

An Overview of *Fight Club* (1999)

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History

When Palahniuk made his first attempt at publishing a novel (*Invisible Monsters*) publishers rejected it for being too disturbing. This led him to work on *Fight Club*, which he wrote as an attempt to disturb the publisher even more for rejecting him. Palahniuk wrote this story in between working while on the job for Freightliner. After initially publishing it as a short story (which became chapter 6 of the novel) in the compilation *Pursuit of Happiness*, Palahniuk expanded it into a full novel, which, contrary to what he expected, the publisher was willing to publish. While the original, hardcover edition of the book received positive reviews and some awards, it had a short shelf life.

Nevertheless, the book had made its way to Hollywood, where interest in adapting it to film was growing. It was eventually adapted in 1999 by screenwriter Jim Uhls and director David Fincher. The film was a box office disappointment (although it was #1 at the U.S. box office in its first weekend) and critical reaction was mixed, but a cult following soon emerged as the DVD of the film was popular upon release (with some critics changing their opinions on it as a result of the DVD). As a result of the film, the original hardcover edition became a collector's item.^[3] Two paperback re-releases of the novel, one in 1999 and the other in 2004 (the latter of which begins with an introduction by the author about the conception and popularity of both the novel and the movie), were later made. This success helped launch Palahniuk's career as a popular novelist, as well as establish a writing style that would appear in all later books by the author.

Despite popular belief, Palahniuk was not inspired to write the novel by any actual fight club. The club itself was based on a series of fights that Palahniuk got into over previous years (most notably one that he got into during a camping trip). Even though he has mentioned this in many interviews, Palahniuk is still often approached by fans wanting to know where their local fight club takes place. Palahniuk insists that there is no real, singular organization like the one in his book. He does admit however that some fans have mentioned to him that some fight clubs (albeit much smaller than the one in the novel) exist or previously existed (some having existed long before the novel was written).

Many other events in the novel were also based on events that Palahniuk himself had experienced. The support groups that the narrator attends are based on support groups that the author brought terminally ill people to as part of a volunteer job he did for a local hospice. Project Mayhem is loosely based on the Cacophony Society, of which Palahniuk is a member. Various events and characters are based on friends of the author. Other events came as a result of stories told to him by various people he had talked to. This method of combining various stories from various people into novels has become a common way of writing novels for Palahniuk ever since.

Outside of Palahniuk's professional and personal life, the novel's impact has been felt elsewhere. Several individuals in various locations of the United States (and possibly in other countries), ranging from teenagers to people in technical careers, have set up their own fight clubs based on the one mentioned in the novel. Some of Tyler's on-the-job pranks (such as food tampering) have been repeated by fans of the book (although these same pranks existed well before the novel was published). Palahniuk eventually documented this phenomenon in his essay "Monkey Think, Monkey Do", which was published in his book *Stranger Than Fiction: True Stories*, as well as in the introduction to the 2004 paperback edition of *Fight Club*. Other fans of the book have been inspired to non-anti-social activity as well; Palahniuk has claimed that fans tell him that they have been inspired to go back to college after reading the book.

Other than the film, a few other adaptations have been attempted. In 2004 *Fight Club* was in development as a musical, developed by Palahniuk, Fincher, and Trent Reznor. Brad Pitt, who played the role of Tyler Durden in the film, expressed interest in being involved. A video game loosely based on the film was published by Vivendi Universal Games in 2004, receiving poor reviews from gaming critics.

The fight club becomes a new type of therapy through bare-knuckle fighting, controlled by a set of eight rules:

1. You don't talk about fight club.
2. You don't talk about fight club.

3. If someone says stop, goes limp, even if he's just faking it, the fight is over.
4. Only two guys to a fight.
5. One fight at a time.
6. They fight without shirts or shoes.
7. The fights go on as long as they have to.
8. If this is your first night at fight club, you have to fight.

"Project Mayhem", is controlled by a set of rules:

1. You don't ask questions.
2. You don't ask questions.
3. No excuses.
4. No lies.
5. You have to trust Tyler.

Characters in "Fight Club"

The narrator, the novel's protagonist whose name is never mentioned, possibly in order to make him an everyman character (though near the end of the novel he shows Marla his driver's license with his real name) is the central character to the story. In the beginning of the story, he is suffering from insomnia, and starts going to support groups for terminally ill people where he fakes that he is dying of their diseases. By crying at these support groups he is able to sleep at night. He eventually quits going to them after he becomes part of fight club. He co-founds fight club along with Tyler Durden as a method of dealing with his insomnia and annoyance with consumer culture. His self-loathing, mental instability, and violent behavior make him a good example of an antihero. Some fans of the film refer to the narrator as "Jack", which is in reference to a scene in which he reads stories written from the perspective of a man's organs (e.g. "Jack's medulla oblongata"); the protagonists' lines in the official movie script also use the name "Jack" to denote them. Furthermore, a number of props from the film (such as a paycheck for the narrator) have the name "Jack Moore" on them, indicating that members of the film's crew also thought the narrator's name was Jack. The name "Jack" was "Joe" in the novel, which was changed in the film to avoid conflicts with *Reader's Digest* over the use of the name (the articles read by the narrator were featured in the magazine). The narrator of *Fight Club* set a precedent for the protagonists of later novels by Palahniuk, especially in the case of male protagonists, as they often shared his anti-heroic and transgressive behavior.

Tyler Durden, an anarcho-primitivistic nihilist with a strong hatred for consumer culture. "Because of his nature", Tyler works night jobs where he causes problems for the companies; he also does beach art to find "perfection". He is the co-founder of fight club (it was his idea to have the fight that led to it). He later launches Project Mayhem, from which he and the members make various attacks on consumerism. The unhinged but magnetic Tyler could also be considered an antihero (especially since he and the narrator are technically the same person), although he becomes the antagonist of the novel later in the story. Few characters like Tyler have appeared in later novels by Palahniuk, though the character of Oyster from *Lullaby* shares many similarities.

Marla Singer, a woman that the narrator meets during a support group. The narrator no longer receives the same release from the groups when he realizes Marla is faking her problems just like he is. After he leaves the groups, he meets her again when she meets Tyler and becomes his lover. In later novels by Palahniuk in which the protagonist is male, a female character similar to Marla has also appeared. Marla and these other female characters have helped Palahniuk to add romantic themes into his novels.

Robert "Bob" Paulson, a man that the narrator meets at a support group for testicular cancer. A former bodybuilder, Bob lost his testicles to cancer possibly caused by the steroids he used to bulk up his muscles, and had to undergo testosterone injections; this resulted in his body increasing its estrogen, causing him to grow large breasts (Gynecomastia) and develop a softer voice. The narrator befriends Bob and, after leaving the groups, meets him again in fight club. Bob's death later in the story while carrying out an assignment for Project Mayhem causes the narrator to turn against Tyler.

Major themes

At two points in the novel, the narrator claims he wants to "wipe [his] ass with the *Mona Lisa*"; a mechanic who joins fight club also repeats this to him in one scene. This motif shows his want for chaos, later explicitly expressed

in his want to "destroy something beautiful". Additionally, he mentions at one point that "Nothing is static. Even the *Mona Lisa* is falling apart." University of Calgary literary scholar Paul Kennett claims that this want for chaos is a result of an Oedipal complex, as the narrator, Tyler, and the mechanic all show disdain for their fathers. This is most explicitly stated in the scene that the mechanic appears in:

The mechanic says, "*If you're male and you're Christian and living in America, your father is your model for God. And if you never know your father, if your father bails out or dies or is never at home, what do you believe about God?*"

How Tyler saw it was that getting God's attention for being bad was better than getting no attention at all, maybe because God's hate is better than His indifference. If you could be either God's worst enemy or nothing, which would you choose? *We are God's middle children*, according to Tyler Durden, *with no special place in history and no special attention*.

Unless we get God's attention, we have no hope of damnation or redemption. Which is worse, hell or nothing? Only if we're caught and punished can we be saved. "Burn the Louvre," the mechanic says, "and wipe your ass with the Mona Lisa. This way at least, God would know our names."— Fight Club, page 141

Kennett further argues that Tyler wants to use this chaos to change history so that "God's middle children" will have some historical significance, whether or not this significance is "damnation or redemption". This will figuratively return their absent fathers, as judgment by future generations will replace judgment by their fathers.

After reading stories written from the perspective of the organs of a man named Joe, the narrator begins using similar quotations to describe his feelings, often replacing organs with feelings and things involved in his life.

The narrator often repeats the line "*I know this because Tyler knows this.*" This is used to foreshadow the novel's major plot twist in which Tyler is revealed to be the same person as the narrator.

The color cornflower blue first appears as the color of an icon on the narrator's boss's computer. Later, it is mentioned that his boss has eyes of the same color. These mentions of the color are the first of many uses of cornflower blue in Palahniuk's books, which all feature the color at some point in the text.

Subtext

Throughout the novel, Palahniuk uses the narrator and Tyler to comment on how people in modern society try to find meaning in their lives through commercial culture. Several lines in the novel make reference to this lifestyle as meaningless. Usually Palahniuk delivers this through overt methods, but there are also some allegorical references as well; for instance, the narrator, upon looking at the contents of his refrigerator, notices he has "a house full of condiments and no real food."

Additionally, much of the novel comments on how many men in modern society have found dissatisfaction with the state of masculinity as it currently exists. The characters of the novel lament the fact that many of them were raised by their mothers due to their fathers either abandoning their family or divorcing their mothers. As a result, they see themselves as being "a generation of men raised by women," being without a male role model in their lives to help shape their masculinity. This ties in with the anti-consumer culture theme, as the men in the novel see their "IKEA nesting instinct" as resulting from the feminization of men in a matriarchal culture. Some readers and critics have noticed how the state of men in the novel is similar to the state of women in modern society, and that Palahniuk may have also been writing about the problems of female life. Much of this was influenced by Susan Faludi's book *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*.

Maryville University of St. Louis professor Jesse Kavadlo, in an issue of the literary journal *Stirrings Still*, claimed that the narrator's opposition to emasculation is a form of projection, and that the problem that he fights is himself. He also claims that Palahniuk uses existentialism in the novel to conceal subtexts of feminism and romance in order to convey these concepts in a novel that is mainly aimed at a male audience.

Palahniuk himself gives a much simpler assertion about the theme of the novel, stating "all my books are about a lonely person looking for some way to connect with other people."

Paul Kennett claims that, because the narrator's fights with Tyler are fights with himself, and because he fights himself in front of his boss at the hotel, the narrator is using the fights as a way of asserting himself as his own boss. He argues that these fights are a representation of the struggle of the proletariat at the hands of a higher capitalist power, and by asserting himself as capable of having the same power he thus becomes the one who controls him. Later, when fight club is formed, the participants are all dressed and groomed similarly, thus allowing them to symbolically fight themselves at the club and gain the same power.

Afterwards, Kennett says, Tyler becomes nostalgic for patriarchal power controlling him, and creates Project Mayhem to achieve this. Through this proto-fascist power structure, the narrator seeks to learn "what, or rather, who, he might have been under a firm patriarchy." Through his position as leader of Project Mayhem, Tyler uses his power to become a "God/Father" to the space monkeys (although by the end of the novel his words hold more power than he does, as is evident in the space monkeys' threat to castrate the narrator when he contradicts Tyler's rule). According to Kennett, this creates a paradox in that Tyler pushes the idea that men who wish to be free from a controlling father-figure are only self-actualized once they have children and become a father themselves. This new structure is, however, ended by the narrator's elimination of Tyler, allowing him to decide for himself how to determine his freedom.

There are a number of parallels between Nietzschean philosophy and *Fight Club*, though these are expressed more transparently in the film of the same name. These include themes such as the death of God, trying to find meaning in life through destroying old values and creating new ones, master morality vs. slave morality, the overman, and, of course, the will to power.

Literary significance & criticism

While *Fight Club* has been praised for its insights into contemporary American culture, it has also received criticism from various academics and cultural commentators. Much of this surrounds the possibility that the novel promotes misogyny and self-destructive behavior. Some passages in the novel seem to suggest that men have something to gain by ridding themselves of feminine characteristics and engaging in more masculine activities. Furthermore, these critics believe these activities, mainly fighting, are self-destructive. Even more problematic to some critics is *Fight Club's* role in pop culture, as such a role makes it easy to infer that the ideas presented in the novel are influencing the general populace. However, there is much polarization on this issue. Supporters of the novel have responded by noting that the narrator finally rejects Tyler and fight club, and seems to also place great importance on developing a more authentic relationship with Marla.

Many critics have also claimed there are homoerotic elements in *Fight Club*. Amongst these were David Denby of *The New Yorker* and Laura Miller of *Salon.com*, both of whom used their claims to disparage Palahniuk. Additionally, Robert Alan Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus published *Hiding Homoeroticism in Plain View: The Fight Club DVD as Digital Closet* to make similar claims. All these claims were made before Palahniuk publicly announced that he is a homosexual.

Allusions/references from other works

Because of the film's popularity, *Fight Club* is sometimes referenced in pop culture, having been referred to in television shows, films, music, video games, and other forms of media. Such references include the following:

Television:

- *Corner Gas* — In one episode, Lacey talks about a book club with Karen, who says "I thought the first rule of book club is we don't talk about book club." Lacey says "No that's fight club." Karen responds by asking "How do you know about fight club?"
- *The Daily Show* — In an episode featuring a discussion with Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart about Internet bloggers sharing a job similar to that of reporters, Colbert criticizes them, saying "The first rule about journalism is, don't talk about journalism! Or maybe that was *Fight Club*." In another episode Juliet Eilperin, the author of the non-fiction book *Fight Club Politics*, is a guest. When she is trying to state the number one rule John Stewart interrupts saying "I thought the first rule was don't talk about fight club?"

- *Dead Like Me* — Throughout the series the character Mason often wears clothes very similar to ones worn by Tyler in the movie version.
- *Futurama* — Professor Farnsworth, in the episode "Three Hundred Big Boys," leaves the Royal pajamas at the National Silk Surplus saying "Gotta go, fight club."
- *Grey's Anatomy* — Dr. Yang says "Don't talk about it - it's fight club"
- *The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy* — In the episode "Druid, Where's My Car?", in the scene where the wizard tells Grim to think about nature, he sees a cold snow area where a penguin walks up to him and says "slide".
- *Home Movies (TV series)* — In the episode "Bad Influences," after the characters put on weight, they shoot a movie about a "fat club," which includes a subliminal Tyler.
- *Invader Zim* — In the episode "Rise of the Zit Boy", Gaz reads a book called "Punch Club".
- *NCIS* — In season 2 episode "Red Cell", Anthony DiNozzo says "*First rule of fight club, never talk about fight club.* God, that's a great movie. Brad Pitt, Edward Norton, it's like the greatest guy movie...ever, I'm going to rent that for you."
- *The OC* — In season one, episode one, after Seth and Ryan get into a fight Seth says "That was like a scene straight out of *Fight Club* or something."
- *MADtv* — featured a sketch called "Fight like a Girl Club."
- *Spaced* — In season 2, episode 3, Tim and Mike become part of the dark world of Robot Club.
- *Undeclared* — In a spoof episode, the main character is asked by his friend to "Hit me as hard as you can" and proceeds to punch him in the ear before getting beat up.
- *Undergrads* — In the episode "New Friends", Rocko decides to start a fight club. But since he is the only member, he has to fight himself.
- *The Wrong Coast* — A sketch parodying "First Wives Club" and "Fight Club" combines the two and turns it into a movie called "First Wives Fight Club".
- *The X-Files* — An episode entitled "Fight Club" involved two pairs of identical people who are not twins and share a cosmic connection.

Films:

- *Daredevil* — When Matt Murdock walks into the cafe sporting a cut above his eye, he dismisses it saying he was at a fight club and that he cannot talk about it.
- *Fun with Dick and Jane* — Dick's boss says "I want you to hit me as hard as you can."
- *Grandma's Boy* — When Jeff is asked why he's so sweaty he replies, "Oh I just started a fight club."
- *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* — When Mr. Smith (played by Brad Pitt, who played Tyler Durden in the film adaptation) and Mrs. Smith are interviewing a hostage, the hostage is wearing a *Fight Club* t-shirt.
- *Old School* — The main characters start a secret fraternity where they deny the existence upon questioning. Luke Wilson's character mimicks "the narrator"/"Tyler Durden" character as the untouchable "godfather". Director Todd Phillips has stated in the DVD commentary that he was inspired by the film and that many fans of it have been able to pinpoint all the direct references to him.
- *Out Cold* — When explaining the snowboarding contest entitled "King of the Mountain," Luke remarks that the first rule of King of the Mountain is that you do not talk about King of the Mountain.

Video games:

- *Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel* — there is a scene in the game when you are in a desert town. When you first walk into a building, there is a dead man on a table, and a message pops up saying "His name was Robert Paulson."
- *Gothic 2* — Features a fight club, complete with rules, including "No one talks about what goes on behind the warehouse." Chuck Palahniuk is also listed among the game's credits.
- *Halo 2* — In this sequel to the original Xbox console game Halo (by Bungie Software), a particularly intense sequence of the game is titled "Fight Club"
- *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland* — a gang of anti-commercialists called Skate Club blow up buildings and torch billboards. A few of the members resemble Brad Pitt. The rules of Skate Club are similar to those of fight club.
- *Warcraft III* — Two men named Tyler and Jack are seen fighting in one village.
- *World of Warcraft* — There is an area in the Undercity where a Tyler and Edward (Edward being a reference to Edward Norton, who played the narrator in the movie version of *Fight Club*) are fighting

different monsters. The undead around them also have names from the movie, such as Marla and Chloe. A weapon in the game is also named Fight Club.

Music:

- Black Eyed Peas — The band has a song called "Like That" which contains the lyrics, "To be at fight club, even Brad had to crack a tooth".
- Evergreen Terrace — The band has an album entitled *Losing All Hope Is Freedom*, named after a line from the novel that the narrator says after crying with Bob.
- Finch — The band has a song called "Project Mayhem" on their first major label release, *What It Is to Burn*. The song's lyrics can be seen as mirroring some of the events in *Fight Club*.
- Frontline — The song "Hold 'Em" contains the lyrics "Generations of Tyler Durdens/who identify his wordin/as something pertinent to the/way they feel right now/a sense they've been roped in that/them debts is ownin them that house/they'll never own that shit no..." which reflect Tyler's anti-consumerism ideas.
- Limp Bizkit — The band has a song called "Livin' It Up" on their CD entitled *Chocolate Starfish and the Hotdog Flavored Water* where lead singer Fred Durst claims to have seen *Fight Club* 28 times. They also have a prescription bottle label on the inside cover of their *Results may vary* album where the prescribing doctor is Dr. Durden, Tyler.
- Panic! At The Disco — Some songs by the band contain references to *Fight Club*.
- Seether — A music video for the song "Remedy" was confirmed to be inspired by *Fight Club*.
- Slagsmålsklubben — The Swedish band (whose name translates to "the fight club" in English) was named after the film.[1]
- Taking Back Sunday — The music video for "Cute Without The 'E' (Cut From The Team)" was inspired by *Fight Club*. Also, a *Fight Club* poster can be seen in the background in Adam Lazzara's room in the "Timberwolves at New Jersey" video, and they have done many Fight Club-themed photo shoots for magazines.

Other:

- *Bite Club* — A Vertigo Comics series about a group of vampires.
- *The Onion* — The satirical newspaper ran an article parodying *Fight Club* titled "The First Rule Of The Quilting Society Is You Don't Talk About The Quilting Society".
- A trailer for the film of *Fight Club* was re-edited to make it look like a romantic comedy, much like the wildly popular one that turned *The Shining* into a feel-good family film called *Shining*.
- In the webcomic Ctrl+Alt+Del there are many indirect, but obvious, references to *Fight Club*.

Awards and nominations

The novel won the following awards:

- the 1997 Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Award
- the 1997 Oregon Book Award for Best Novel

Differences between novel and film



Brad Pitt as Tyler Durden with Edward Norton as the Narrator

Though the plot is mostly similar to the novel and much of the dialog is used verbatim, some significant changes have been made in the film.

- Many of the lines taken from the novel for the film are given to different characters than they were originally said by. It is likely this was done because the narrator has more lines in the novel than the other characters, though other characters' lines are also switched around (for instance, Tyler gives a speech that was originally given by a mechanic in the novel).
- Tyler's involvement in the storyline is often in the foreground of the film, while he is often unseen in the novel, his involvement being mentioned by the narrator in retrospect.
- Tyler Durden is a soap salesman instead of a beach artist as in the novel.
- The narrator meets Tyler on a plane instead of on a nude beach as in the novel.
- The first two rules of fight club, "You don't talk about fight club", have "don't" changed to "do not".
- The third rule of fight club, "If someone says stop, goes limp, even if he's just faking it, the fight is over.", was changed to "If someone says stop, goes limp, taps out, the fight is over".
- The narrator reads stories about "Jack" in the film, who was named "Joe" in the novel. This was changed to avoid conflicts with *Reader's Digest* over the use of the name (the articles read by the narrator were featured in the magazine).
- Marla's line after having sex with Tyler was "I want to have your abortion" in the novel. The film changed this line to "I haven't been fucked like that since grade school." However, the original line was filmed and can be seen in the DVD's deleted scenes section (the reason for the change is that the director was told the original line was 'too offensive', so he changed it to something even more offensive and then refused to change it back).
- The first batch of soap made by the narrator and Tyler is made from fat from a liposuction clinic, rather than from liposuctioned fat from Marla's mother as in the book. The Paper Street Soap Company isn't formed until after this first soap making project, which was simply to get some soap to clean the Narrator's clothes.
- The scene where Tyler fights Lou is based on a scene in the novel where Tyler blackmails the Projectionist Union's president. Lou (or any other angry bar owner) didn't appear in the book.
- A flashback scene in the novel in which the narrator urinates on the Blarney Stone does not appear in the film.
- A scene in which Tyler is telling a story in which he caused a woman to nearly lose her mind after he leaves an anonymous note stating that he urinated in one of the woman's perfume bottles is omitted from the movie.
- The narrator's fight with himself to blackmail his boss is at the car company in the film; in the novel, it was done to threaten his boss at the hotel where Tyler had gotten him a job as a waiter.
- The narrator is not entirely aware of what Tyler is doing with Project Mayhem and is more uncomfortable with the increasing destructiveness of their activities, rather than being partially in control of it as in the book.
- The confrontation with Raymond K. Hessel is handled by the narrator alone in the novel; in the film, Tyler takes control while the narrator witnesses the event.
- Robert Paulson is by himself when he is killed in the novel; he was using an electric drill to drill a hole in an ATM and pump it full of glue, pudding or grease (they never mention which), and a cop spots him and thinks the drill is a gun.
- A scene from the novel in which Tyler murders the narrator's boss does not appear in the film, although the method of his murder is used in the film (drilling out a computer monitor and filling it with gasoline).
- In the film, the ultimate objective of Project Mayhem is never revealed, but the narrator tells a police officer that he believes their goal is to blow up all the credit card companies and send the national debt record back to zero. In the novel, however, the goal of Project Mayhem was to slow down humanity's technological advancement by artificially causing another Dark Age. This is referred to in the film, however, in the bedroom scene after the car crash. Part of Project Mayhem's goals included erasing history, and the real purpose of blowing up the building in the book was to have it fall on the National Art Gallery next door.
- Project Mayhem's bombs are successful in exploding in the film, while they were duds in the novel.
- The narrator shoots himself to kill Tyler, rather than to make a decision on his own as in the novel.
- Tyler's gun had a home-made silencer in the novel. The gun makes a loud sound in the film, and there appears to be no silencer.

- The film ends with the narrator and Marla watching buildings explode, while the novel ends with the narrator talking about a mental institution (which he believes is heaven) to which he has been confined.

Reaction and themes

Fight Club was released in the United States on October 15, 1999 to mixed reviews. While some critics raved about the film, many high-profile critics denounced it. Janet Maslin of *The New York Times* compared it favorably to *American Beauty* while Roger Ebert called it "macho porn." Perhaps the strongest negative reaction was from critic Rex Reed, who called it "A film without a single redeeming quality, which may have to find its audience in Hell." The graphic violence of the fights seemed to upset most critics, although only two death scenes actually occur in the film, neither of which are related to the fights in question. One of the most controversial critical moves occurred on *The Rosie O'Donnell Show* when Rosie O'Donnell spoiled the twist ending to the movie before it was in wide release as protest to the perceived violent message. The film was also criticized as a result of being released into theaters while the social and cultural effects of the Columbine High School massacre were still lingering.

The film opened with \$11 million, a surprise #1 movie in a close race that weekend at the box office. However, it fell very quickly in subsequent weekends, finishing with only \$37 million in the U.S. It was regarded as a failure as the budget was \$63 million, not including advertising which could have been another \$20-30 million. Even with the \$63 million later accumulated overseas, executives at 20th Century Fox still felt the movie was a severe disappointment, so much that Entertainment Chief Bill Mechanic was fired. According to Mechanic, he had personally clashed with Fox owner Rupert Murdoch over *Fight Club* and it cost him his job, barely a year after Fox's *Titanic* had become the highest-grossing film ever made.

Fight Club's salvation turned out to be the DVD market which was experiencing rapid growth at the time. The two-disc package featured four audio commentaries and hours of extra material, offering an in-depth analysis of the film. *Fight Club* would eventually break even and later become profitable thanks to booming DVD sales. *Entertainment Weekly*, which had originally given the film a negative grade of D, later ranked the DVD #1 on its list of "The Top 50 DVDs You Need To Own."

Fight Club ranked 10th on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *My Favorite Film*. The film was the only entry in the top 10 to split the presenter panel along gender lines, with the three male presenters endorsing the film and the three female presenters offering a negative reaction.

The film's highly critical view of consumerism and modern living caused discomfort among some critics. Critics like Ebert decried what they described as fascist themes throughout the film, while others have commented on anarchist, nihilist, and Buddhist ideals. Both are represented in the transformation of the fight club, an anti-materialistic organization of individuality to Project Mayhem, a more organized anarchy, led solely on the authority of Tyler Durden. The amorphous nature in which these seemingly opposed philosophical systems melded together is the cause for much of the disagreement over the philosophical core of this film.

Parallels are also drawn between Tyler Durden's vision of the world after his revolution, and the views of Theodore Kaczynski, a.k.a. the Unabomber. This can be seen in one scene where Tyler talks about abseiling down the Sears Tower in clothes that will last you the rest of your life and hunting elk on abandoned freeways.

Some elements from the film have found their way into the mainstream, such as the first two rules of fight club — both of which are *You do not talk about fight club* — or the name "Tyler Durden" itself.

Nietzsche

There are a number of parallels between Nietzschean philosophy and *Fight Club*. These include themes such as the death of God, trying to find meaning in life through destroying old values and creating new ones, master morality vs. slave morality, the overman, and, of course, the will to power.

The process of fighting oneself and fighting others relates to the will to power--which, while a theory of everything, involves the collision of forces and the success of the stronger. Males in the film find a fight club so appealing

because to them, it's a cure to the loneliness inherent in consumer capitalism. The fight club offers white collar office workers something their typical jobs cannot. Winning or losing a fight doesn't matter because extreme pleasure or pain makes the male fighter feel strong and alive. Even in defeat one has extended oneself.

The Narrator represents slave morality whereas Tyler represents master morality. The Narrator taking control over himself--destroying himself in order to create himself and finally asserting himself over Tyler--represents the move to overman.

Tyler explains Nietzsche's concept of God's death to the narrator: the question of God's existence (whether it's true or not) is an unimportant answer. The question of God's existence is irrelevant.

Clues about Durden's identity

Throughout the movie, there are several clues as to Tyler Durden's true identity before the revelation at the end of the film.



If you wake up in a different time, in a different place, could you wake up as a different person?

1. There are several single frame images of Tyler in scenes where he does not belong. They are:
 1. In the insomnia chapter, Durden is visible when the copier flashes.
 2. In the doctor's office, Tyler appears with his arm around the doctor.
 3. In "Remaining Men Together, Tyler is shown with his arm around the group leader.
 4. After Marla first appears in the movie, Tyler appears in the alleyway as she is walking away.
 5. In the hotel room, after the airport scene, there is a welcome video with several workers saying welcome in unison. Tyler is the one farthest on the right.
2. When the narrator is at the airport, he delivers the line, "If you wake up in a different time in a different place, could you wake up as a different person?" The camera pans to Tyler as he glides past on the moving walk way. Tyler is not in the scene until he moves out from behind the narrator. This is interesting, since the conveyor is moving at a constant rate and Tyler should have been visible to the right of the narrator before passing behind him.
3. On the plane, the narrator is sitting with a woman to his left. After he fantasizes about a mid-air collision, Tyler now occupies the same seat. Both Tyler and the narrator have the exact same briefcase as well.
4. After having sex with Marla for the first time, the narrator says, "You won't believe this dream I had last night." Marla replies that she could not believe anything about it either, giving him a look because of their shared experience. Her actions indicate disbelief and shock when the narrator kicks her out of the house revealing that they are not on the same page. When Tyler comes in to talk about it, the narrator says he already knew the story.
5. When the narrator beats himself up to extort his boss, he says it reminded him of his first fight with Tyler (His first fight with himself).
6. When Tyler and the narrator are in the bathroom together, relating life experiences, they have remarkably similar pasts.

7. When the narrator is being stitched up after surgery, he says, "Sometimes Tyler spoke for me." He repeats what Tyler says, even though he is in the same room with Tyler and this would have seemed odd for the nurse.
8. In the kitchen, when Marla is examining the narrator's burn. Tyler is feeding him lines to say to her.
9. The narrator walks in on Tyler having sex with Marla (This is the scene where Tyler is wearing the yellow gloves). Tyler talks to the narrator and Marla asks him whom he is talking to.
10. Before the car crash scene, the narrator is sitting on the right, in the passenger seat, talking to Tyler. After the car flips over, Tyler pulls the narrator out of the driver's seat.
11. When the narrator gets off the bus, just before he learns about Project Mayhem painting a smiley face and setting fire to a building, he is carrying a green folder. This is one of the same folders that are tacked up to the bulletin board for Project Mayhem's exploits.
12. When the narrator and Tyler get on the bus, the narrator pays fare for only one person

Trivia

- The movie appears to take place in Wilmington, Delaware, home to most credit card companies. The Narrator's business card includes the Wilmington zip code 19808 and the Delaware area code 302. Moreover, the cities specifically mentioned in the car-smashing scene are New Castle, Delaware City and Penns Grove, NJ, which are close to Wilmington. The apartment building in which the narrator lives has as its motto "A Place To Be Somebody," which is also the city motto of Wilmington, Delaware; this can be seen in the scene where the narrator is driven home by a S.C.A.T. company cab, the local taxi service of Wilmington. In the scene where the narrator desperately calls office buildings to warn them, the street names "Franklin" and "Harrison" are shown. However Franklin and Harrison streets run north to South in Wilmington's Westside/Hilltop neighborhood, a mile or so parallel to the corporate downtown. Wilmington city officials rejected the filmmakers' request to film in Delaware, in fear of copycats. It was filmed in Los Angeles instead and made to look like a generic city.
- The film makers originally intended Tyler Durden to recite working recipes for homemade explosives. They later decided against it for the interest of public safety, and fake recipes were used, including the recipe for "homemade napalm," which is not equal parts orange juice concentrate and gasoline.
- On the business card for Tyler's soap company, the address is 537 Paper St. When the narrator is talking to the cops, he gives the address as 1537 Paper St.



Two of Tyler Durden's one-frame appearances

In the beginning of the film, Tyler Durden flashes on screen for a duration of one frame, perhaps foreshadowing Tyler's job as film projectionist, in 4 different instances. These are:

1. At the photocopier at work while the narrator says "Everything is a copy, of a copy."
 2. In the doctor's office, when the narrator is learning about the testicular cancer support group.
 3. At that group's meeting.
 4. As the narrator sees Marla leaving a meeting but doesn't follow her.
- These single frame flashes caused quality controllers to complain about "dirt" on the final reel. The film makers had to then reassure them that this was by design before the film was allowed to be distributed.
 - Pitt describes these instances as "subliminal Tylers."

- Beyond these individual frame moments, Tyler appears twice more; first on a hotel TV screen among a group of employees wearing white jackets and bidding the viewer "welcome" (look on the right side of the screen); and again while the Narrator is riding the moveable sidewalk in the airport. When the narrator asks "If you wake up at a different time, in a different place, could you wake up as a different person?", the camera pans to follow a white-suited Tyler. Also, as the narrator passes the bottle of beer to Tyler outside the bar after their first fight, the light in the background blinks out the instant Tyler takes it. This sort of trickery has become one of Fincher's trademarks.
- The reverse-tracking shot out of the trash can, an elaborate computer graphic, was the very last shot to be added to the film - as almost an afterthought by the director. It required so much processing time that it almost had to be spliced in "wet" - i.e., fresh from the lab - so that the film could be duplicated on schedule.
- In the scene where Brad Pitt and Edward Norton are seemingly drunk and striking balls into neighboring factories, the two actually are drunk and hitting balls at catering trucks.
- During rehearsals Brad Pitt and Edward Norton found out that they both hated the new Volkswagen Beetle. In the film they are seen striking a Volkswagen Beetle with baseball bats. However, after the film's DVD release Pitt is quoted in a commentary track as saying he had a change of heart about his feelings for the new VW Beetle.
- In a similar one panel trick, a single frame showing a frontal view of a naked man is included in the view of the explosions at the end of the film. This is likely an internal reference to Tyler's practice of splicing single frames of pornography into family films during his job at the movie theatre, as if he is working at the cinema in question. A common urban legend is that this is Pitt's penis; a press release for the film said that it is not. The penis in question is the same one Tyler splices into the children's movie near the beginning of the film.
- In 2004, plans were made to create a *Fight Club* musical, developed by Palahniuk, Fincher, and Trent Reznor. Palahniuk said "We all verbally signed on to do it, but that was two years ago, and we haven't heard anything" in a 2006 interview with the *Courier-Journal*.



Meat Loaf as Robert Paulson with the Narrator (Edward Norton).
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fight_Club_%28film%29