

 **PRAGDA** | SPANISH FILM CLUB

DISCUSSION GUIDE



THE GIRLS ARE ALRIGHT

A film by Itsaso Arana

Spain / 2023 / 85 min
Spanish with English subtitles

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BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before watching a film, it is important to know the current events and history of the country that film comes from. Learning about the filmmaker is also a relevant way to gain insight on the context in which the film was produced. You can learn more about Itsaso Arana at <https://pragda.com/film/the-girls-are-alright/>

INTRODUCING THE FILM

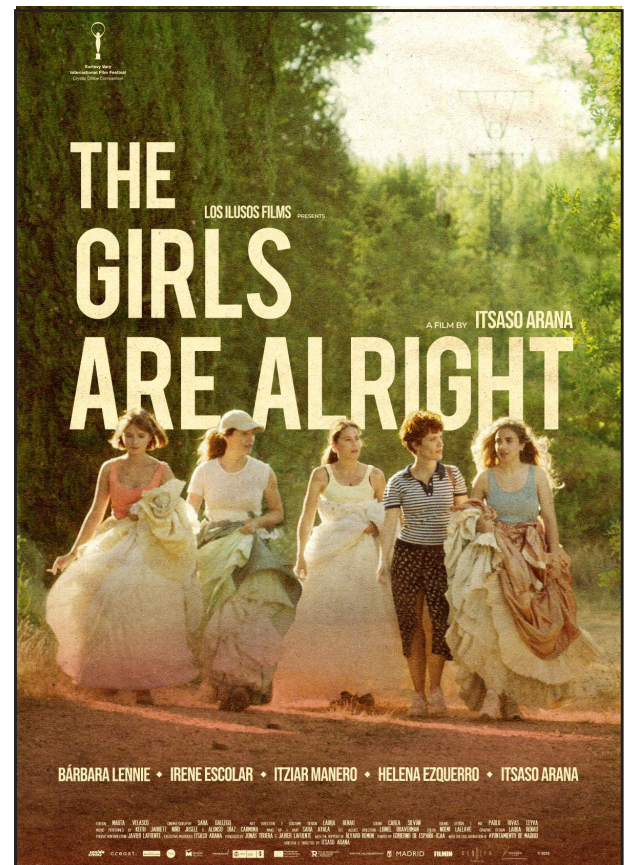
A **film synopsis** is a piece of text designed to summarize the film's narrative, genre, style, and key participants in a way that appeals to a wide audience. The synopsis is part of the film's marketing process and tends to follow a traditional format. Read this synopsis for *The Girls are Alright*:

Nominated for Best New Director at the recent edition of the Goya Awards, multi-hyphenated director Itsaso Arana joins Bárbara Lennie, Irene Escolar, Itziar Manero, and Helena Ezquerro in a summer tale about the coexistence of four actresses and their writer who seclude themselves from the world to rehearse a play in an old mill. This is in the story of a spell. With princesses, toads, rivers, letters, and even a confused prince.

During a few days of rehearsal, the actresses will get to know and measure each other through the materials presented in the play they are preparing, and they will contribute their own experiences around their characters' themes: love, beauty, orphanhood, faith, friendship, acting, and death.

From the film synopsis, can you imagine the genre and tone of the film? From this same text, try to identify the main events of the film's plot and the socio-political context of the film.

- > Do you think that the film will have a political message? Cite specific language from the synopsis to support your answer.
- > How do the trailer, poster, and still images encourage you to watch the film?
- > Viewing the marketing materials alone (i.e. trailer, poster, and still images available at <https://pragda.com/film/the-girls-are-alright/>) without the aid of the synopsis, can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about?



AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

NARRATIVE

- The film opens with five women arriving at a secluded country house where they'll be spending the week together. How are their personalities and relationships introduced in these early scenes? What kind of dynamic is established among them?
- The handwritten opening title, *Las chicas están bien*, penned by the actress-director herself, lays out the premise simply: "5 women, 7 days, 1 house." It's both intimate and programmatic. How does this minimal, personal framing shape your expectations as a viewer? Does it draw you in or set a particular tone?
- How does the seven-day deadline affect the story? Does it create a sense of tension?
- Each character is named after the actress who plays her and is introduced with a single descriptor: Bárbara la mejor (the best), Irene la princesa (the princess), Itziar la santa (the saint), Helena la loca (the crazy one), and Itsaso la escritora (the writer). This setup blurs the line between fiction and documentary, suggesting an autofictional approach. How does it shape your perception of what's real and what's performed?
- Luis Martínez, film critic for *El Mundo*, wrote: "*The Girls are Alright* is, at its core, a fragile film. And it is so because its intention is none other than to offer itself to the viewer fully aware of everything it denies, rather than what it proposes or affirms. There is no real plot, nor is it structured in three acts; the characters' dramatic arcs call for no heroism beyond that of laziness reclaimed as an exaltation of the senses; the space it inhabits (a beautiful mill) does not seek to be the battleground of any conflict; and the time in which it unfolds (the height of summer) completes no cycle." Do you agree with his review? Expand on why or why not.
- What role does the scene where the women transport the bed play in the film's overall tone? How does its comedic nature contrast with other parts of the story?
- The scene where the women get dressed feels like "travelling in time." How do costume and music (especially the old-fashioned piano) help create this sensation?
- In what ways do the dressing and undressing scenes offer insight into what a female only world might look like?
- How does the change of clothing affect the way the women move and speak? What do you think the film is suggesting about identity and transformation through costume?
- How do you interpret the letters from the brothers towards the end of the film? What emotional or narrative function do they serve?
- There are fewer spoken words between the women as the film progresses. What might the film be saying about communication beyond language?
- Despite being the only male character, Gonzalo doesn't seem to disrupt the balance of the women's group. Why do you think his presence doesn't threaten the dynamic?
- What do you make of Irene's love declaration to Louis via audio message? Why might the film have chosen this indirect form of communication for such a personal moment?
- Itziar leaves a voice message in Basque to her mother—who died when she was 11. One of the other girls tells her to speak about who she is today. How do you interpret the use of Basque in this intimate moment? What does it add emotionally or culturally to the scene?



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NARRATIVE *continued*

- At the end of the film, Itsaso, the writer, says to Bárbara, the pregnant actress: “*I wrote you the final scene—would you like to read it out loud?*” In this poignant moment, Bárbara reads a letter to her unborn daughter, asking her to embrace fragility, to be fully present, not to stay silent. She also shares how grateful she is, as an actress, that her films will live on—like letters to the future.
- What do you think of this ending? Do you feel it resonates with Bárbara’s character and her journey throughout the film?
- Please reflect on those initial introductory titles and the adjectives assigned to each of the characters. How have these descriptors played a role in the narrative? After watching the entire film, do they still feel relevant and accurate?

CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

- What stands out to you about the film’s color palette? Are the colors soft, vibrant, muted, or saturated?
- The film critic for EscribiendoCine, Alvaro Arce, wrote: “*The cinematography, led by Sara Gallego, plays an essential role in the film’s visual storytelling. With a color palette and composition reminiscent of French Rococo paintings, Gallego manages to create a dreamlike atmosphere that blends seamlessly with the classical themes of the work.*” Do you agree with him? Expand on why or why not.
- How would you describe the pacing of *The Girls Are Alright*? Does it feel slow and contemplative, fast and dynamic, or something in between?
- Are there moments when the pacing shifts noticeably? What might be the narrative or emotional reason behind these shifts?
- What editing techniques do you think were used to create or control the film’s rhythm? Can you identify moments where the cuts, transitions, or lack thereof contribute to the atmosphere?
- How does the use of color support or highlight the film’s themes, such as femininity, memory, or transformation?
- Would you describe the film’s visual style as naturalistic? In what ways do the costumes, lighting, or locations reinforce or contrast this realism?
- The film is set in a remote country house, surrounded by nature. What does this isolated location bring to the tone or themes of the film?
- Does the setting feel anchored in the present, or does it evoke another time? How does this sense of timelessness—or time displacement—serve the story?
- How does the mise-en-scène in the opening scenes, when the girls arrive and choose their rooms, help establish their personalities and relationships? What details stand out?
- How does the use of Bach’s piano music influence the film’s tone? What kind of atmosphere or emotional resonance does it create?
- Would you say the music enhances the feeling of being in another era? How does this choice affect the way we perceive the characters and their world?
- Does the film rely more on natural or artificial lighting? Can you point to specific scenes that illustrate this?
- What effect does this lighting choice have on the mood or authenticity of the film? How does it relate to the themes of connection, simplicity, or truth?



THEMES

- > What do you think is the central meaning of *The Girls Are Alright*? What ideas or emotions does the film leave you with?
- > What messages does the film communicate about womanhood, friendship, or emotional intimacy? Do you think it offers a new or original perspective?
- > How does the film portray a “women’s world”? In what ways does it feel different from other films you’ve seen that involve female characters?
- > The title *The Girls Are Alright* can be read in many ways. What does it mean to you after watching the film? Is it a statement, a reassurance, a question...?
- > How does the title reflect the film’s content and themes? Do you think it captures the emotional arc of the characters?
- > How would you describe the tone of the film—light, nostalgic, melancholic, empowering? Did the tone surprise you in any way?
- > The film was made almost entirely by a female crew. How do you think this influences the way the story is told, or the way the characters are portrayed?
- > What does the film gain by being written, directed, shot, and edited by women? Can you feel a difference in the way the women are seen or heard compared to other films?
- > In *The Girls Are Alright*, women’s emotions are placed at the center. How are these emotions expressed differently here compared to other films you’ve seen?
- > Have you heard of the **Bechdel Test** before? Why do you think it’s still important today to consider how women are represented in film?
- > The Bechdel Test, invented by Alison Bechdel and Liz Wallace, is a test that evaluates the presence of women in films and works of fiction. It consists of three criteria that must be met for a film to pass the test:
 1. The film must have at least two female characters who are identified by name
 2. These two female characters must have a conversation
 3. The conversation must be about something other than a man
- > Can you think of other films you love that would pass the Bechdel Test? Are there any that don’t, and how does that affect the way you see them now?
- > This film only briefly mentions men, and very late in the story. How does that choice influence your viewing experience? Did you notice their absence?
- > The film expresses the idea that “films are letters to the future.” Do you agree with this statement? How can a film serve as a message, a memory, or a legacy?
- > What parts of *The Girls are Alright* feel like a letter to future generations of women?

