

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Characters in Bertolucci's Films

LORENZO (in "Me and You") Emotional

Character Young Lorenzo is a loner, slightly autistic, in fact. He shuns people and delves into the natural world of reptiles and insects. Shy and fragile, he is also kind and affectionate, though that does not prevent him from throwing a teenage tantrum. He has a keen imagination and would like nothing more than to live in isolation from the messy world outside his private self.

Fastidious One feature of Lorenzo's slightly autistic character is his love of precision, or, put another way, his avoidance of ambiguity. This trait is illustrated during his conversation with his mother while they are eating in a restaurant. She happens to mention that his father is happy that he (Lorenzo) is going on a ski trip. 'What did he say?' the boy asks. 'That he was happy,' the mother answers. But Lorenzo wants more precision. 'What were his exact words?' he demands in a cold voice. Again, she simply says that he said he felt good. 'No,' Lorenzo says, now raising his voice and drumming his fingers on the table. 'What exactly did he say?' This scene shows us that the young boy needs things to be precise and to have boundaries because then the chaos of the world can be controlled.

Whacky It's hard to find another word to describe Lorenzo's sometimes bizarre comments and behaviour. The most sensational example, which few viewers will forget, occurs again during the scene in the restaurant with his mother. Just as his attractive mother dips her fork back down into a heap of pasta, Lorenzo notices that a single man has been watching them from a nearby table. 'Mom,' he says slowly, 'do you think people seeing us here, could they think we're a couple?' When she very sensibly reminds him of their age difference, he says she looks young and asks her to imagine that an epidemic has wiped out the earth's population. 'You and I find the antidote and we're saved. We're the only ones left on earth. Humanity is doomed unless we...' Now, she is angry and tells him to stop, but he doesn't. 'Come on,' he says, 'it would save humanity.' At this, she screams at him to shut up. This is classic Lorenzo, imaginative, unfazed and insensitive.

Affectionate Lorenzo is also a sweet kid, who never wants to hurt anyone and often shows kindness. The best illustration of this quality is a scene he has with his grandmother, who is in a nursing home and appears to be in her final weeks. While he sits on her bed, playing cards with her, she tells him that she really liked the story he told her last time. 'Which one?' he asks. 'The one about a pastry maker,' she says. He nods and says, 'Oh, yeah, the pastry maker who tames beetles. That's a good one.' After surreptitiously giving her sleeping pills (presumably not approved by the nurse), he says he'll come back next week. She laughs and says she'll be in a cemetery by then. He also laughs and says, 'Ok, I'll have my coffin put on top of yours, like a bunk bed.' 'Good,' she says, 'that way we can chat.' Lorenzo bends down, kisses her forehead and hugs her. He is a delight to his dying grandmother, telling her stories, cheering her up and sharing her gallows humour.