

BRITFILMS

BRITISH SCHOOL FILM FESTIVAL

#11 - 2017/2018

Study Guide

I, DANIEL BLAKE

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German certification	minimum age 6 recommended for 14 years and older
Language	English, English with English subtitles, English with German subtitles
Country, Year	Great Britain/France/Belgium 2016
Running time	101 min.
Directed by	Ken Loach
Starring	Dave Johns (Daniel Blake), Hayley Squires (Katie), Micky McGregor (Ivan), Dylan McKiernan (Dylan), Sharon Percy (Sheila) and others

What I, DANIEL BLAKE is about

A heart attack leaves Daniel Blake disoriented. By order of his doctor, the 59-year-old carpenter is temporarily unfit for work. After he is declared healthy and able-bodied by the Department for Work and Pensions, his employment and support allowance is refused. Daniel's only way of receiving support is collecting jobseeker's allowance. In order to do that, he has to apply for jobs (online at that!) which he of course couldn't take without risking his life due to his poor health. Daniel meets Katie, a young mother with equally frustrating problems. While waiting for a hearing to determine and reevaluate his status, he takes care of Katie and her two kids.

Ken Loach's film is a bitter indictment of a social system that fails to support people in need and even makes life harder by way of harassment, obstacles, bureaucracy and humiliation. Opposite that is the character of Daniel Blake, a working class man defined by his humanity, his empathic behaviour and also warm and gentle humour. While the camera stays very close to Daniel and Katie, the sensitive and yet seemingly mundane style of the film underlines their predicament: They seem constricted and cramped into the narrow hallways of administrative buildings, leaving little room to breathe or to move. But they will not give up.

The following worksheets deal with

- Terms like employment and support allowance and jobseeker's allowance
- The dilemma Daniel is in and how it slowly evolves into a vicious cycle
- How the character's feelings are expressed visually
- What stylistic traits from other Ken Loach films can be found in I, DANIEL BLAKE

Publishing information

Publisher:
AG Kino – Gilde deutscher Filmkunsttheater
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Photo credits: Prokino

(All the stills are from the DVD of I, DANIEL BLAKE, published in Germany by Prokino. They serve as image quotations, to enable study of the film's content, and not as illustrations.)

Important terms from I, DANIEL BLAKE

Explain the following terms:

employment and support allowance	
jobseeker’s allowance	
appeal	
food bank	

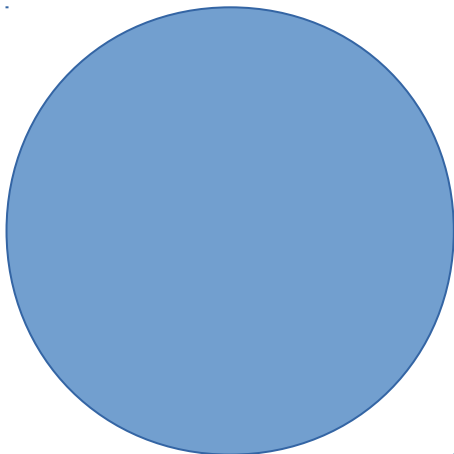
Daniel’s Problem

Daniel is trapped in a vicious cycle. Illustrate his situation in the circle below, going clockwise. What does he need? What are the choices presented to him by the authorities? What are the consequences for him?

After suffering a heart attack, Daniel is temporarily unable to work.



Because he is not wealthy, he depends on the nation’s social support structure.



Daniel and Katie

A close friendship grows between Daniel and Katie. Describe what they have in common and how and why they sympathize with each other.

Using the following examples, describe how the feelings and problems of Daniel and Katie are communicated visually. Pay special attention to the use of colors and the character's composites.



1



2



3



4

How Daniel sees himself

In the second to last scene we see this image: Daniel examining himself in a mirror. Describe the design elements of this image and how it feels.



Connect the image to the following statement, made by Daniel in an earlier scene:

When you lose your self-respect, you're done for.

I, Daniel Blake

At the pauper's funeral, Katie gives a speech that Daniel had prepared for his hearing. Written, of course, in pencil.

I am not a client, a customer, nor a service user. I am not a shirker, a scrounger, a beggar, nor a thief. I'm not a National Insurance Number or blip on a screen. I paid my dues, never a penny short, and I am proud to do so. I don't tug the forelock, but look my neighbour in the eye and help him if I can. I don't accept or seek charity. My name is Daniel Blake. I am a man, not a dog. As such, I demand my rights. I demand you treat me with respect. I, Daniel Blake, am a citizen, nothing more and nothing less.

Discuss the following questions in a group:

- What kind of image is Daniel Blake defending against?
- Which political principles does that image benefit from?
- What are the values that Daniel Blake stands for?
- What rights is Daniel Blake demanding?

Write an obituary for Daniel Blake, detailing the problems of the british social system in a matter-of-fact way.

A film by Ken Loach

British director Ken Loach is famous for his warm-hearted and intense social dramas, that depict people from the working class and their struggles.

Explain the following aspects of the film, using the image below:

Humanity	
Wit and humour	
Working class	
Social criticism	
Ken Loach’s feelings for the character of Daniel Blake	

