Arts & Life

What the women in movies and television taught us about our 20s

By SOPHIE MURRAY
Arts & Life Editor

From Rachel Green to Lorelai Gilmore, people have spent years watching fictional women navigate relationships, careers and growing up. Now, as I'm about to enter my 20s, the reality looks a little different than I imagined.

When Green ran out of her wedding when she was 24 years old in the pilot episode of "Friends," she probably wasn't thinking about how relatable her situation would become to women for years to come. Trading her wedding dress and an idealized and stereotypical version of her life for a new beginning in New York City, Green walked away from the life she thought she was supposed to have and entered a world where she had no idea what would come next.

Through my teen years, I watched women like Green navigate their 20s and make it all feel very realistic through the struggles they endured. At other times, it looked easy. At the end of the day, they eventually found their careers and had everything work out. Sure, they fell in and out of relationships and made questionable decisions, but they figured it out.

Whether it was Elle Woods proving herself at Harvard Law in "Legally Blonde" or Carrie Bradshaw writing about her romantic misadventures in "Sex and the City," there was something comforting about watching women, no matter what stage of life they were at, figure out who they are.

But as my 20th birthday approaches, I'm realizing that becoming one of those women is more complicated than television makes it look.

For years, 20 seemed like the age when everything would start falling into place. We'd be certain about the future, feel confident and independent. Even with all of these uncertainties, in some ways I am what I've imagined. I'm in college, working towards a career I'm excited about and taking advantage of opportunities I would only hope for as a teenager.

But I've also learned that having your life together doesn't make every part of it perfect.

Some plans don't work out, relationships and friendships change and maybe versions of your future don't look quite like you planned it to. And I know this feeling isn't exclusive to me.

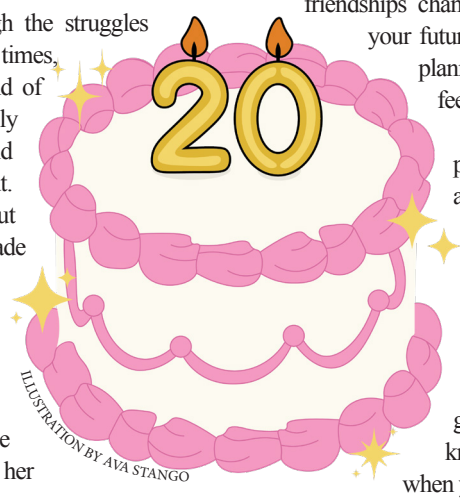


ILLUSTRATION BY AVA STANGO

That is a particular pressure of growing up and turning 20. You're supposed to be ambitious and independent, but still have time for your friends, relationships and everything else going on in your life. You're expected to have goals, look put together and know what you want, even when you're still figuring it all out.

Take Lorelai Gilmore from "Gilmore Girls." As a young mother who built a life for herself outside of the expectations of her wealthy family, Gilmore represents a version of her independence that many women admire. But even as she navigates her career, raises her daughter and maintains her relationships, she's consistently balancing the expectations of others with what she wants for herself.

Then there are the women of "Sex and the City," who navigate complexities of dating, careers, friendships and figuring out what they want out of life. Through Bradshaw, Miranda Hobbes, Charlotte York and Samantha Jones, the show explores four very different approaches to womanhood, each with their own expectations, insecurities and ideas of what a successful life should look like. Between navigating complicated relationships and building careers, their experiences highlight the pressure women face to balance their personal ambitions with the expectations placed on their romantic lives.

And while television often makes these experiences look entertaining, the reality of balancing everything can be hard.

Social media certainly doesn't make it easier. Being in your 20s comes with a full decade of some of people's biggest milestones. Between announcements, job or internship opportunities and seemingly perfect relationships, it's difficult not to compare your own timeline with everyone else's.

The expectation can be even more complicated when it comes to how women feel they need to look and present themselves. The 2023 film "Barbie" explored the contradictions women face, highlighting the impossible expectation to be everything at once. Be beautiful, but don't be vain. Be successful, but don't make others uncomfortable. Be confident, but don't think too highly of yourself.

But perhaps the biggest difference between watching women navigate their 20s on television and experiencing it yourself is that there's no script.

Green had Monica Geller's apartment to move into when she had to start over; Woods had Harvard to prove herself. Their stories had a beginning, middle and end, with character development along the way. Real life is way less organized.

As I prepare to leave my teenage years behind, I don't necessarily feel the need to have everything figured out. I'm proud of the person I'm becoming and the experiences I've had that have shaped me. But I'm also accepting that growing up means accepting that not everything goes to plan, especially in a new decade of so much change.

Green didn't know what came next when she walked out of her wedding. And maybe that's what made her story worth watching in the first place.

As I turn 20 and get to watch my friends around me turn 20, I hope we spend less time worrying about whether we're becoming the person we're supposed to be and more time figuring out who we want to become.

Especially because we're only 20, and there's plenty of time to figure it all out.

Make Quinnipiac light your way

Students filled campus with holiday cheer for the annual quad lighting

By SOPHIE MURRAY
Arts & Life Editor

Quinnipiac University students and faculty kicked off the start of winter festivities on the Mount Carmel Campus for the annual quad lighting outside of the Arnold Bernhard Library Nov. 10.

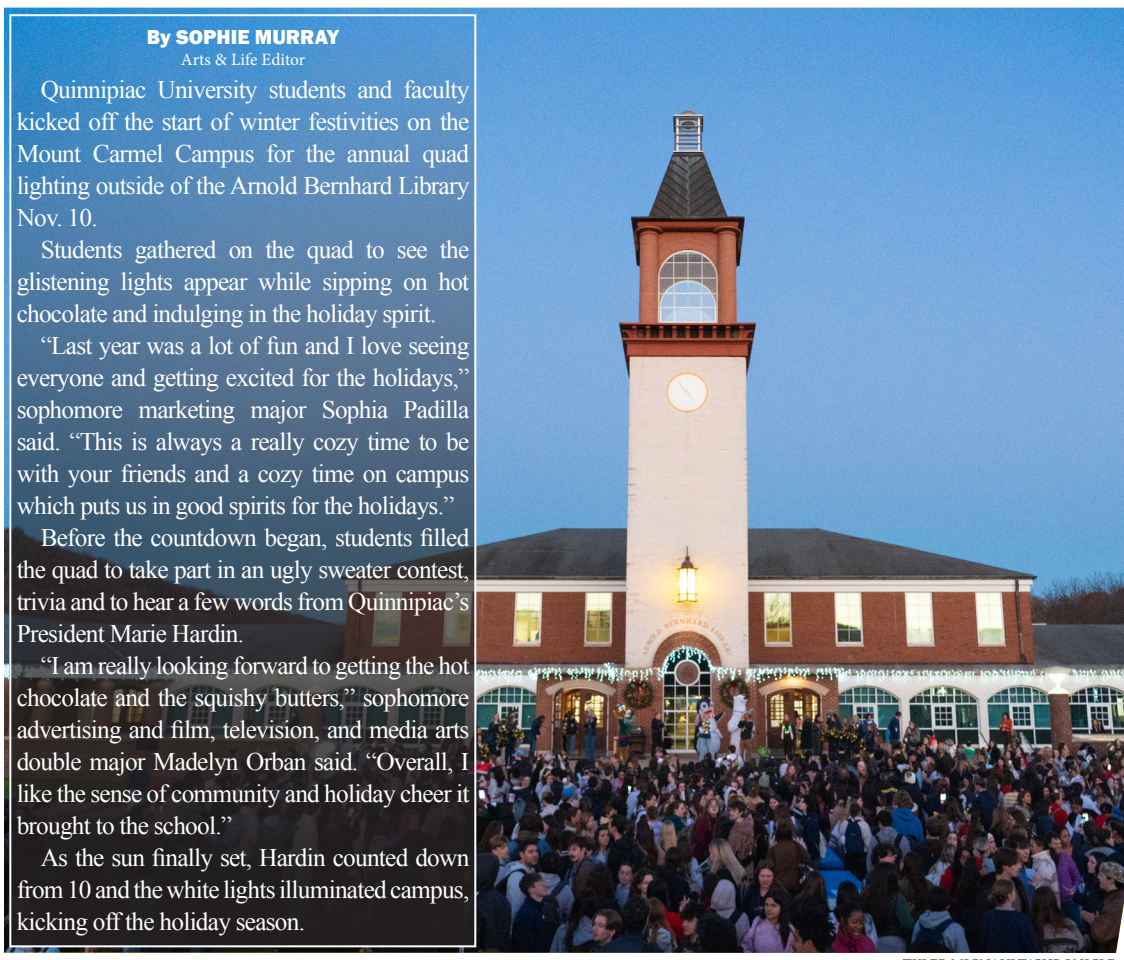
Students gathered on the quad to see the glistening lights appear while sipping on hot chocolate and indulging in the holiday spirit.

"Last year was a lot of fun and I love seeing everyone and getting excited for the holidays," sophomore marketing major Sophia Padilla said. "This is always a really cozy time to be with your friends and a cozy time on campus which puts us in good spirits for the holidays."

Before the countdown began, students filled the quad to take part in an ugly sweater contest, trivia and to hear a few words from Quinnipiac's President Marie Hardin.

"I am really looking forward to getting the hot chocolate and the squishy butters," sophomore advertising and film, television, and media arts double major Madelyn Orban said. "Overall, I like the sense of community and holiday cheer it brought to the school."

As the sun finally set, Hardin counted down from 10 and the white lights illuminated campus, kicking off the holiday season.


TYLER MIGNAULT/CHRONICLE

Quinnipiac students gather on the Mt. Carmel Quad for the Annual Quad Lighting Nov. 10.


RYLEY LEE/CHRONICLE

Boomer engages with the audience at the Quad Lighting.


RYLEY LEE/CHRONICLE

Quinnipiac President Marie Harden and sophomore marketing student Payton Stein celebrate when the lights turn on at the Quad Lighting.