirety, then we must, essentially, question all of life and time. We are here, in this form, because of life and its development over time. Now, what exactly is life?

He finally notices Mary, and is distracted momentarily. Mary waves/nods goodbye, thumbing gesture that she's heading out. Paul nods and returns to lecture. Mary exits.

7 EXT. JOHN CARE'S FARM EST. DAY. 7

The farm is Eden-esque. Vibrant colors. Healthy soil. Long, gravel drive. A small apple grove and abundant garden. Long evergreen row serves as wind-break on one side of property. Pristine white farmhouse, red barn and outbuildings pop against piercing blue sky. A lone oak tree is set off by itself on opposite side of driveway, surrounded by plush, green grass. There is a magical quality that is more Field of Dreams than Oz.

8 EXT. JOHN'S GARDEN. DAY. 8

JOHN CARE, 40, is toiling in garden. Close-up sights and sounds of his hands digging into soil and ripping weeds. His breath is loud, and his sweat drips. He is frustrated with something, and takes it out on the task at hand. A half-eaten apple lies in the grass near him, and he periodically picks it up in his filthy hands and takes a hard bite.

The high school principal, Alexander Adams, stands nearby. A strong, seasoned, steady man. While the two men converse with the ease of friendly colleagues, we sense underlying strain.

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ALEXANDER

How the hell do you have full-grown tomatoes and apples in mid-May? I can't get anything to grow by August. Everything you've got is perfect and ripe AND out of season. What the hell?!

No response.

That was barely a frost, though... certainly wasn't a winter.... Global freaking warming.

No response.

We made a mistake, John. We screwed up.

JOHN

Yes, you did. Since when do you cave in to the masses? You've always been solid when it comes to what's right. And I, for some reason I cannot fathom, got a front-row seat to watch your backbone wither.

ALEXANDER

You never knew where to draw the line, John. Who are we kidding?!

John shakes head slightly, intensely, nearly speaking, but holds.

You kissed a student!

JOHN

On the forehead, for God's sake! And I hugged hundreds more. And that child at that moment needed that.... The way any daughter would.

ALEXANDER

You weren't her father.

JOHN

Right. Where the hell was he? Gone. Absent. Drunk. Riding into town just in time to sling some accusations.

ALEXANDER

Incredulously

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

You kissed his daughter.

JOHN

I was celebrating her writing
award, which - News Flash! - he
wasn't around for.

ALEXANDER

Shake her damn hand, then! (beat)
Poor judgment. Testing the limits.
And the tragedy.... That's why
you're gone.

JOHN

You have no idea how painful
September was... not seeing those
kids.... You know that fragile
backbone of yours, Al? Well,
there's an oft-neglected part of
the anatomy just below it, and you
can kiss mine if you'd like...
before you get off my property!

Alexander turns and leaves. John rolls off knees into
sitting position, grabs apple and consumes it, core and all.
He spits seeds into his dirty palm and scatters them in
grass. A couple of seeds remain in his mouth. He plays with
them for a bit, concentrating with a calm, zen-like
attention, and then spits them onto the grass.

9

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY CLASSROOM

9

As Mr. Harris speaks, CU of student's hand writing in
notebook, "I never let schooling get in the way of my
education." - Mark Twain"

MR. HARRIS

OK, guys. Let's do some review for
the state test.

Students dutifully open notebooks, except for Maddie, who
sits, distracted with mounting frustration.

Chronologically, you'll have to
know Pre-colonial through
9/11.... Maddie, what's going on?!

MADDIE

Do we have to do this, Mr. Harris
It's drudgery. History has gotta be
more than this....

MR. HARRIS

Of course, it's more than this, Maddie.

MADDIE

But we've been doing this at least twice a week lately, and I just don't get why it matters.

MR. HARRIS

It matters because it's stuff you need to know. Why? Because the great taxpayers want to know that you're learning. So, they elected politicians who set up committees, who decide that you should know X, Y and Z. And in a few weeks you're going to sit at a desk with a number-two pencil and fill in the right bubbles to get the right score, so that these doors will stay open and we can continue to walk through them.

MADDIE

It's just that this used to be one of my favorite classes....

MR. HARRIS

(Incensed now and barking)
And YOU used to be one of my favorite students!

Maddie becomes visibly upset. Pauses. Considers. Then storms out. Cue music: "I Don't Want to Die in a Hospital" by Conor Oberst.

10 INT. HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE. HALLWAY. DAY. 10

Maddie walks briskly and deliberately down hallway and out of school's entrance doors as Principal Adams is on his way in. They cross. He sees her, shows concern, but does not intercede.

11 EXT. HIGH SCHOOL. BACK PKG LOT. DAY. 11

Maddie heads toward parking lot, hops on her motorized scooter and pulls away. Camera follows as she wends away from school, through town, and past John Care's farm.

12 SUPER: 12

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13 EXT. MAIN ROAD OUTSIDE JOHN CARE'S FARM. DAY. 13

It is afternoon. Mary Green sits in car on side of road, double-checking map and notes, confirming that this is her destination. She sets down papers, smiles and admires the beauty before her, puts car in gear, and pulls onto the long gravel driveway.

John is now spreading wildflower seeds in pasture, scattering them by hand. He hears her coming, and moves toward her car. He's got another apple, still chewing and spitting seeds.

Mary alights from car, enthused but tentative.

MARY

You have a beautiful place here.

John does not respond.

I'm Mary Green.

She extends hand to shake. John holds up dirty hand to suggest she may not wish to shake it, but Mary extends hand further and smiles wider. They shake, and Mary wipes hand quickly on jeans to suggest no big deal. She's torn between a formal introduction, stating the purpose of her visit, and a more laid-back 'down-on-the-farm' tenor.

JOHN

John Care. Apple?

He motions to an apple tree, Mary picks her own, and takes a bite.

MARY

I'm working on my PhD at the university. Biology. The science of life, ya know. And, I was wondering.... (beat) You have apples in May?!

JOHN

This year I do. Leftovers from fall... and what appear to be some new ones. Did a snow grow over that thing we used to call winter.

Mary notices a basket full of tomatoes and cucumbers near the thriving garden and becomes distracted from her initial question.

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