

## Film Review: Awkward & Difficult is Played Out in ‘Eighth Grade’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on July 22, 2018 - 3:26pm

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CHICAGO – We’ve all been there. Depending on what school structure you lived through, everyone had issues in “Eighth Grade.” Writer/director Bo Burnham puts those universal issues in a modern context (social media, online video), and portrays them through a girl struggling to belong while navigating the choppy waters of adolescence. It’s difficult, awkward and representative.



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

Luckily Burnham found an extraordinary actor to interpret his story. Elsie Fisher is connected to her character not just by age, but by an instinctive vulnerability that bubbles to the surface in her portrayal. In eighth grade reality, a couple of situations are going on. One is the plateau in the education system, the upper echelon in a grade school/middle school structure, and the second is dealing with those pesky teenage hormones that drives everybody crazy. Those two scenarios clash profoundly in Burnham’s story, so much so that in rooting for Elsie’s character to have any victory, memories are inevitable on how difficult those victories were to attain. Because of these reactions, “Eighth Grade” is universally felt and still modern in context.

Kayla (Elsie Fisher) is in her final week of Eighth Grade, but is struggling to connect to the changes her classmates are going through in adolescence right before high school. She comes off as awkward and shy outwardly, but at the same time posts a number of YouTube videos on how to be confident. Her single father (Josh Hamilton) cannot reach her, as she spirals downward in self esteem.

She has a crush on Aiden (Luke Prael) and tries to engage him by pretending to like what he likes (nude pictures via text), but ignores signals from Gabe (Jake Ryan), a fellow awkward traveler. At the same time, she begins a friendship with Olivia (Emily Robinson) which gets her into another difficult entanglement. She is going in a crazy direction, and slowly begins to understand what is right for her.

*“Eighth Grade” opened in Chicago on July 20th, part of a nationwide limited release. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Elsie Fisher, Josh Hamilton, Luke Prael, Jake Ryan and Emily Robinson. Written and directed by Bo Burnham. Rated “R”*



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Kayla's (Elsie Fisher) Reflects in Front of Her Screen in 'Eighth Grade'

Photo credit: A24



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