

Heathers ★★★

Year of Release: 1989

Review by Randy Parker

Country: USA

Verdict: See It

What can you say about a movie that satirizes teen suicide? Well, you'd probably call it sick, demented, and perverse. And while the black comedy *Heathers* is all these things, it's also outrageously funny and refreshingly off-beat.

Heathers stars Winona Ryder as Veronica, and as the film begins, she's in basic training ... training to be arrogant, bitchy, and most important, popular. Her mentor is Heather, or make that the Heathers as there are three of them: Heather 1, Heather 2, and Heather 3. These preppie Diet Coke heads are the social elite of Westerburg High; they enjoy the ultimate social power of deciding who is in and who is out.

Even though Veronica aspires to be popular, her brains, sensitivity, and conscience set her apart from the Heathers, her cold and heartless mentors. And just when her admiration for the Heathers turns to contempt, Veronica meets J.D., played by Christian Slater who gives a delicious Jack Nicholsonesque performance as the mysterious, rebellious, and demented new kid at school. J.D. has the alarming capacity for turning Veronica's angry thoughts and urges into reality. For instance, Veronica wishes in her diary that Heather number

one would die, and the next thing she knows she and J.D. have killed her. To escape criminal charges, they disguise Heather's death as a suicide. And much to Veronica's surprise, suicide becomes the latest rage at Westerburg high.

Heathers definitely is not for everyone. Some viewers inevitably will be offended by its subject matter. But if you're looking for a dark comedy with a biting edge to it, then *Heathers* has a lot to offer. Daniel Waters' script is full of hysterical dialogue and great one-liners, and the teenage slang he creates for the movie is a riot. The performances are inspired across the board, especially those by Ryder and Slater who develop sizzling chemistry in the lead roles.

My only problem with *Heathers* (and it's a big one) is that after an hour of great satire, the movie sells out and turns into a full-blown thriller. Although the climax is exciting, it's too violent and somber in comparison to the rest of the film. After sustaining perfect pitch for over an hour, *Heathers* finishes on the wrong note. Nevertheless, *Heathers* deserves applause for taking risks and daring to be different.