

HOW TO READ A FILM: *HIGH NOON*

Reading a **FILM** is not passive. To watch a movie actively, you must learn to “read” the screen, to ask yourself questions as you watch, to notice the elements which make a film succeed or fail. You can’t simply plunk yourself down in a theater, popcorn in hand, and let the images wash over you for a couple of hours. Pay special attention to how the **MUSICAL SCORE** and specific **CAMERA TECHNIQUES** advance the **PLOT**, develop **CHARACTERS**, and even reveal **THEME** and **SYMBOLISM**.

A film introduces itself through the **OPENING CREDITS** and **TITLES**. These may establish **MOOD**, present the **CONFLICT**, introduce **CHARACTERS**, etc. *High Noon* is unusual because no words are spoken for several scenes. Instead, this film introduces itself through picture and song. The following are approximate **LYRICS** to the opening song of *High Noon*. Read along during the opening and listen carefully throughout the **FILM** for the use of the **MELODY** and its two distinct **RHYTHMS**.

- Stanza 1 Do not forsake me, oh my darlin’,
 On this our wedding day.
 Do not forsake me, oh my darlin’,
 Wait...wait along.
- Stanza 2 The noonday train will bring Frank Miller.
 If I’m a man I must be brave,
 And I must face that deadly killer,
 Or lie a coward, a craven coward,
 Or lie a coward in my grave.
- Stanza 3 Oh, to be torn ‘twixt love and duty,
 Supposin’ I lose my fair-haired beauty,
 Look at that big hand move along,
 Here in high noon.
- Stanza 4 He made a vow while in state prison,
 That it would be my life or his’n.
 I’m not afraid of death, but oh,
 What will I do if you leave me?
- Stanza 5 Do not forsake me, oh my darlin’,
 You made that promise when we wed.
 Do not forsake me, oh my darlin’.
 Although you’re grievin’, I can’t be leavin’
 Until I shoot Frank Miller dead.
 Wait along, wait a long, wait along...

1. How do the **LYRICS** contribute to the **EXPOSITION**? In other words, what background information do we learn?
2. What **CONFLICTS** do the **LYRICS** introduce? What is **FORESHADOWED**?
3. What **THEME** or **MORAL** do the **LYRICS** suggest?

4. Since the singer of the song is speaking for the hero of the film, what do the **LYRICS** reveal about Will Kane's **CHARACTER**?

5. How is the **MELODY** varied to establish different **MOODS** during the film? Consider which **STANZAS** or **LINES** are associated with specific **SCENES** and **CHARACTERS**.

6. The first three **CHARACTERS** introduced are Jack Colby, Ben Miller, and James Pierce. Which specific **REACTION SHOTS** best show that these are the "Bad Guys"?

7. The first **MAJOR CHARACTER** introduced is Will Kane. What three **CHARACTER TRAITS** best describe him and what three specific events reveal each of those traits?

8. Another **MAJOR CHARACTER** is Kane's bride, Amy Fowler. Is she **FLAT** or **ROUND**? Is she **STATIC** or **DYNAMIC**? Cite specific evidence to support your opinion.

9. A **FOIL** is any character who is used to point out the **TRAITS** of another **CHARACTER**, both similarities and differences. The two women, Amy Fowler and Helen Ramirez, are **FOILS** for each other. **COMPARE** and **CONTRAST** the specific ways they are alike and yet also opposites.

10. Also, Ben Miller and Harve Pell are **FOILS** for each other. How does the film demonstrate the immaturity of each? Does either character "grow up" in the course of the film?

11. The townspeople include several **MINOR CHARACTERS** who are important to the film, even though they are essentially **FLAT** and **STATIC**. Select two who serve as **FOILS** for each other. **COMPARE** and **CONTRAST** the specific ways they are alike and yet also opposites.

12. Badges serve as a **LEITMOTIF** (or recurring **IMAGE**) throughout the film? List each time the film focuses on a badge and explain the significance of each **IMAGE**.

13. Although a badge obviously **SYMBOLIZES** law and order, what other **SYMBOLIC MEANING** (or meanings) does a badge take on in the course of the film?

14. How are **LONG SHOTS** used to establish the Kane's independence and isolation?

15. How are **CLOSE-UPS** used to create **SUSPENSE**? What is the significance of the chair and the clocks, etc.?

16. We have anticipated Frank Miller throughout the film. What **FILM TECHNIQUES** are used to establish him as the baddest of the "Bad Guys"?

17. What **FRAMES** are used in the final shoot-out to focus our attention on Amy?

18. How does High Noon fit the four **PLOT PATTERNS** we have studied? Write a paragraph for each pattern. Define what the patterns mean and give specific examples from the film.

A. RITE OF PASSAGE

