

<b>Director</b>	Bobcat Goldthwait
<b>Producer(s)</b>	Sean McKittrick and Jeff Culotta
<b>Released in</b>	2011
<b>Price</b>	9 – 16 €
<b>PG/ FSK</b>	15 (UK) / 16 (D)
<b>Length</b>	100 minutes approx.
<b>Synopsis</b>	<p>Frank doesn't have much to live for. Ava, his daughter from his ex-wife refuses to see him, if he doesn't buy her presents. Alone and suffering from migraines he spends his days sitting at home in front of the television, zapping through disgusting and dehumanising programmes. Singing contests, which make fun of the weak, reality TV programmes, which go to extreme lengths to be shocking and political commentators spreading fear, is all there is. When after 13 years, one day he is fired from work for having sent flowers to a co-worker and the same day finding out that he has an inoperable brain tumour, he decides to end his life. However, as he is sitting on his couch, with a gun in his mouth, the TV flickering away with the newest programme about spoiled rich girl Chloé, his only thought becomes killing her. With a „nothing-more-to-lose“ attitude he steals his annoying neighbour's yellow Chevrolet Camaro and sets out to kill the girl. While waiting at her school, he is discovered by Roxy, a 16-year old girl, who, after he successfully kills Chloé, follows him to a motel and convinces him to kill Chloé's parents, as well, in order to not make it seem as if he had killed her because he desired her romantically. After being told that she lives with an abusive family, Frank agrees to take Roxy along and killing everyone, who deserves to die, because they lack kindness or decency. On their killing spree, their victims include, people who protest against homosexuals and religious groups, people who don't turn their phones off at the cinema, take up two parking spaces or spread fear. When Frank is called by his doctor and discovers that his medical documents were mixed up with someone else's and he, in fact, does not suffer from a tumour, Frank decides he is going to start a new life in France with Roxy, who has gained his trust and has become some sort of substitute-daughter to him. Unfortunately, while watching TV in their shared motel room, he catches a news report on a missing girl. Roxy had lied to him and was in reality the daughter of a wealthy and loving family, whom she had run away from. Enraged by this, Frank decides they should go their separate ways. In a last attempt to convey his message about the downfall of morals and civilised behaviour, he drives to the filming location of singing contest „American Superstarz“ and, armed with an AK47 and a belt of explosives, tells everyone they should quit making fun of dim-witted contestant, Steven Clark, who he thinks tried to kill himself, because he could not stand the humiliation. When, however, Steven tells him that he attempted suicide because they would not let him perform anymore, Frank decides that there is no more reason to live. Handing his AK47 to Roxy, who had again followed him to apologise, he starts shooting first Steven and then everybody else. Both Roxy and Frank die on the stage, while the cameras keep filming.</p>
<b>Structure</b>	Classic narrative structure with rising action, climax, falling action and dénouement.
<b>Characters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frank is disgusted by the world, because he feels people have lost their kindness, acts according to his own moral code and thinks of himself as an ethical person.</li> <li>• Roxy has similar reason for wanting to kill people, but is more arbitrary in her choice of victims. Feels misunderstood by her family and has some</li> </ul>

	<p>romantic interest in Frank, although unrequitedly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ava is Frank's young daughter from his divorced marriage. She is portrayed as selfish, materialistic and rude.</li> <li>• Alison, Franks ex-wife has a weak character and is not able to control her daughter's behaviour, instead she feels bad if she is not able to fulfil Ava's requests</li> <li>• Chloé is Frank's first victim. A spoiled rich girl, who accuses her parents to have ruined her life, because they bought her the wrong car for her birthday. She embodies what Ava is going to become.</li> <li>• Steven is a dim-witted contender at a singing contest, who rises to fame because of his ridiculously off-key performance. Unlike previously believed, he enjoys being on stage even if people make fun of him</li> </ul>
<b>Topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decline of media quality and media manipulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reality TV</li> <li>- Social media</li> <li>- Political programmes and sensational news</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Vigilante justice</li> <li>• Gun control</li> <li>• Freedom of Speech</li> <li>• Censorship</li> <li>• Friendship</li> <li>• Clashing values</li> <li>• Family</li> </ul>
<b>Available Media</b>	Goldthwait, Bobcat, dir. <i>God Bless America</i> . Perf. Joel Murray and Tara L. Barr. Darko Entertainment, 2011.
<b>Helpful Secondary Literature</b>	<p><b>Basic reference book on film analysis:</b></p> <p>Ryan, Michael, and Melissa Lenos. <i>Technique and meaning in narrative film</i>. New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation; [distributor] Orca Book Services, 2010. Print.</p> <p><b>Interview with the director:</b></p> <p>Tobias, Scott. "God Bless America Director Bobcat Goldthwait Is Okay with Not Everybody Liking His Movies." <i>The A.V. Club</i>. N.p., 08 May 2012. Web. 03 Apr. 2015. &lt;<a href="http://www.avclub.com/article/emgod-bless-americaem-director-bobcat-goldthwait-i-73578">http://www.avclub.com/article/emgod-bless-americaem-director-bobcat-goldthwait-i-73578</a>&gt;.</p> <p><b>German review:</b></p> <p>Badtke, Thomas. "Respektlos? Geschmacklos? Grandios!: "God Bless America" – N-tv.de." <i>N-tv.de</i>. N.p., 14 Jan. 2013. Web. 07 Apr. 2015. &lt;<a href="http://www.n-tv.de/leute/film/God-Bless-America-article9906961.html">http://www.n-tv.de/leute/film/God-Bless-America-article9906961.html</a>&gt;.</p>

	<p><b>A collection of reviews by top critics can be found at:</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/god_bless_america_2011/reviews/?type=top_critics">http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/god_bless_america_2011/reviews/?type=top_critics</a></p>
<b>Language</b>	Relatively easy to understand for A level students, although Frank uses high level English. Use of explicit language
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role playing activities</li> <li>Analysing film techniques</li> <li>Comparing films</li> <li>Analysing character development</li> <li>Comparing portrayal of media in film and in real life.</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching Pros</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interesting topics conveyed in an entertaining context</li> <li>Easily available (practicability)</li> <li>Easily dividable into several viewings/ lessons</li> <li>Current topics can be appealing for students</li> <li>No background knowledge needed</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching Cons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Violent scenes might be off-putting for some students.</li> <li>Can be perceived as a unethical film</li> <li>Strong language</li> <li>Time consuming</li> </ul>
<b>Overall Evaluation</b>	<p><i>God Bless America</i> brilliantly combines entertainment and the thematisation of relevant issues. Although the film seems to sometimes sacrifice depth in exchange for entertainment value, when it comes to using a film as a base to start a conversation, said sacrifice can, in fact, be beneficial for the classroom atmosphere. <i>God bless America</i> lends itself to numerous uses in class in terms of discussion topics. The most accessible of which is probably the devolution of media quality and its effect on culture; a topic, which does not only concern the English speaking world, but also, to some extent, links American culture to German culture. Moreover, contemporary topics engage students' interest in the language, without too much effort.</p>