

Classe de 4°B (25 élèves), collège Fustel de Coulanges, Strasbourg 3° année d'anglais, professeur: Diane Bénédic

## Film review: Promised Land, Gus Van Sant (2013)

Steve Butler (Matt Damon) and Sue Thomason (Frances McDormand) are sent to Pennsylvania by the Global company. They have to convince farmers to let Global work in their plots. They sign big checks and even promise the signers they will become millionnaires. However, the story is not as simple as it seems especially when an environmental activist (Dustin Noble starring John Krasinski) arrives in town...

The title of the film is intriguing. The promised land is supposed to be the land God promised to the chosen people in the bible. In the United States, the promised land refers to the American promise of success and security. So now, let's see if the land in the film corresponds to these two definitions.

The plot is based upon the debate over fracking in a rural community of Pennsylvania. It is built through a series of confrontations: the rich Global company versus poor farmers and the visible versus the invisible. Indeed, most farmers know nothing about the dangers of fracking and some characters have hidden sides, starting with Steve.

Water is very meaningful in the film. Water is first used in fracking because it has a great power of destruction. Its power of destruction is also shown in the film with the fair scene when the fair is cancelled because of the bad weather. But water is also the first source of life. It has a purifying power. It is used as a transition between Steve as the "bad guy" (as they say in the film) who works for Global and Steve as the good guy he truly is.

Our class is quite divided about the film. Can we talk about suspense when the film has a slow rythm and when the goodies and the baddies are so well-defined? Some pupils said that everybody knew that Steve, the main character, was going to change while others pointed out that the chain of manipulation was unpredictable. Moreover, to some of us, a few pupils think that having a fake environmental activist (John Krasinski starring as Dustin Noble) makes the story quite unlikely. It is hard to believe this thing could happen in reality. We are only sure about one thing: the ending of the story is not clear. Will farmers accept or refuse Global's offer? Will the land of Pennsylvania remain the promised land of the Bible and of the United States? The debate about fracking is still on.

In conclusion, you should watch Promised Land if you are interested in the fracking debate and if you want to discover beautiful American landscapes but don't watch it if you only like action films and if you can't stand documentary films.

