

# Teaching & Learning Civic Engagement Through the Art of Classic Film

A Film Study Curriculum for High School and College Students Designed by Educational  
Guidance Institute

*We are all together in the same boat – sailing upon a stormy sea – and we owe each other a  
terrible loyalty*  
G. K. Chesterton



## **Our present cultural and political moment...**

*Can great classic movies actually help build the unity we need across generations to overcome the “we win - you lose politics” that threatens our future? The answer is a straightforward YES for one compelling reason:*

*The great classic movies of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century carry a unique cultural and aesthetic storytelling power that can push against the forces of tribalism, faction, and group identity politics – at least for an opportune teachable and communal moment! These films bear the weight of our common humanity and their unifying light shines for the generation born into the age of the internet.*

## Timeless Wisdom, Cultural Memory & Aesthetic Excellence in the Fruits of Classic Cinema Conversations

### The Cherished Art Form of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: 3 Measures of Greatness

Three elements of classic movie storytelling – *timeless wisdom, cultural memory, and aesthetic excellence* – measure the enduring appeal of these great films decades after they were seen in the theaters of towns and cities across America. ***Each film tells a story that helps us - across the generations - to better understand one another. Together we can probe more deeply into the mysteries of our human nature.*** With films like *12 Angry Men* and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, this is an opportunity to rebuild lost social capital and reclaim communal and cultural common ground. Restoring the Ethos of Community in the cultural spaces where all of us live is the essential first step. We have created this film study curriculum for use in any and all educational and social settings. Classic film conversations can help to build civic friendships at any intersection of culture and community we happen to be in.

Great classic films are not merely artifacts of a bygone era; they give us a way to recover timeless wisdom about the meaning of life. Each film carries cultural memory and aesthetic excellence for understanding our shared human nature. For the sake of our country and future generations, each of us can play a part in building the bonds of civic friendship that overcome political division and tribalism. As the British poet of the last century, Gilbert Keith Chesterton expressed it:



***“We are all together in the same boat sailing on a stormy sea. We owe to each other a terrible and tragic loyalty.”***

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# Introduction

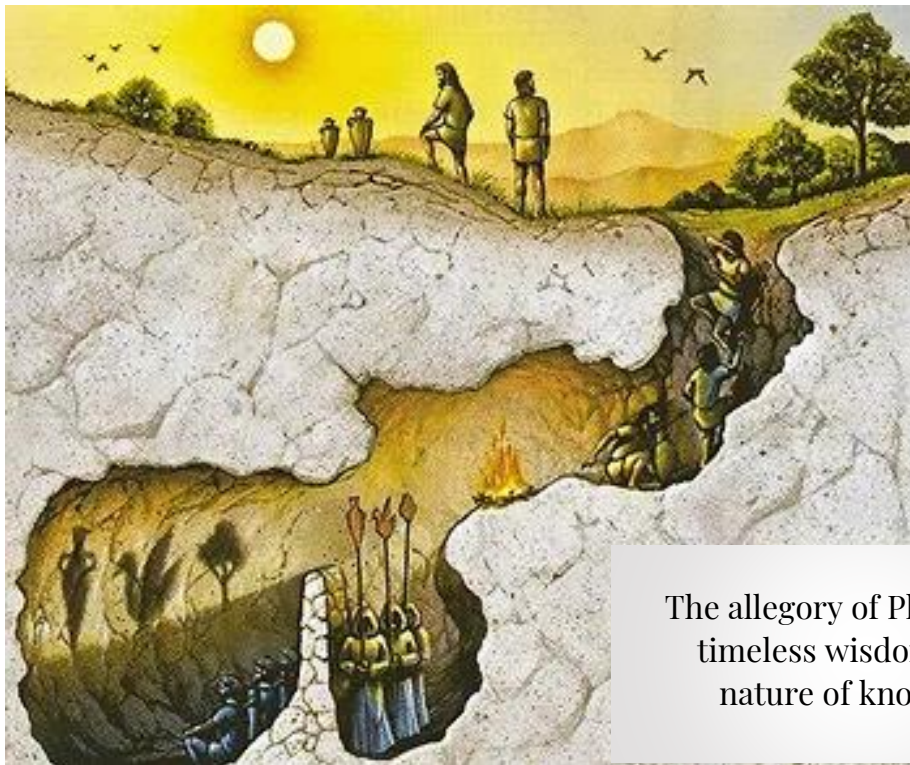
## Film Classics and the Quest for Meaning

Why should we - living in a deeply fragmented political world - focus on classic movie storytelling? It has to do with the classical understanding that in living out our lives in human flourishing, the transcendentals *lead*. What are the attributes of beauty, truth, and goodness depicted in these films that both show and remind us how to be better citizens and model the deeper meaning of civic friendship for the rising generation? As more data is confirmed on the negative impacts of social media on mental health and stability, we must have the courage to confront the collective cultural breakdown we - and especially the young - are experiencing.

**In the sunlight, sharing great films together, we rediscover our common humanity**

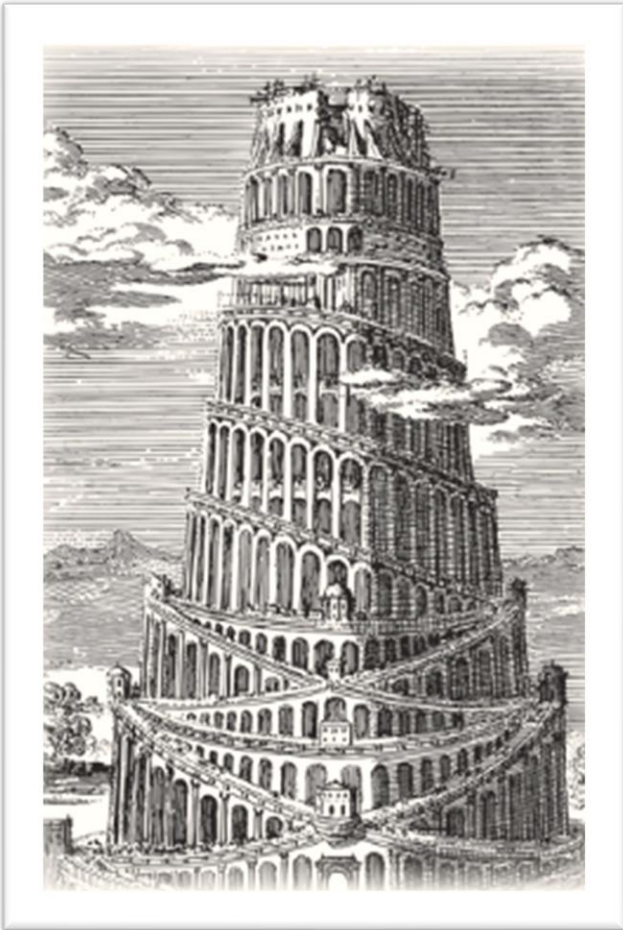
*“...the more you emphasize common goals or interests, shared fate, and common humanity, the more [people] will see one another as fellow human beings, treat one another well, and come to appreciate one another’s contribution to humanity.”*

*-The Coddling of the American Mind*  
Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt



The allegory of Plato’s Cave:  
timeless wisdom on the  
nature of knowledge

# Gathering Amid the *Ruins of Babel* in Our Postmodern Era



Jonathan Haidt describes us as:  
*“People wandering amid the ruins, unable to communicate, condemned to mutual incomprehension. [The tower is a] metaphor for what is happening not only between red and blue, but within the left, and within the right, as well as within universities, companies, professional associations, museums, and even families.”*

-*The Atlantic*, April 2022  
“After Babel: How social media dissolved the mortar of society and made America stupid”

**Regaining greater unity  
and civic friendship amid the  
ruins of Babel ...**

***Golden Age five-star films  
provide building blocks  
across the generations***



## **Building Moral Energy for Unity and Solidarity with *Classic Cinema Conversations***

*“Art gives us the power to see inside ourselves and outside ourselves at the same time”* -Thomas Merton

Throughout the curriculum readers will find that classic movie storytelling makes possible the blending of inquiry into our shared human condition across academic disciplines. The film stories traverse such disciplines as psychology, sociology philosophy, political science, history, and cultural anthropology. Educators and their students can grow more adept in the art of integrating scholarly wisdom from diverse spheres of inquiry by exploring themes, characters, and film history in communal and classroom settings. With the publication of *The Anxious Generation* in March 2024, the sobering news is cumulative: far too many of our young people are being swallowed up in a torrent of social media toxins. *Conversations about life in classic movies can be a vibrant and uniting part of collaborative efforts to rebuild social capital in our fragmented world.*

### *Overcoming Toxic Untruths with Classic Movie Storytelling*

The infographic features a central graphic on the left with a brown background. At the top, it reads "THE CODDLING OF THE AMERICAN MIND" in white. Below this is a row of five black silhouettes of people in graduation gowns, with the last one falling off a ledge. At the bottom of the graphic, the authors' names "GREG LUKIANOFF" and "JONATHAN HAIDT" are listed in white. To the right of the graphic, three untruths are listed in brown text, each followed by a descriptive phrase in italics. The background of the infographic is light beige with gold leaf-like patterns and two gold leaves in the bottom right corner.

**3 UNTRUTHS DESCRIBED IN  
*"THE CODDLING OF THE AMERICAN MIND"***

**THE CODDLING OF THE AMERICAN MIND**

GREG LUKIANOFF  
JONATHAN HAIDT

**Untruth of "Us Versus Them"**-  
*life is a battle between good people and evil people*

**Untruth of "Fragility"**-  
*we are victims in an uncontrollable environment*

**Untruth of "Emotional Reasoning"**-  
*always trust your feelings*

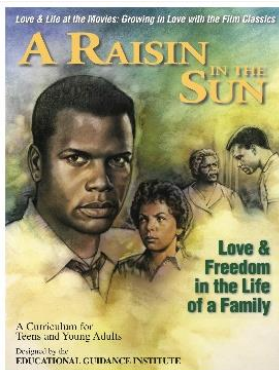
**Studying great classic movies with each other equips all of us -especially Gen Z- to refute all three of these Untruths**

# Taking up the Task of Teaching and Learning Together

## *Making Use of Classic Film Storytelling's Power of Transport*

*“Life us not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be lived”*  
-French philosopher Gabriel Marcel

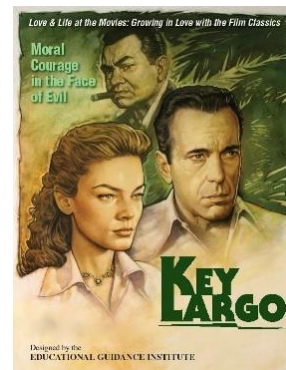
It can be very hard for young people in today’s world to wander down the road of classic moral inquiry when, for most of them the entire internet universe is in their pockets. Classic Movie Storytelling has the power to break through the toxic clouds of social media that permeate our culture. Here are the ABCs of the journey though classic cinema we offer. These movies bear so much meaning, they seem to do 90% of the work themselves through these ABC’s.....



Accessible

Believable

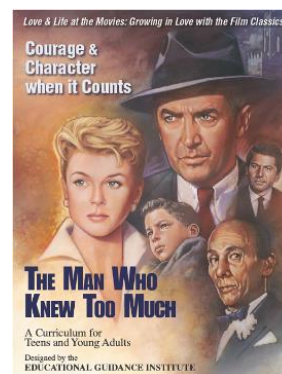
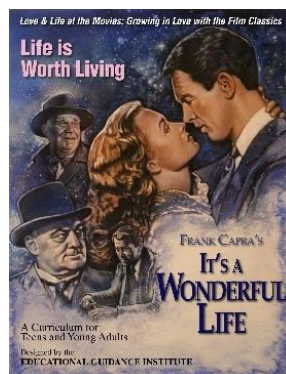
Compelling



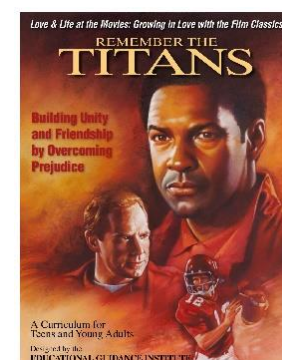
Depolarizing

Elevating

Formative



A Gift  
to us ALL



# Rallying Our Immeasurable & Innate Human Qualities

SELF-AWARENESS EMPATHY LEADERSHIP COMPASSION

HUMOR COURAGE SENSE OF BEAUTY HUMILITY CIVIC-MINDEDNESS



CRITICAL THINKING RESILIENCE MOTIVATION PERSEVERANCE

QUESTION-ASKING SENSE OF WONDER ENTHUSIASM

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Rallying Our Immeasurable & Innate Human Qualities

Teaching & Learning Civic Engagement Through the Art of Classic Film



## Experiencing Shared Understanding of the Good with *Classic Cinema Conversations*

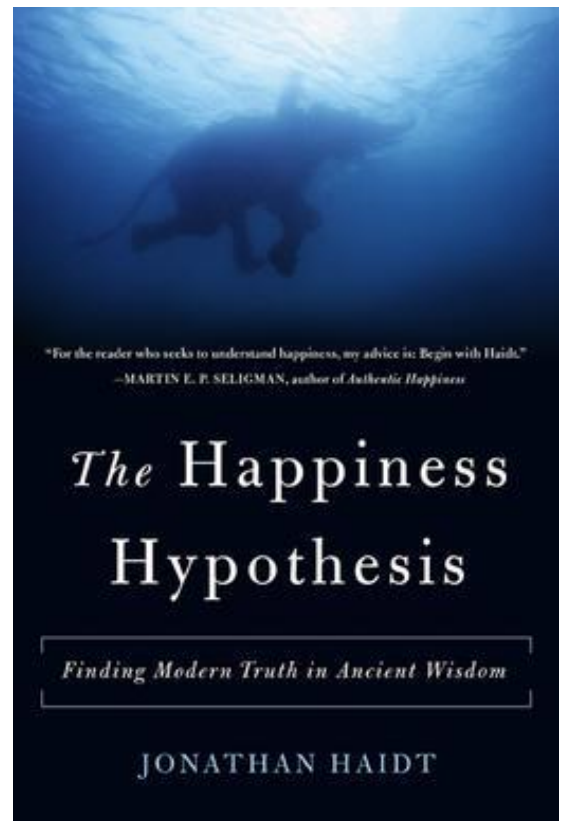
*“Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason, the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.”*

-Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*

How do classic movies help us to engage in the kind of moral inquiry that Aristotle talked about? In *The Happiness Hypothesis* social psychologist Jonathan Haidt reminds us of the importance of a **shared, common ethos—the Ethos of Community we find modeled in the films in this curriculum**. In a chapter entitled “The Felicity of Virtue,” the vital role of *a shared communal ethos* is underscored. Haidt explains what happens when this ethos is lost, drawing on the insights of French sociologist, Emile Durkheim:

*“I believe that we have indeed lost something important—a richly textured common ethos with widely shared virtues and values. **Just watch movies from the 1930’s and 1940’s and you’ll see people moving around in a dense web of moral fibers...***

*Durkheim, the sociologist who found that freedom from social ties is correlated with suicide also gave us the word “anomie” (normlessness). Anomie is the condition of a society in which there are no clear rules, norms, or standards of value. In an anomic society, people can do as they please, but without any clear standards or respected social institutions to enforce those standards, it is harder for people to find things they want to do. Anomie breeds feelings of rootlessness and anxiety and leads to an increase in amoral and antisocial behavior. Modern sociological research strongly supports Durkheim.”*



## Introducing Our *Civic Virtue Continuum*

This chart provides the classic understanding of virtue ethics as best explored in Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*. The *Civic Virtue Continuum* provides an accessible way for surveying the landscape of the human condition depicted in these classic films; it works well in any learning setting. Here the civic virtue of **Magnanimity** is applied in Frank Capra’s *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and Joseph L. Mankiewicz’s *No Way Out* (1950). The full chart (on the following page) will be referred to throughout the curriculum. For example, **Justice** is the major theme of *12 Angry Men* while **Self-Giving Love** is demonstrated in *A Tale of Two Cities*.



In the classical understanding of virtue ethics, we aim for the good while avoiding deficiencies on one end and excesses on the other. Our aim for the most virtuous outcome is explained in this quote from Aristotle below....

*“To feel these feelings at the right time, on the right occasion, towards the right people, for the right purpose and in the right manner, is to feel the best amount of them, which is the mean amount - and the best amount is of course the mark of virtue.”— Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics*



In *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *No Way Out* we see the civic virtue of Magnanimity breaking out of tribal boundaries. Jimmy Stewart’s fellow Senators are overcoming their partisan passions to actually listen to him. A doctor persecuted by a psychopathic racist – Sidney Pointier in his first film – affirms his determination to attend to the man’s wounds saying, *“I can’t kill a Man because he hates me.”* **In our fragmented era, the meaning of civic virtue can be holistically understood via visual storytelling across generations and political/cultural divisions.**

# CIVIC VIRTUE CONTINUUM

## The Virtue Narrative

Deficiency



Transactions

Cowardice

Process Lens

Apathy

Unaware of Natural/  
Cultural Boundaries

Reductionism

Utilitarianism

Disregard

Degradation

Hyper-Individualism

Self-Focus

Indifference

*Magnanimity*

*Courage*

*Prudence*

*Justice*

*Temperance*

*Understanding*

*Self-Giving Love*

*Respect*

*Humility*

*Like-Mindedness*

*True Friendship*

*Care for Common Good*

Excess



Sentimentality

Rashness

Self-Righteousness

Group Identity Politics

Scrupulosity

Judgementalism

Emotivism

Obsession

Pride

Factional Hubris

Idolatry

Entitlement

# Unit One: Classic Movie Blueprints for Civic Renewal

*“Creating robust social capital takes time and effort. For the most part, it develops through extensive and time-consuming face-to-face conversations between two individuals or among small groups of people. It takes person-to-person contact over time to build the trust and mutual understanding that characterize the relationships that are the basis of social capital.”*

*-Robert Putnam, et al, Better Together: Restoring the American Community*

In this insightful quote from Robert Putnam, sociologist and author of *Bowling Alone*, the keys to educating the rising generation in the classical understanding of Civic Friendship can be seen. With Putnam’s descriptive words we can see it takes *persevering effort over time* to regain and rebuild the Ethos of Community that has tragically eroded in recent decades. We witness a shattered political landscape where indifference and mere survival seem to be the prevailing civic orientations. *To rebuild the civic friendships that ground civic engagement, we must grow together in a classic understanding of our shared human condition.* In our high school and college pilots, students have learned experientially to weave together the threads of personal, communal, and political life in search of meaning. Classic films provide cultural access in community and campus spaces to explore life’s deep existential questions *without provoking political panic* - questions of personal identity, the meaning of life, and making moral decisions. These are the questions and concerns swirling around in the heads of young people today. The enduring goods, justice, community, and solidarity - must be addressed first to make sense of our world today - to engage in classic moral inquiry and rediscover together the goods we love.



## Discovering Our Common Humanity *Together* is the First Step to Engaged Citizenship

Civic Engagement is vital for the civil society of a self-governing people. Today's youth - growing to maturity in a state of disconnection and cultural breakdown - deserve to be shown *a path of Discovery that is trustworthy - to discover what it means to be human and live with others in civil society.* Growing together in the search for deeper meaning, it is expected that high school and college students will differ - developmentally, emotionally, and intellectually. The high school years see the development of young minds while the college and young adult years ought to bring with them a sensibility and maturing of the student. Classic cinema stories are proven bearers of deep meaning to students of diverse sensibilities, experiences, and stages of development.

How can we restore our lost community ethos when left, right and center our political and cultural divisions are so pervasive? Moral Foundations Theory, explained by Jonathan Haidt in *The Righteous Mind*, provides a uniting starting point and credible analytical tool for undertaking the daunting tasks of restoring our tattered communal moral intuitions.

**The Elements of Moral Foundations Theory**

*The Righteous Mind* delves into the moral intuitions found in human nature and demonstrated in Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* & Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *No Way Out*.

**CARE**      **LOYALTY**  
**FAIRNESS**      **AUTHORITY**  
**LIBERTY**      **SANCTITY**

# *12 Angry Men*

## *Truth and Justice in the Balance*

***“It is nonsense to imagine that a free political community can survive without citizens who pursue lives of virtue.” - James Madison***

*12 Angry Men* teaches a vital lesson for the citizens of a free society: achieving true justice in the public square requires not only the practice of civic virtue on the part of most of its citizens, but also their willingness to engage with each other in serious conversation and debate. Throughout the film the life of the accused young man is on the line. Each juror must search his conscience and make the moral choice for “guilty” or “not guilty” *beyond a reasonable doubt*.

We encounter the theme that it is in our shared human nature to desire justice, just as it is human nature to have blind spots that can prevent us from seeing truth.

*How these jurors overcome their blind spots and gain solidarity is the dramatic hook of the story.*

### Film Facts for *12 Angry Men*

**Year:** 1957

**Starring:** Martin Balsam, John Fiedler, Lee J. Cobb, E.G. Marshall, Jack Klugman, Edward Binns, Jack Warden, Henry Fonda, Joseph Sweeney, Ed Begley, George Voskovec, Robert Webber

**Director:** Sidney Lumet

**Screenwriter:** Reginald Rose

**Cinematographer:** Boris Kaufman

**Viewing Time:** 96 min.

**Setting:** Filming Locations:

New York County Courthouse - 60 Centre Street,  
New York City, New York,

**Academy Award Nominations:**

- Best Director, Sidney Lumet
- Best Picture, Henry Fonda, Reginald Rose
- Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium, Reginald Rose



## *We share a natural desire for justice even in an imperfect world*

Juror 11, a recent immigrant, and a new citizen of the United States, reminds jurors of the real reasons they are together in that jury room.

*“This is not why we are here, to fight. We have a responsibility. This, I have always thought, is a remarkable thing about democracy. That we are, what is the word? Notified. That we are notified by mail to come down to this place and decide on the guilt or innocence of a man we have never heard of before. We have nothing to gain or lose by our verdict. This is one of the reasons we are strong. We should not make it a personal thing.”*



## *12 Angry Men in Film History*



In 1954 Henry Fonda saw the original Reginald Rose teleplay of *12 Angry Men* on *Studio One*. Rose had gotten the idea for the story from serving on a jury. The veteran actor knew immediately that he wanted to bring the story to the big screen. Henry Fonda and Reginald Rose became co-producers of the film. Sydney Lumet, with his New York stage and television experience, was the logical choice for the director. Reginald Rose was part of the highly talented group of writers, actors, and directors who moved back and forth from the New York stage television.

This highly creative and artistically excellent time period from 1948-1956 is known as the “Golden Age of Television.” Sidney Lumet recalls this time: *“The burst of talent in acting and directing and writing was just unbelievable.”* Jack Klugman, who in the film plays Juror 5, pays tribute to Rose’s script and recalls the screenwriter’s great talent: *“Reginald Rose wrote a phenomenal script and everybody played it to the hilt.”* In the documentary *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: Making Twelve Angry Men*, the beloved late host of Turner Classic Movies, Robert Osborne, observes: *“You’ve got 12 guys basically sitting in a room and yet it is one of the great thrillers of all time.”*



## Beyond Politics: Exploring the Meaning of True Justice

“He’s had a pretty miserable eighteen years, I just think we owe him a few words, that’s all.” The greatest virtue required in the public square is the ability to use practical reasoning to present arguments on behalf of fairness, justice and truth. Henry Fonda’s Juror 8 urges fellow jurors to think more deeply about **what justice requires them to do**.



The film unfolds the concrete context for students to explore how true justice is the virtuous mean .to aim for - avoiding indifference and apathy at one end and tribalism on the other. We grow in understanding our human condition as “**the way things are**.” In a political science seminar on Aristotle, students may learn what Aristotle has to say, but struggle to understand *what Aristotle means*. Each juror is grappling for what is real and true over biased personal opinions and we see this and understand it.

In the final scene, the virtue of civic friendship is beautifully shown as Juror 8 helps his former antagonist put on his coat. Here we see we have a responsibility to not only be civil, but to extend charity to even our opponents.

### Justice Wins over Apathy and Group Identity Politics

How can we account for the high acclaim for *12 Angry Men* from all sides of the political spectrum? *The Civic Virtue Continuum* gives us a clue. The deficit end of apathy and indifference is seen in the baseball fan who only thinks of missing the game and on the other end a man who carries racial/class hatred against the accused. But for each juror there is a journey to justice rooted in acknowledgment of the human nature we share.





# *It's a Wonderful Life*

## **The *Habits of the Heart* Shine in Frank Capra's Masterpiece**

*It's a Wonderful Life* is at the top of the American Film Institute's list as the most inspiring film of all time. What is it about this film that gives it a timeless appeal across generations and cultural eras? Part of the answer must be that this film - above all others - gives an account of human nature we can believe is true across the political and cultural spectrum. Educational Guidance Institute's Classic Film Study Project has always been grounded in the thought of French philosopher Blaise Pascal. Pascal held the "habits of the heart" in the highest place. He is famous for this quote: ***"The heart has its reasons that reason knows not."***

### Film Facts

**Year:** 1946

**Starring:** Jimmy Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, Thomas Mitchel, Henry Travers

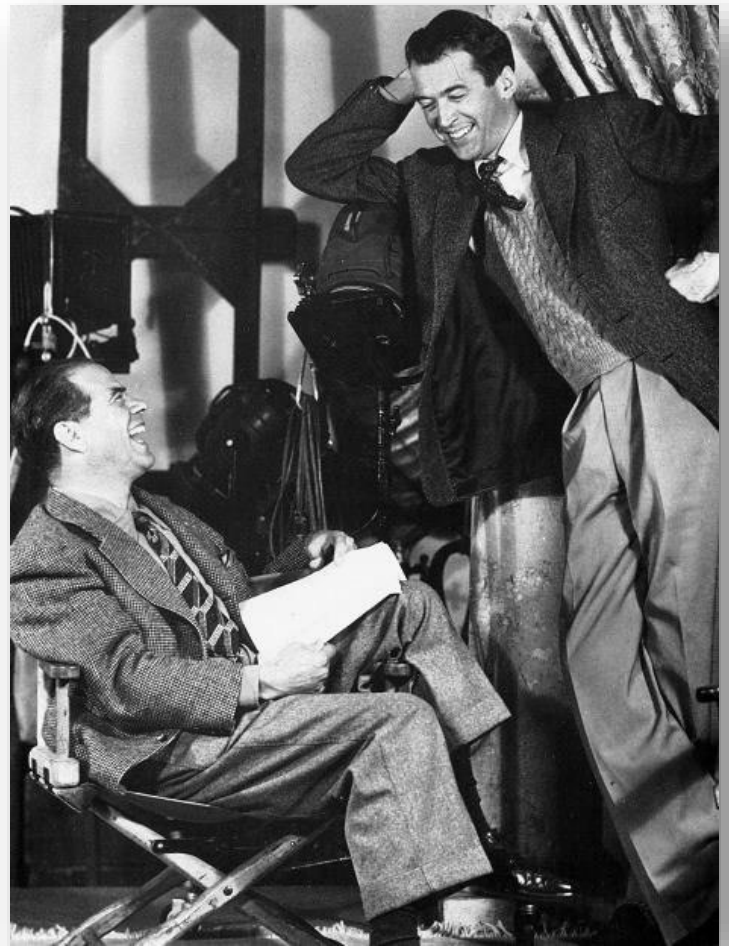
**Director:** Frank Capra

**Screenwriters:** Frank Capra, Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett (screenplay) and Philip Van Doren Stern (story)

**Viewing Time:** 130 minutes

### **Academy Award Nominations (1947):**

- Best Actor in a Leading Role, James Stewart
- Best Director, Frank Capra
- Best Film Editing, William Hornbeck
- Best Picture, (Liberty Films).
- Best Sound & Recording, John Aalberg (RKO Radio SSD)
- At the top of the list of the most inspiring films of all time for the American Film Institute, *It's A Wonderful Life* is number one.



**Frank Capra tells the story of how he tried to tell Jimmy about the story, but the words seemed to fail him. He almost gave up on the whole project. In an interview, Jimmy Stewart tells his version, *"Frank, if you want me to be in a picture about a guy that wants to kill himself and an angel comes down named Clarence and he can't swim... I say, when do we start?!"***

## Film History

It is widely known that Jimmy Stewart was suffering from PTSD when he returned from active service in World War II. Lionel Barrymore, who plays Potter - George Bailey's deadly enemy in the film - was actually the caring person who worked with Stewart and helped him regain his confidence and self-efficacy for his acting vocation. In the scene where a despairing George Bailey asks God for help in the bar, Jimmy Stewart was so emotionally moved by the moment that he broke into tears during its filming. Capra was so thrilled with the scene that he kept it in the film and even spent almost a thousand dollars trying to blow up the shot so it would be a closeup.



Years later, Jimmy Stewart gave this account:

“As I said [the prayer in *It's a Wonderful Life*], I felt the loneliness and hopelessness of people who had nowhere to turn, and my eyes filled with tears. I broke down sobbing. This was not planned at all, but the power of that prayer, the realization that our Father in heaven is there to help the hopeless had reduced me to tears.”

*Our contemporary culture places upon us all, but especially those in the rising generation – a debilitating untruth that success in life all depends on each of us as individuals. Classic films and in particular *It's a Wonderful Life* tell a different story. The truth is we are social by nature and dependent on each other to flourish in family, community, and society. We experience life as participants in a shared moral universe. This is the fundamental classic anthropology that grounds a free people in a sustainable civil society.*

### Analyzing the Civic Virtues of Like-Mindedness, True Friendship and Care for the Common Good in *It's a Wonderful Life*



## The Run on the Bank Scene as a Study in Community

Community is a vital part of life that is universally cherished because in our human nature we are social beings. *It's a Wonderful Life* gives us a “big picture” view of what makes a community strong, real, and vibrant. Even in a time *when so many of us have not experienced genuine community life*, the genius of Frank Capra helps us to grasp ***the meaning of community***.



On the way out of town to their honeymoon, George and Mary witness a run on the bank and decide to stop. George has the difficult task of persuading his fellow citizens to act for the common good of the town. He explains to them that the investment in their homes is really an investment in everyone else's home as well.

Encouraging the solidarity they must maintain in a time of panic, he says, “*Now, we can get through this thing all right. We've got to stick together, though. We've got to have faith in each other.*”



*It's A Wonderful Life*  
**The Run on The Bank: Saving Bedford Falls**

**Who do YOU want to hang around with?  
A \$242 person or a \$17.50 person?**

## ***Remember the Titans – Witnessing Solidarity***



The film has an authenticity that transcends both the year in which it was made, 2000, and the year the story takes place, 1971. The film is based on a true story of friendship, community, family ties, and civic responsibility. *Remember the Titans* portrays the true story of the T.C. Williams high school football team, of Alexandria, Virginia. The story follows Coach Herman Boone (Denzel Washington) and Coach Bill Yoast (Will Patton) as they bring the Titans together as a winning team -overcoming the racial tensions that accompanied the integration of the city in 1971. This film is a landmark story of the Civil Rights Movement and crosses the generations for our time.

*Analyzing characters and themes in Remember the Titans we have the unusual circumstance of Coach Boone and Coach Yoast still having an active community presence in Alexandria, Virginia when the film was made.*

### **Film Facts**

**Year:** 2000

**Starring:** Denzel Washington & Will Patton

**Director:** Boaz Yakin

**Screenwriter:** Gregory Allen Howard

**Viewing Time:** 113 min.

**Setting:** Alexandria, Virginia (Filmed in Covington, Georgia)

**Production Company:** Jerry Bruckheimer Films, Walt Disney Pictures



### **“The town followed the team.”**

Screenwriter Gregory Allen Howard recalls,

*“I started asking around and I kept hearing about this high school football team. I think it was my barber who first told me about the Titans and these two coaches. I couldn’t imagine that a high school team could so affect an entire town. Some say they saved the city.”*

## Film History

### Remembering the History of ‘Titans’

*A screenwriter who moved to Virginia to escape LA's tensions retraces his discovery of Alexandria's racial healing.*

Los Angeles Times - September 30, 2000 - Gregory Allen Howard

Thirty years ago, Alexandria was a segregated town. Whites lived on Seminary Ridge. Blacks lived in "the Berg" near the waterfront. They did not "mix," a common term used then. According to Herman, "If you were black you didn't go up on the Ridge, particularly at night." During the summer of 1971 a black teenager was killed by a convenience store owner who said, "He looked dangerous." Intense protests followed and many felt the town was on the verge of exploding, like Watts or Detroit. And in a state where high school football coaches are community leaders, every head coach in the Alexandria system was white. To calm the black community, Alexandria hired Boone as head football coach of the new high school, T.C. Williams--consolidated from three segregated schools, one white and two black. In hiring Boone the school board passed over the senior coach in the system, Yoast, a white coach who was a regional championship winner. The first integration effort was Yoast accepting the assistant head coach job under Boone. That 1971 T.C. Titans Football team turned this town around, integrated it by winning football games and showing this city that race mixing could work.



### Building Civic Friendship in Community

*Without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods.*

*- Aristotle*

Restoring Social and Moral Capital to our  
Fragmented Communities with *Remember the  
Titans and other film classics*

In today's fragmented society, young people often feel isolated and alone. This film brings us together as we discover we are hardwired to live in community. We learn again we are naturally dependent on each other to flourish in the common world we live in with other people. For detailed guidance for this film and others, see *Shining Light on Our Common Humanity* available on Amazon.



*Shining Light on Our Common Humanity*



A Classic Film Study Guide Designed by the Educational Guidance Institute

## The Struggle for Solidarity Over Tribalism – Applications of Moral Foundations Theory to *Remember the Titans*

The compelling civic lesson unfolding in *Remember the Titans* is that human beings have to make free will moral choices to bring solidarity out of tribal division. In the middle of a tribal war, we can be blindsided, seeing the other side as the enemy and some very imperfect people on our side as allies and friends. In *The Righteous Mind*, Jonathan Haidt explains how Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) is grounded in years of social science research. Applying MFT to classic movies, we uncover the blind spots of *us vs. them*; we discover together how - in the practice of civic virtue - solidarity in a fractured political community can be restored. According to Haidt:

*“Moral communities are fragile things, hard to build and easy to destroy. When we think about very large communities such as nations, the challenge is extraordinary and the threat of moral entropy is intense.....if you don’t value moral capital, then you won’t foster values, virtues, norms, practices, identities, institutions, and technologies that increase it.”*



Although Boone and Yoast have different temperaments and coaching styles, the two men discover they have much in common: integrity, honor, and a strong work ethic. The hard work of turning the Titans into a winning team begins at the training camp in Gettysburg as Coach Boone realizes that the young men must learn to work together and overcome their racial divides. He tells them that they will be rooming with a person of the opposite race and that they will spend their time getting to know one another.

### **Becoming *Part of the Whole* to Gain Authentic Solidarity**

*We may spend most of our waking hours advancing our own interests, but we all have the capacity to transcend self-interest and become simply a part of a whole. It’s not just a capacity; it’s the portal to many of life’s most cherished experiences.*

- Jonathan Haidt

***The word “solidarity” is easy to say - but requires personal transformation.*** Solidarity is defined as unity and agreement of feeling and action among people with a common interest - mutual support within a group. From beginning to end, the story of *Remember the Titans* compellingly depicts the human struggle for solidarity within conflicting groups.

## Analyzing Elements of Moral Foundations Theory - *Fairness vs Cheating and Sanctity vs Degradation in Remember the Titans*

The moral intuitions described in *The Righteous Mind* have been validated by scientific inquiry. Liberals and conservatives alike can intuitively and reasonably assume there are no hidden political or religious agendas lurking beneath the surface of Moral Foundations Theory. The moral intuition elements of Moral Foundations Theory are “Care,” “Fairness,” “Liberty,” “Loyalty,” “Authority” and “Sanctity”- all dramatically present in *Remember the Titans*. Here are highlights of the “Fairness” and “Sanctity” foundations.

### Fairness vs Cheating

The strategic importance of the *Fairness* foundation to group solidarity is seen in two sequences. Coach Yoast has been told by prominent members of the community that he will be chosen for the Hall of Fame. The moral price of this award is for Yoast to look elsewhere when unethical moves are made that will cost Coach Boone his job. The second sequence depicts the decision made by Gerry Bertier, with Coach Boone’s permission, to drop Ray from the team. Ray has been “cheating” by refusing to cover black players in strategic plays where their safety and the outcome of the game are at stake.



### Sanctity vs Degradation

*“You listen... and you take a lesson from the dead. If we don't come together... right now, on this hallowed ground... then we, too, will be destroyed, just like they were. I don't care if you like each other or not, but you will respect each other, and maybe... I don't know, maybe we'll... learn to play this game like Men.”* - Coach Boone at Gettysburg

The fundamental nature of the Sanctity Foundation is seen in the very early sequences of the film. Coach Boone has started to build solidarity with the basic decision to put black and white players together as roommates. Yet much more is needed in the realm of awakening in them an awareness of the deeper human meaning underlying a united winning team. Watching this sequence in *Remember the Titan* mysteriously triggers a strong sense of Sanctity – the Sanctity of our common humanity.



## ***Mr. Smith Goes to Washington***

*“Public virtue cannot exist in a nation without private virtue, and public virtue is the only foundation of republics” – John Adams*

A Classic Cinema Victory for the *Habits of the Heart* - In the 2004 election year, Frank Capra’s *Mr. Smith* revealed an unusual consensus among Democrats and Republicans!

Six decades after its release, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* was chosen by over ninety percent of both Republican and Democrat classic movie fans as their all-time favorite film with a political theme. The results of this Turner Classic Movies survey, conducted in the election season of 2004, are an indication of the longing for national unity many of us carry in our hearts. Whatever our political affiliations may be, civic friendship, solidarity and the common good are cherished by Americans across the generations. Jimmy Stewart as Mr. Smith learns and practices the essential civic virtues and principles of statesmanship that bring human flourishing for a free people. *We learn along with Jeff Smith that the Civic Virtue of Humility is vital.*

### Film Facts

***Year:*** 1939

***Starring:*** Jimmy Stewart, Jean Arthur, Claude Rains

***Director:*** Frank Capra

***Screenwriter:*** Sidney Buchman (screenplay), Lewis R.

***Viewing Time:*** 129 Minutes

***Studio:*** Columbia Pictures

***Academy Award*** Best Writing, Original Story, Lewis R. Foster

***Academy Award Nominations***

**10 nominations including:**

Best Actor in a Leading Role, James Stewart

- Best Actor in a Supporting Role, Claude Rains
- Best Director, Frank Capra
- Best Music, Scoring, Dimitri Tiomkin
- Best Picture (Columbia)
- Best Writing, Screenplay, Sidney Buchman





## Film History

When Jeff Smith confronts Senator Paine (Claude Rains) with the words, “*I guess this is just another lost cause, Mr. Paine*” his humility and fortitude awaken the corrupted politician’s deadened conscience. Jeff Smith is showing his fellow Americans how to behave as engaged citizens in overcoming faction and division in a free society.

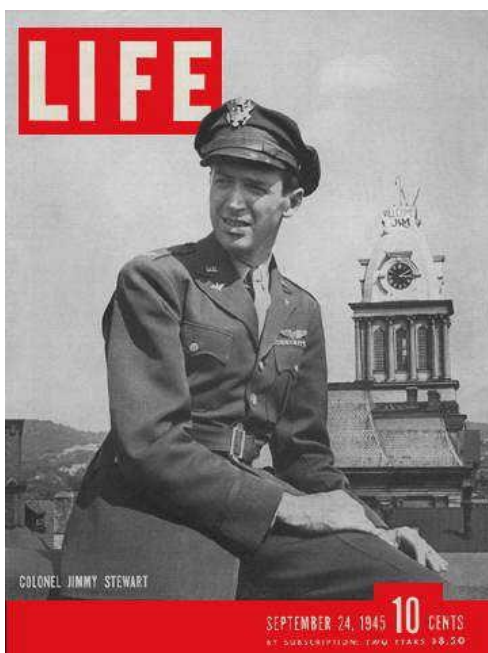
*The lesson came home to the people of France as they watched Hitler’s Nazi armies invade their country. Three years after Mr. Smith premiered, the nation was in the midst of WWII. Capra’s wife sent the following account to her husband in the army overseas as recounted in The Hollywood Reporter, November 4, 1942:*

### **Last Cheers of French Audience for *Smith Goes to Washington***

Frank Capra’s *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, chosen by French theatres as the final English-Language film to be shown before the recent Nazi-ordered countrywide ban on American and British films went in to effect, was roundly cheered by French audiences.

When the ban became known, the French people flocked to the cinemas to get seats for the last showing of an American film. In many provincial theatres, Frank Capra’s, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, in the original English version, was chosen for the occasion and a special farewell gala performance was staged.

Cheers and acclamation punctuated the famous speech of the young senator on man’s rights and dignity. It was as though the joys, suffering, love and hatred, the hopes and wishes of an entire people who value freedom above everything, found expression for the last time.



In his visit to Turner Classic Movies on September 30, 2023, Oscar-winner Richard Dreyfuss introduced *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* reminding us that, “Jimmy Stewart is a role model for America...he was so clear and vivid as a stand in for America.” He illustrates his point with this comment:

***“the beginning impulse for politics is serving the community—you don’t ever have to know whether he’s a democrat, republican, or liberal, or what state he’s from—all you know is that he’s from the interior.”***

## Integrating Moral Foundations Theory into Discussion of Characters and Themes in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*

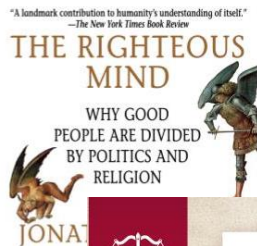


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### Haidt's Theory Guides Our Character Analysis

#### ◆ Moral Foundations Theory

- ◆ Care/Harm
- ◆ Fairness/Cheating
- ◆ Loyalty/Betrayal
- ◆ Authority/Subversion
- ◆ Sanctity/Degradation



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The “Sanctity” in Foundation Moral Foundations Theory is when Saunders challenges Jeff to “fight the good fight” for his ideals and country

This idea is depicted when Saunders confronts Jeff with the question:

- ◆ “What are you going to tell those kids?”



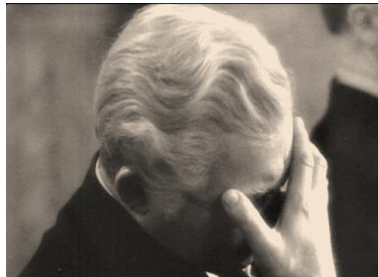
### Care vs Harm

Jonathan Haidt has found that the moral emotions of human beings are deeply sensitive in the sphere of Care vs. Harm. People naturally become greatly disturbed and sorrowful at the sight of a person suffering from harm. In the filibuster scene we witness the deeply troubled conscience of Senator Paine when he sees Jeff faint from exhaustion. Paine loves Jeff Smith like a son (Jeff’s father was his best friend). Even though it will mean the end of his career in the Senate, Joe Paine reacts to the sight of Jeff fainting on the Senate floor. For a republic to be sustained over the long haul, enough people in positions of leadership – like Jeff Smith and ultimately Joseph Paine - must move beyond self-interest to work for the common good. **In the words of Emile Durkheim, we must all become “*simply a part of the whole.*”**



### Loyalty vs Betrayal

Betrayal of trust and friendship is a terrible thing. We see this scenario played out in the scene at the senate hearing when the Taylor machine frames Jeff in the matter of the land grab. At this point in the film, Joseph Paine has chosen to stay loyal to Taylor for the sake of his political career. His betrayal of Jeff is the price of his seat in the United States Senate. This scene highlights one of the greatest moral challenges we see in politics: the conflict between publicly upholding justice and the common good, and the back room deals that undermine that greater good. Jimmy Stewart's place in the hearts of the people of this country was secured in his performance as Jeff Smith. Consider the realization of deep betrayal this is expressed on Stewart's face in this moment.



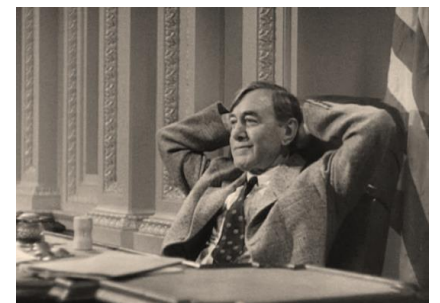
### Authority vs Subversion

In discussing the Authority Foundation in *The Righteous Mind*, Jonathan Haidt gives good advice to people who want to live in a free society: *“If authority is in part about protecting order and fending off chaos, then everyone has a stake in supporting the existing order and in holding people accountable for fulfilling the obligations of their station.”*



Frank Capra shows his understanding of human nature when he dramatizes the image of Authority as Harry Carey in the role of President of the Senate. Key scenes link political leadership and moral authority together. First, Harry Carey's character swears Jeff Smith in with the oath of office. Next, in the pivotal moment, he chooses to recognize Senator Smith and the filibuster begins.

Finally, and very telling for this particular film, Capra chose to end the film with Carey smiling with his hands over his head. Taking a cue from the previews with audiences before the film was released, Capra chose this image of Harry Carey over a sequence with Stewart and Arthur riding in a victory parade back home. Good art imitates life and Capra and his audiences both knew intuitively the pivotal importance of Carey's character as symbolic of the need for principled leadership and authority in a free society.



For more detailed guidance on Moral Foundations Theory applied to *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, see our study guide, *The Films of Jimmy Stewart: The Uncommon Common Man*, available on Amazon. Readers can also request our full slideshow on *Mr. Smith*.

## *No Way Out*

### **Justice and the Examined Life**

Made in 1950, a decade before the civil rights movement took hold, this film unearths fear and hatred as the emotional roots of racism. Darryl Zanuck, production head of 20th Century Fox, and Joseph Mankiewicz, one of the most respected directors and screenwriters at the studio, collaborated on the project. *No Way Out* was the first screenplay out of Hollywood that squarely took on racism as a social issue.

The corrosive effect of racial animosity on individuals, communities and society is the central theme in *No Way Out*. The story teaches the lesson that the only effective counterforce to racial hatred is personal virtue and friendship. The script presents this character growth without the kind of preachy over- simplification of complex social problems that sometimes diminishes other films with racial themes. The pioneering nature of this film makes it all the more remarkable because in the time it was made, race was not a subject of civil discourse in the nation.

Richard Widmark, reluctantly agreed to play the antagonist, a psychopathic racist, for the greater good of a film that took a giant step for Hollywood in that time. He and Sidney Poitier became lifelong friends after making *No Way Out*.

### **Film Facts**

**Year:** 1950

**Starring:** Sidney Poitier, Richard Widmark, Linda Darnell

**Director:** Joseph L. Mankiewicz

**Screenwriter:** Joseph L. Mankiewicz

**Viewing Time:** 106 Minutes

**Production Company:**  
Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation



## Film History

Joseph Mankiewicz directed twenty films over the course of 26 years, covering genres that ranged from Shakespeare (*Julius Caesar*) to comedy (*A Letter to Three Wives*) to urban sociological drama (*No Way Out*) and a musical (*Guys and Dolls*). He was known by his peers as a man of great wit and literary talent. It would have taken a talented writer like Joseph Mankiewicz to write a compelling screenplay about racial conflict in this period of American Life. Mankiewicz and studio head Darryl Zanuck were known



for their boldness in tackling controversial themes. They needed an exceptional actor to play the psychopathic racist, Ray Biddle; that actor was Richard Widmark. Widmark had gained stardom by playing psychotic villains at 20th Century Fox, but he did not want to be typecast as a villain. As a strong supporter of civil rights, Widmark did not relish playing the part of Ray Biddle. Zanuck and Mankiewicz convinced him that the story line would advance the cause he cherished. Human dignity, citizenship and participation in our Constitutional order are connected goods . The classic anthropology of *No Way Out* brings home the full meaning of human dignity underscored with this quote:

**“In the civil public square all have a right to participate—not only because they are citizens so entitled by this constitutional order - but also, and more fundamentally because we recognize that they are possessed of a human dignity that cannot be denied without threatening the very fragile earthly city on which we all depend.”**

-Richard John Neuhaus

Classic movie fans know well that up until *No Way Out*, black actors mainly appeared in stereotyped and shallow roles rather than as complex characters. It was the genius of Joseph Mankiewicz to cinematically present white policemen in that light instead. Eddie Mueller, Turner Classic Movies host and film noir expert, pointed this out in the film’s DVD commentary.



## Highlights of Moral Foundations Theory Depicted in *No Way Out*

Analyzing the film’s themes and characters through the lens of Moral Foundations Theory provides Transport out of the tribal thickets of social media to examine such concepts as *care vs harm and fairness vs cheating*. It is the classical moral proposition that we must, as human beings, aim for good and avoid evil. *And we must learn anew how to integrate our personal and our public lives as fellow citizens sharing basic understandings of our common humanity. Only then can enough of us carry sufficient weight to cast aside the deadly poison of us vs them/we win you lose politics poisoning our communities and our nation.* .

### Care vs Harm

The moral emotions of human beings are deeply sensitive in the sphere of Care vs. Harm. People naturally become deeply disturbed and sorrowful at the sight of a person suffering from harm. In *No Way Out* Linda Darnell’s character, raised in a racist environment, becomes deeply disturbed at the sight of the violence and injury she sees in a race riot. Her deep sorrow is intensified by knowledge her own actions contributed to the riot.



### Fairness vs Cheating

Our emotions rise when we perceive the unhappy reality of unfairness and injustice. *Obviously, there must be some innate sense of fairness and justice for human beings to have the moral intuition to react negatively to these wrongs.* In *No Way Out*, the heroine knows that she must take action to prevent the killing of an innocent man.

### The Liberty Foundation

To live in a free society, objective standards of right and wrong and good and evil must be understood and affirmed by enough citizens to keep the whole experiment in liberty going. The republic cannot survive by relying on a bureaucracy to manage the constant conflict of tribal interest groups. Rather, it is working on a team and being – in Durkheim’s words - “part of the whole” that makes all the difference. The film’s turning point is the conversation between two women who cross racial barriers and discover that they have the same moral perspective on human nature and what is important in life.



Handout: *No Way Out* (2)

### Loyalty vs Betrayal

One of the features of *No Way Out* that makes it so contemporary is its realistic treatment of tribal conflict. The hero, a black doctor played by Sidney Poitier in his very first film, witnesses the fierce and blind tribal loyalty of angry whites who cannot even see that as a doctor he is there to help their relatives. When an angry white woman spits in his face, the doctor knows he must take strategic action to avoid persecution for a crime he has not committed.



### Authority vs Subversion



*No Way Out*, breaking new ground on racial issues in 1950, conveys the necessity for authority and order in civil society. As Professor Haidt points out, authority is seen in hierarchy. One of the reasons why the white racist in the story becomes so angry is that the black doctor clearly has been given authority over him. This causes him to insist that the doctor is personally responsible for the death of his brother. The wrongly accused doctor in turn gives himself up to law enforcement authority. As a result, the doctor is cleared of any wrongdoing. Joseph

Mankiewicz's script clearly dramatizes a truth sadly eroding in our culture today; right and wrong are not determined by what political or religious tribe we belong to, but by an objective standard of right and wrong that members of all tribes can recognize and live by.

### Sanctity vs Degradation

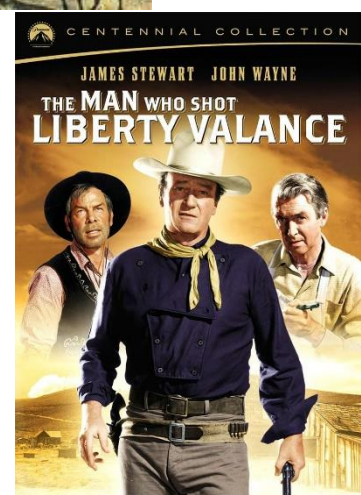
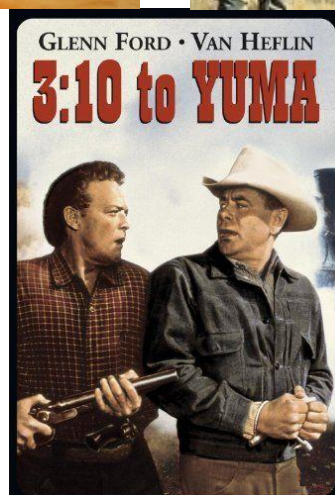
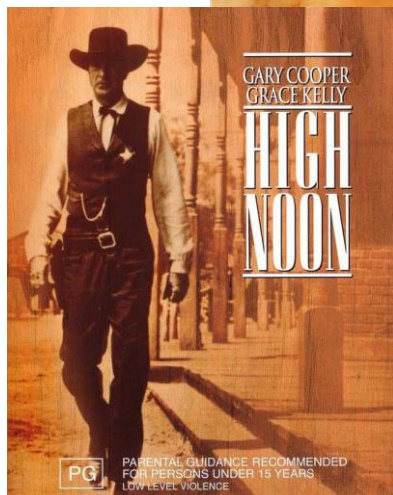
*No Way Out* - in 1950 when the film was made, and today when we are experiencing widespread political division - our imagination is stirred to *contemplate the meaning of human dignity and come to a deeper understanding of our shared human condition*. The heroine, Edie Johnson, is deeply disgusted by the violence and harm she has witnessed. When Dr. Brooks asks her to assist him in saving the life of Ray Biddle, Edie begins to *understand the sanctity of human life and dignity*.



## Unit 2: A Time for Choosing the Common Good in Classic Westerns

*“The complete community, formed from several villages, is a city-state, which at once attains the limit of self-sufficiency, roughly speaking. It comes to be for the sake of life and exists for the sake of the good life.”-Aristotle, Politics, Book I*

The classic westerns give today’s students the opportunity to study political community through a *communal rather than an individualistic lens*. A political community cannot ultimately survive as a cluster of individuals operating as autonomous sovereign selves - as the best of the classic westerns always show. As this quote from Richard John Neuhaus presents it: *“the classical understanding of politics is that of free citizens deliberating the question, ‘How ought we to order our life together?’*





## ***Shane: Rising Above Our Broken World***

*“If we focus on the ‘I’ and lose the ‘We,’ if we act on self-interest without a commitment to the common good, if we focus on self-esteem and lose our care for others, we will lose much else. Nations will cease to have societies and instead have identity groups. We will lose our feelings of collective responsibility and find in its place a culture of competitive victimhood. In an age of unprecedented possibilities, people will feel vulnerable and alone.”*

-Rabbi Jonathan Sacks,  
*Morality: Restoring the Common Good in Divided Times*

### Film Facts: *Shane*

**Year:** 1953

**Starring:** Alan Ladd, Jean Arthur, Van Heflin

**Director:** George Stevens

**Screenwriter:** A.B. Guthrie Jr. (screenplay), Jack Sher (additional dialogue),

**Viewing Time:** 118 Minutes

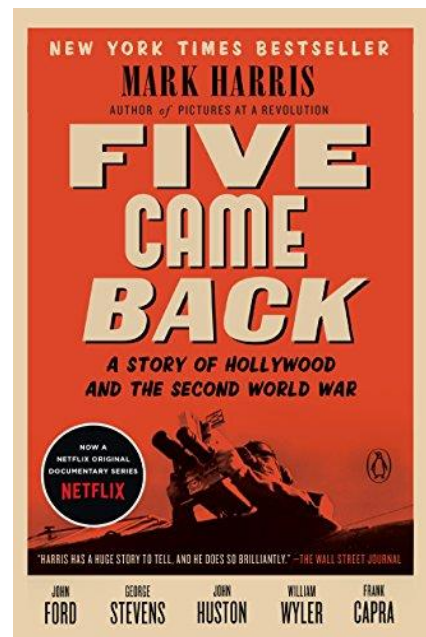
**Production Company:** Paramount Pictures Corporation

**Academy Award:**

- Best Cinematography, Color, Loyal Griggs

**Academy Award Nominations:**

- Best Actor in a Supporting Role, Brandon De Wilde
- Best Actor in a Supporting Role, Jack Palance
- Best Director, George Stevens
- Best Picture, George Stevens
- Best Writing, Screenplay, A.B. Guthrie Jr.



Mark Harris, the author of *Five Came Back*, gives the account of George Stevens' heroism at the concentration camp at Dachau. His horrific photographs were used to convict Nazi war criminals at the Nuremberg Trials.

**George Stevens' *Shane* Works to Keep the Spirit of Our Common Humanity Alive**

George Stevens was at Dachau in the final days of WWII. His work made possible convictions at Nuremberg. *Shane* reflects the spirit he wished to see live on in America.

## Community and the Common Good in *Shane*

### The Spirit of Friendship

From the beginning, Shane shows his loyalty to the Starrett family by standing with Joe when Ryker and his gang come to harass them. Ryker asks Shane who he is to which Shane replies: *I'm a friend of Starrett's.*



### Leadership and Solidarity

Joe tries to keep the families from leaving after the funeral: *We can have a regular settlement here. We can have a town and churches and a school.* Joe begins to falter in making his appeal to the community. Shane speaks up to support him: *“You know what he wants you to stay for? Something that means more to you than anything else - your families.”*

Shane’s words give Joe the strength to explain to his fellow settlers why they stay and build a community.



*“We can’t give up this valley. This is farming country, a place where people can come and bring up their families. Who is Ryker or anyone else to run us away from our own homes? He only wants to grow beef. What we want to grow up is families, to grow ‘em good and strong, the way they was meant to be grown. God didn’t make all this country just for one man like Ryker.”*

Lewis sees his house burning in the distance. Joe tells Lewis that he will help rebuild his home and the other homesteaders stand behind him in solidarity. They all come to realize that each family is an essential part of a greater whole and that they possess a community that they can build up together.



## How the Spirit of Entitlement Damages Human Rights and Our Common Life in Political Community

Joe Starrett and Ryker have a conversation about justice and human rights. Ryker believes that he has the right to the land and the right to drive the settlers out. This self-serving view has taken over Ryker's capacity for moral judgment. He rationalizes his actions by thinking the land belongs to him as a matter of justice. Because he once fought for this land, he thinks he can violate the rights of others who threaten his interests. Joe Starrett confronts Ryker's sense of entitlement directly by saying,

*"I'm not belittlin' what you and the others did. At the same time, you didn't find this country. There was trappers here and Indian traders long before you showed up and they tamed this country more than you did. You talk about rights. You think you've got the right to say that nobody else has got any."*



### **Leadership and Solidarity**

Shane backs Joe in leadership with the homesteaders:

*"You know what he wants you to stay for? Something that means more to you than anything else - your families."*

### **Wisdom and Reason**

Shane knows that he could have probably stayed if he and Marion were not deeply attracted to each other. It is up to him to put things in their right order for her. When Marian asks,

*"Are you doing this just for me?"*

He answers, *"For you, Marion - for Joe - and little Joe."*



### **Responsibility**

Shane teaches Joey a great lesson in personal responsibility before he leaves:

*"You go home to your mother and your father. And grow up to be strong and straight. And Joey, take care of them, both of them."*

## *The Big Country*

*The Big Country* is a film that embodies in its story many of life’s contradictions and at the same time depicts the centuries old struggle for the common good over faction in civil society. Gregory Peck, who co-produced the film with famed director William Wyler, spoke in later years about the difficulties caused by overnight script changes during production. History is the best judge of the quality of a film however, and any difficulties with the script seem unnoticeable today. William Wyler had the ability to connect his characters intimately to the audience. Wyler’s confidence as an artist and a director is reflected in a comment made in 1947: “*You have to have the passion to tell the story, and you have to know how to tell it with style.*”

### **Film Facts: *The Big Country***

**Year:** 1958

**Starring:** Gregory Peck, Jean Simmons, Carroll Baker, Charlton Heston, Burl Ives, Charles Bickford

**Director:** William Wyler

**Screenwriters:** James R. Webb, Sy Bartlett, Robert Wilder

**Viewing Time:** 165 Minutes

**Setting:** Filming Locations: Ione, California,

**Production Company:** Anthony Productions, Worldwide Productions

**Academy Award:** Best Actor in a Supporting Role, Burl Ives



## Film History

Director William Wyler, and star Gregory Peck, having enjoyed a great success in their collaboration for *Roman Holiday* in 1953, decided that they would collaborate as co-producers several years later for *The Big Country*.

The complex social nature of our human condition is seen in the intertwined lives of each character in this ensemble cast. The performance of Burl Ives as Rufus, the patriarch of the Hannassey clan, is highly original and brilliant, winning the folk singer turned actor the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor in 1959.



The final scenes are unforgettable: Rufus is vainly trying to maintain the crumbling civic order in “The Big Country” by conducting a duel between his son Buck (an outstanding performance by Chuck Connors), and Gregory Peck’s character, Jim McKay. Rufus has utterly failed to set an example for Buck or give him any genuine guidance. He resorts to verbal put-downs and threats of violence to control Buck. When he is forced to shoot Buck to prevent him from killing Jim unfairly, the audience sympathizes with a man who must choose between justice and the life of his son, a man whose bad decisions have made such a choice inevitable.

Charlton Heston notes that the fight scene between himself and Gregory Peck was intended by William Wyler to convey the futility of violence that comes from the vice of pride we all observe in human nature. In his autobiography, Heston comments:



*“We worked through it doggedly, blow by blow in the stifling August heat of the prairie for two endless days. At one point, Willy moved the camera up on a ridge two hundred yards away. I thought I must be hallucinating; I knew enough about lenses by then to see we’d be the size of ants on the screen. This was Willy’s point, of course—the insignificance of two tiny figure struggling in the dust of this vast land. In the end, there was no winner.”*

## Three Elements of the Common Good in a Community and a Society

*The Big Country* portrays the essential link between personal virtue practiced by individuals and the civic virtue required for the common good of a community in civil society.

Three elements commonly associated with achievement of the common good are seen in the film's events. The first element is the formation of conscience and growth of the individual person in civic virtue. The second element is the gathering of enough individuals in the community committed to sacrificing for the sake of the common good. The third element is the strength, resolve, and determination of citizens to maintain over time the common good with justice, peace and stability in their community.

### The First Element - Formation of Conscience and Growth in Civic Virtue

Steve Leech and the other men have always followed the Major's orders without question, but the courageous act of Jim McKay, in entering Blanco Canyon to rescue Julie, allows Steve to see the Major's true character and finally stand up to him.



Steve Leech: *"Suppose he's ridin' outta there with her right now and we start a lot of shootin'? I'd walk into hell for you Major, you know that. There's not much you could ask that I wouldn't try to do... I just don't hold with you on this. I just can't do it, Major. I can't."* *"you call me whatever you want but I'm not beatin' up anymore men for you... I'm not runnin' off anymore cattle or shootin' anymore Hannelsseys for you. You ride on in there if you want to. I'm finished."*

Steve's example in turn affects the rest of the men. Ultimately, Steve and the men do follow the Major, but only for the sake of loyalty; they do not support his decision. Terrill has lost both the authority over and respect of his men.

The worldview of Major Terrill and his ruthless use of power, which he disguises as 'law and order,' are clear from the beginning of the film. Jim has a moral responsibility to challenge the Major's beliefs and unjust actions.



Handout: *The Big Country* (2)

Early in the film Jim explains to the Major that his riding on the Hannasseys is not a matter of honor or of protection of the innocent; it is a matter of pure aggression. “*Major, you’re riding on the Hannasseys for reasons of your own. Not because of anything that happened to me.*” At one point in the story Jim says to Pat, “*I’m not going to go on living in the middle of a civil war.*” With this comment, Gregory Peck’s character is speaking the truth that the audience knows as well; it is not possible to live a good life in a community plagued with constant conflict.



*How do Julie and Pat differ in their awareness of and willingness to serve the common good?*

Pat looks at everything with her own entitlement and self-interest while Julie is mindful of the legacy that her grandfather, Clen Maragon, has left her with the stewardship of the Big Muddy

**The Second Element - The gathering of enough individuals in the community committed to accepting moral responsibility and sacrificing for the sake of the common good.**



Rufus Hannassey sees through the Major and challenges him in a high point of the film. Unfortunately, he cannot see in his own character what he sees so clearly in the Major.

The case of Rufus Hannassey is more tragic than the Major’s. Once his son Buck dies, Rufus takes to heart the truths that Jim McKay has spoken: the violence that has taken lives and destroyed the peace is nothing more meaningful than a “*personal feud between two selfish, ruthless, vicious old men.*”

Rufus sees that what Jim has said is true and he goes to confront Major Terrill in a last fight.



**The Third Element - The strength and determination of ordinary citizens to work for the common good must be maintained in a free society.**



When Julie Maragon's grandfather owned the Big Muddy, both the Terrill and Hannassey clans had access to all the water they needed for their cattle. The film's events make clear that Julie's grandfather had not only ownership of the Big Muddy, but the moral authority as well, to maintain the peace between the two factions.

Jim McKay resolves to buy the Big Muddy from Julie to not only work it for himself but also to work for the common good of the community.

Major Terrill and Rufus Hannassey, each in their own way, disrupt the efforts of Jim and Julie to bring peace and order to the community. Clearly the task of defending and maintaining the common good must continue on after the deaths of these two men.



Scenes in *The Big Country* give evidence that even if events bring peace for a time, engaged citizens must continue the struggle to maintain the common good over time and in every season.



## Classic Westerns Depict the Civic Virtues Necessary to Sustain Political Communities

In these classic westerns, true friendship, care for the common good and like-mindedness are seen as civic virtues. In *Shane*, group decisions to defend what is at stake in the community take place at a funeral; *The Big Country* is a study in the dangers of group identity politics. Each western depicts how like-mindedness is needed to carry the burden of the common good in the story. The chart below outlines the deficiency when citizens give up on civic virtue and the excesses when the common good is subordinated to self-interest.



The civic virtue of Like-Mindedness comes alive in our shared love of the good. In every time and place we are called to come together and grapple with the prudent actions required to sustain our free society. A similar virtue narrative for like-mindedness in defense of the common good is seen in *High Noon*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* and *3:10 to Yuma*. The tragedy in *High Noon* is Gary Cooper's Marshall failing to convince any citizens to defend the town. It all comes to a head in the scene at the Church. The arguments for utility and transaction win over law and order. In *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*, there are three citizens joining in like-mindedness: the warrior hero, the statesman, and the honest reporter. Then finally, in *3:10 to Yuma*, the antagonist begins to realize the tremendous importance of the family and his lost opportunity to have one of his own.



## Unit 3: The Human Conscience Navigates the Mysteries of Good and Evil

### *On The Waterfront: The Awakening of Conscience*

Film critics agree that *On the Waterfront* is screen director Elia Kazan's masterpiece. This is the film Elia Kazan said he wanted to make all his life. A great film must have three essential ingredients: the vision of the director, the talent of the screenwriter and the outstanding performances of the actors who bring the film to life. *On the Waterfront* has all three of these ingredients and shows a great truth deeply relevant in our world today:

#### *Major Theme of On the Waterfront*

*For a community or civil society to survive, there must be a sufficient number of engaged and dedicated citizens who willingly make sacrifices for the sake of the common good.*

#### Film Facts

**Year:** 1954

**Starring:** Marlon Brando, Eva Marie Saint, Karl Malden, Lee J. Cobb

**Director:** Elia Kazan **Screenwriter:**

Budd Schulberg **Viewing Time:** 108

Minutes



#### **Academy Awards:**

- Best Actor in a Leading Role, Marlon Brando
- Best Actress in a Supporting Role, Eva Marie Saint
- Best Art Direction-Set Decoration, Black-and-White, Richard Day
- Best Cinematography, Black-and-White, Boris Kaufman
- Best Director, Elia Kazan
- Best Film Editing, Gene Milford
- Best Picture, Sam Spiegel
- Best Writing, Story and Screenplay, Budd Schulberg

## Film History

Elia Kazan describes how both he and screenwriter Budd Schulberg saw the great dramatic potential in this story of corruption on the New York waterfront. In 1948, *The New York Sun* sent its star reporter, Malcolm Johnson, to investigate a routine waterfront murder. In a series of articles that caught national attention, Johnson did what no one before had been willing to do. He wrote about the culture of extortion, graft and murder that permeated life on the New York and New Jersey waterfronts. He was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his investigative reporting. The Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor was set up in August 1953.



Screenwriter Budd Schulberg comments, “*I had taken a rather unorthodox approach to the writing of the screenplay, applying not a month or two, but years of my life to absorbing everything I could about the New York waterfront*”. Schulberg interviewed union leaders and priests from New York’s Hell’s Kitchen. He modeled his character of Father Barry, played by Karl Malden, on Father John Corridan, known as the ‘waterfront priest.’

Kazan filmed *On the Waterfront* in only 36 days. It was shot in various places in Hoboken, New Jersey. The docks, bars, alleyways, the rooftop where Joey’s pigeons were kept, and the cold, all brought a sense of realism to the film. To add to the film’s authenticity some of the men who played Johnny Friendly’s goons were former professional heavyweight boxers. Real longshoremen played themselves as extras.



## Reflections on Conscience and the Common Good

*“Public virtue cannot exist in a nation without private virtue, and public virtue is the only foundation of republics” – John Adams*

*On The Waterfront* portrays the link between the formation of conscience and development of care for the common good of a community and society. Three elements associated with persons serving the common good are seen in the film’s events. The first element is the development of a person’s conscience to engage in action for the common good. This element is seen as Terry Malloy recognizes that he must testify before the Crime Commission. This action is followed by another moral decision. Terry demands his rights as a longshoreman to work on the docks. The second element is essential: the gathering of enough individuals committed to changing their community for the good and the willingness of these individuals to make sacrifices for that good. The third element is the resolve and determination of enough individuals who live in the community to work together to maintain civil peace and stability over time.

**The First Element** – *the formation of conscience and growth of the person in civic virtue*



Terry changes from what he himself would call a “mug” into a more virtuous person who is capable of Barry tells Terry that before he can do anything else, he has to tell Edie the truth that he was involved in the death of her brother Joey. Eva Marie Saint won an Oscar for her incredible portrayal of Edie.

Father Barry says, *“I’m not asking you to do anything. It’s your own conscience that’s got to do the asking.”* Terry responds, *“Conscience, that stuff can drive you nuts,”* but Terry accepts the challenge and thanks Father Barry.



### **The Second Element**

*Gathering enough individuals committed to changing their community for the good and the willingness to make sacrifices for the good of the community or society as a whole.*

In contrasting scenes, director Kazan shows the silent men passively witnessing the violence against Father Barry. These same men – inspired by Terry’s courage – become engaged citizens standing up to Johnny Friendly.

### **The Third Element**

*The resolve and determination of enough individuals to maintain peace and stability over time in their community*

This third element requires the practice of civic virtue as a habit of the heart and not just an emotional response to a crisis. Terry sees that the community and the longshoremen’s union cannot survive in peace and stability until Johnny Friendly is completely defeated. **The triumph of the common good is seen as the longshoremen resolutely enter the ship to go to work.**



## *Key Largo: A Study in Moral Courage*

### Film Facts

**Year:** 1948

**Starring:** Humphrey Bogart, Edward G. Robinson, Lauren Bacall, Claire Trevor, Lionel Barrymore

**Director:** John Huston

**Screenwriters:** Richard Brooks, John Huston

**Viewing Time:** 100 Minutes

**Setting:** Key West, Florida Keys, Florida (filmed at Warner Bros Studio)

**Academy Award:** Best Actress in a Supporting Role, Claire Trevor



Claire Trevor received the 1949 Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her dramatic portrayal of the character Gaye Dawn. Claire Trevor, a veteran actress who started her film career in the 1930's, very much wanted the part of Gaye Dawn. She asked Humphrey Bogart, her old friend and costar from *Dead End*, to ask Warner Bros. studio head, Jack Warner, if she could have it.

Claire was nervous about the singing she would have to do in her big scene. She repeatedly asked director Huston for a chance to rehearse it. Huston would say there was "plenty of time." One day after lunch, he told her to get into her costume; he'd decided to shoot the scene. He stood her in the middle of the room, an off-screen pianist played one note, and he told her "Go." "I was supposed to be embarrassed," she said. "I thought the day would never end. That was torture. But that's what got the effect."

After she shot the scene, one of the actors playing Rocco's henchmen turned to another and whispered, "She's going to get an Academy Award for this." And she did.

## Film History

Consider how the collaborative art in classic film storytelling underscores the realities of our social natures. John Huston underscored collaboration as fundamental, commenting:

*“I believe filmmaking to be a collaborative medium. Rather than being a tyrant, I believe in getting ideas from as many sources as possible.”*



Director John Huston’s interest in the exploration of the psychopathic personality of his villains is evident in *Key Largo*, with the performance of Edward G. Robinson as the depression era gangster, Johnny Rocco.

Huston uses Bogart’s character to probe the depths of this sociopathic character. Throughout the film these two men are each trying to take down the other. They test one another by getting into their enemy’s mind to search for a weakness.

Rocco’s tough-guy façade falls down when the hurricane’s force picks up power. Frank sees him for the coward that he is and taunts Rocco, saying: *“You don’t like it, do you Rocco, the storm? Show it your gun, why don’t you? If it doesn’t stop, shoot it.”*



Rocco’s psychopathic state of mind comes out through his self-obsessed attitude and his total disregard for the lives of others. He has no hesitation in harassing a woman who despises him, while he treats the only woman who will put up with him with complete contempt.

H

## Humphrey Bogart's Frank McCloud: Profile in Moral Courage

Bogart's character Frank had been staying outside the "line of fire" but when he sees Gaye in a state of deep despair, he knows he must do something to oppose the evil that has come upon them. To overcome Rocco, Frank must first find his own personal humanity, which he does by giving Gaye the drink. He must learn to defend the good again before he can fight the evil.

Nora sees that there is more to Frank than his cynical words. She encourages him to see that there are truths worth fighting. She says: "*A cause is not lost as long as someone is willing to go on fighting.*"

**Even though Frank responds, "I'm not that someone," he knows in his heart he is.**

In speaking with the sheriff, Rocco implicates the Osceola brothers in the death of Sawyer. The turning point for Frank comes when he learns that the Osceola brothers have been killed as a result of this conversation. As Frank contemplates the horror of this, he knows that he must act. He sees clearly that one Johnny Rocco more or less *does* have an effect on the world.

Frank realizes that he must be the one to face Rocco and that he cannot run as Nora and Gaye urge him to do. He explains the basis for his moral decisions:

*"When your head says one thing and your whole life says another, your head always loses."*

Humphrey Bogart's screen persona is remembered as a man who is reluctant to face up to the reality of evil in human life. His characters show the audience the face of cynicism and indifference but in the crucial moments of moral choice, Bogart comes through every time. Mapping out the geography of good and evil can never be avoided in life. Bogart's character realizes he can no longer distance himself from human tragedy. Self-knowledge builds moral courage.

*The 18<sup>th</sup> century British statesman Edmund Burke famously said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Moral courage is the action in the human soul that gives the person the strength to face life on the dark side. Moral courage is the engagement of the human soul in the care and defense of the common good in community.*





## ***Bad Day at Black Rock: A study of the human condition in a desert town***

A western with a contemporary twist: a one- armed World War II veteran confronts a town with a guilty past. Spencer Tracy is the ‘good guy’ who uses all his wits to probe the psyche of his chief adversary (brilliantly played by Robert Ryan) to uncover a town’s dark secret. John Sturges’ modern-day western shows the good and bad in human nature and the truth that human beings have free will to make moral choices.

### **Film Facts**

**Year:** 1955

**Starring:** Spencer Tracy, Robert Ryan, Ernest Borgnine, Walter Brennan, Lee Marvin, Anne Francis, John Ericson, Dean Jagger

**Director:** John Sturges

**Screenwriter:** Millard Kaufman (screenplay), Don McGuire (adaptation) Howard Breslin (story)

**Viewing Time:** 81 Minutes

**Setting:** (filmed at Alabama Hills, Lone Pine, California) **Production**

**Company:** Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) **Academy Award**

### **Nominations**

- Best Actor in a Leading Role, Spencer Tracy
- Best Director, John Sturges
- Best Writing, Screenplay; Millard Kaufman



## Film History

*Bad Day at Black Rock* is unique in the westerns of the postwar period as the story is set in 1945. The hero arrives by train at a whistle-stop town. The film is a combination of the *western* and *thriller* genres. The *western* elements are the strongest with the hero, John J. Macreedy (Spencer Tracy), playing the lone individual coming into the community as an outsider. Macreedy tells the train conductor, “*I’ll only be here twenty-four hours.*” The train conductor responds, “*In a place like this, it could be a lifetime.*”



“*I want to go to a place called Adobe Flat.*” With these words, John Macreedy unknowingly embarks on a dangerous path. As he sizes up the men who are hostile to him and engages them in probing dialogue, he gradually uncovers the truth of what has happened in Black Rock. One by one, Macreedy forces each man to face his guilty past. Each one has either been involved in the murder of the Japanese farmer, Komoko, or ignored the injustice.

*Bad Day at Black Rock* dramatizes the perennial struggle: Bringing justice and truth together

The men of the town know that a great injustice has been done, and they know that they are guilty one way or the other. They know the injustice and they also know the truth. Macreedy reveals the truth about himself to Doc and Pete. Macreedy discloses that his life was “washed up” until he was threatened by Smith and had to defend it. He awakens Pete’s conscience, telling him it is not enough to have an unpleasant memory or just feel guilty. He forces Pete into self-examination, saying, “*I suppose four years from now you’ll be sitting around here telling people you haven’t forgotten me either.*” Macreedy’s demands for the truth are so compelling that Doc begins to tell the story. When Pete hears Doc’s words, he realizes that he will be morally responsible for the death of Macreedy if he fails to act.

## Civic Friendship, Solidarity and the Common Good in *Bad Day at Black Rock*

*Public virtue cannot exist in a nation without private virtue, and public virtue is the only foundation of republics – John Adams*

*“I was all washed-up when I got off that train. I had one last duty to perform before I resigned from the human race.”* Macreedy tells Doc and Pete about the deep gratitude that he has for Komoko’s son who saved his life. In World War II battles in Italy. Gratitude brought him to Black Rock and his desire for justice keeps him there. Spencer Tracey’s character depicts essential civic virtues that sustain truth and justice in a free society.



### A close observer of human nature

Macreedy sees people and situations for what they are and he tells it like it is. He has the ability to penetrate beneath the surface of people’s defenses. He confronts Pete’s sister, Liz saying: *“It seems to me that there aren’t many towns like this in America. But one town like it is enough. And because I think something kind of bad happened here... The rule of law has left here.”*

### Keeping cool under fire

Everybody asks Macreedy why he is in Black Rock, but he only gives the people as much information as he gets from them. Smith tries to intimidate and taunt him, but Macreedy turns the tables on him and provokes him into revealing his hatred of Komoko. Meanwhile Macreedy keeps his cool.



### Giving voice to the claims of justice

*“You’re in trouble. Whatever happens, you’re sunk... You killed Komoko, Smith. Sooner or later, you’re gonna go up for it. Not because you killed him, because in a town like this you can get away with it. But because you didn’t have the guts to do it alone.”*

Macreeedy explains to Doc and Pete why he is in Black Rock: *“This Komoko boy died trying to save my life. They gave him a medal. I came here to give it to his old man. I figured the least I could do was give him one day out of my life.”*

### Connecting with others through honest conversation



Macreeedy: *I was bewildered when I got here. Full of self-pity. But your friend Smith tried to kill me... I guess I was just looking for some place to get lost. Because I was afraid I couldn't function any longer. Luckily your friend Smith changed my mind.*

### The awakening of conscience to moral responsibility

Doc: *Four years ago, something terrible happened here. We did nothing about it, nothing. The whole town fell into a sort of settled melancholy and all the people in it closed their eyes, and held their tongues, and failed the test with a whimper. And now something terrible's going to happen again -- and in a way we're lucky, because we've been given a second chance.*



### Moral truth in action

Pete: *Hello, Liz. Pete. Listen, I'm getting Macreeedy out of town. I would call the police, but all the outside lines are cut. Well, let them try. I might as well be dead. Yeah, I told him everything. Never mind about that. I'm asking you because I need your help. You'd be saving two lives, Liz, Macreeedy's and mine, if that means anything to you.*



Handout: Bad Day at Black Rock (3)

**Walter Brennan’s Doc Makes His Case for Decisive Moral Action.**

Doc: *Four years ago something terrible happened here. We did nothing about it, nothing. The whole town fell into a sort of settled melancholy and all the people in it closed their eyes, and held their tongues, and failed the test with a whimper. And now something terrible is going to happen again -- and in a way we're lucky, because we've been given a second chance.*



**The Mystery of Loss and Gain in a Civil Crisis**

The Doctor asks Macreedy if the town of Black Rock can have the Medal of Honor meant for Komoko’s son.



Doc: [about the medal] *Maybe we need it. It would give us something to build on. This town's wrecked, just as though it was bombed out. Maybe it can come back.*

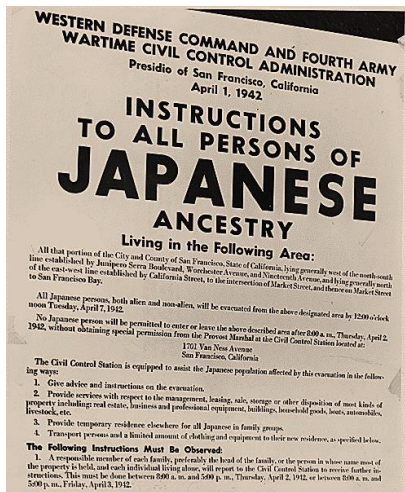
Macreedy: *Some towns do and some towns don't. It depends on the people.*

Doc: *That medal would help.*

**Putting the Events Depicted in *Bad Day at Black Rock* in Historic Perspective**

In every age a free society must confront the realities of our flawed human nature. In 1942, two months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt issued an executive order calling for the internment of all persons of Japanese ancestry. The last internment camp closed in 1945.

The weight of opinion in hindsight is predictably strongly against this unjust measure. At the time however, the bombing of Pearl Harbor was such a horrifying event and the nation’s emotions were in turmoil. The wrong judgement was made to take away the freedom of Japanese Americans



## Unit 4: Culture as the Common Way of Life of a People

# MOVIE CLASSICS AND THE PRIMACY OF CULTURE IN HUMAN LIFE



*"Every art and every inquiry,  
and similarly every action and  
pursuit, is thought to aim at  
some good; and for this reason,  
the good has rightly been  
declared to be that at which all  
things aim."*

-Aristotle, Nichomichean Ethics



With the classics in this unit, we can understand culture more fully as *the common way of life of a people*. We witness how a durable human world is sustained through human beings acting as free agents - working with each other in aiming for the goods of life they long for and cherish. Studying classic films in a cultural framework, students can participate in classical moral inquiry. The characters in the films give witness across the generations: how to confront the toxic cultural dominance of the sovereign and autonomous self. Classic cinema storytelling dramatizes the truth that we are social by nature, that we can know reality, and that we can work together for the good of our community and society.

Political theorists and philosophers in ancient times and today will disagree on the perennial questions of whether human beings have a human nature, whether human beings can know reality and whether or not we have Free Will. In 20th century philosopher Mortimer Adler's *Six Great Ideas*, perennial ideas about the meaning and purpose of life are examined. On a widely acclaimed PBS broadcast in 1981, Mortimer Adler engaged with fellow intellectuals in reflecting and debating on these ideas - ***truth, goodness, beauty, justice, freedom, and equality***. All of the films in our curriculum unfold these ideas - but in a special way the films in this unit carry in their characters and themes a deep experience of culture as the common way of life of a people living out these six great ideas.

**Mortimer  
J. Adler**

**Six  
Great  
Ideas**

The basis for the PBS television series  
The Christian Science Monitor acclaimed as "overflowing  
with the excitement of intellectual revelation, the dynamics  
of discovery, the thrill of insight."



Even in a mental institution, *friendship turns out to be an essential part of life* so emphasized by Aristotle and Cicero long ago. As Olivia de Havilland's character recovers her sanity, she chooses to care for and befriend an inmate of the asylum far worse off than she is. Unless human beings have free will, true friendship is impossible. If there is no free will, we live in a deterministic and fatalistic universe.



# *A Raisin in the Sun*

## Film Facts

**Year:** 1961

**Starring:** Sidney Poitier, Claudia McNeil, Ruby Dee, Diana Sands

**Director:** Daniel Petrie

**Screenwriter:** Lorraine Hansberry (play and screenplay)

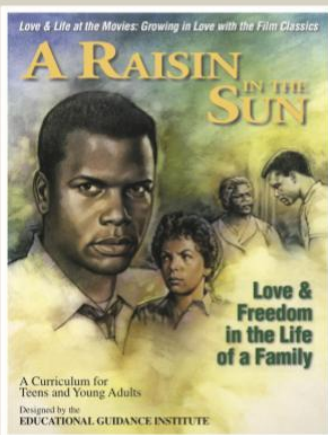
**Viewing Time:** 128 minutes

**Setting:** Chicago, Illinois

The stage version of *A Raisin in the Sun* made history on Broadway in 1959. As the reviewers noted, the largely white audience rose to its feet in a spontaneous standing ovation on the opening night. This depiction of a 1950s family facing racism and discrimination in Chicago presents characters who come together to model to the audience what it means to be a family.



*A Raisin in the Sun: The gift of Moral Energy for the early civil rights movement*

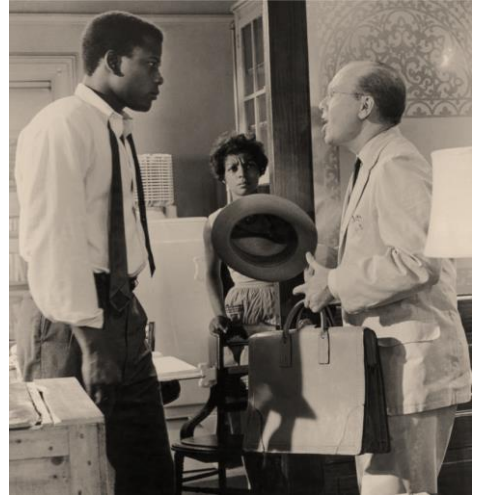




## Film History

Lorraine Hansberry grew up on the South Side of Chicago where her father was a successful real estate broker, and her mother was a schoolteacher. In 1938, when Lorraine was eight, her father moved the family to a white neighborhood, knowing that there were “restrictive covenants” used at the time to keep minorities out of certain neighborhoods.

Even though they were subjected to attacks, the family refused to move until a court ordered them to do so. The case of *Hansberry v. Lee* reached the Supreme Court, ruling restrictive covenants illegal. Lorraine Hansberry’s play made it to Broadway in 1959, and she became the youngest person and the first African American playwright to win the New York Drama Critics Circle Award.



### Ruby Bridges and Dr. Robert Coles

Pulitzer Prize-winning psychiatrist and author, Robert Coles, wrote about his use of films such as *A Raisin in the Sun* and *To Kill A Mockingbird* in his landmark study of *The Moral Life of Children*. Coles interviewed black and white children on their reactions to the films and the psychological issues the films raised. One of the children, a black child named Ruby Bridges, was among the first to be involved in the integration of an all-white school in New Orleans. She had to be escorted to school by federal marshals due to the hostility of the white people, who verbally abused her as she made her way into the school.




Ruby told Dr. Coles that she had seen *A Raisin in the Sun*, and she believed that if white people could see it, “*they might stop coming out to bother us... The people in the movies would work on them, and maybe they’d listen.*”

***A Raisin in the Sun* on Broadway in 1959:** *A Raisin in the Sun* is unique in representing a brief era in our cultural history when Lorraine Hansberry’s play was a unifying cultural and moral force. The story grapples with *what it means to be in a family as it delves deeply into the power of human moral choice*. In our study of culture as “the common way of life of a people” the characters in *A Raisin in the Sun* take us to universal truths about human nature as seen in poetic storytelling. We take this journey in the last years of the Golden Age of Hollywood -. just as the early civil rights movement was already underway.

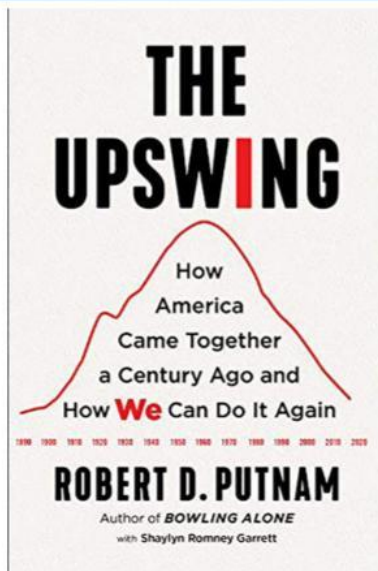
## *A Raisin in the Sun* in the Mysterious Flow of Culture and History

**My Personal Account of Martin Luther King and the Early Civil Rights Movement at Howard University - March, 1960 - by Onalee McGraw**

*In 1960, as an exchange student at Howard, I was in Rankin Chapel that day in March when Martin Luther King urged us to be in solidarity with students at Fisk University. King told us of the lunch counter sit-ins taking place in Nashville and other southern cities and called on Howard students to stand with their brothers and sisters at Fisk. Two days later, some students chartered a small bus and about 15 of us gathered for an hour in front of the Eisenhower White House. Returning to Whittier my senior year, *A Raisin in the Sun* was moving hearts in theaters all over the country.*



## THE MYSTERIOUS FLOW OF CULTURAL VALUES



At the time of *The Upswing's* peak (early 1960s), the whole idea that there must be justice and fair play for everyone was in the air of the culture. For many youth of that time, there was an understanding that each person was called to do as much as they could for human dignity.

## *It's a Wonderful Life* and the Idea of a Shared Common Home

**Contrasting Bedford Falls & Pottersville.** The Welsh word *Hiraeth* carries the mysterious meaning of longing for some “thing” that is irretrievably lost or may never be experienced. The 1946 cultural era of postwar America will never be accessible again in this world, but this Frank Capra film compellingly dramatizes the interwoven personal and public threads of life that were woven together at the intersection of culture and community in 1946 America.



With characters like Mary Hatch-Bailey, Mr. Gower, Ernie the taxi driver, Ma Bailey and Nick the bartender we gain deeper knowledge of the classical anthropology. One that was deconstructed by postmodern French philosophers like John Paul Sartre who misled generations with the claim that *there is no human nature and we each invent ourselves*. Which is more compelling to refute Sartre? Abstract analysis or a conversation about the characters in Bedford Falls and what happens to these characters when they find themselves in Pottersville.

Clarence brings the lesson home:

***"Strange, isn't it? Each man's life touches so many other lives, and when he isn't around, he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?"***



*The people who live in Bedford Falls are a part of something greater than themselves, and any community that is going to survive **must have enough people living there to know this is the case.** Strong communities do not just happen. In Capra's vision of genuine community, *sacrifices* have to be made, *personal time* must be invested, and *sustained effort* put into forming friendships.*

## Friendship, Good Will, and Affection: *The Best Years of Our Lives*

The great Roman statesman, Marcus Tullius Cicero, in his classic work *On Friendship*, noted that the *joining of mutual goodwill and affection were the two essential elements of true friendship*. This film depicts the timeless truth: true friendships triumph over the relationships of utility and pleasure. In today's world, it may be difficult to imagine what it was like - whether on the warfront or the home front - at the end of World War II. The nation and the world were at war from 1941 with the bombing of Pearl Harbor to the surrender of Japan in June of 1945. William Wyler's Oscar-winning masterpiece captured the imagination of a nation longing for peace and stability. The true meaning of friendship is the primary theme.

### Film Facts

**Year:** 1946

**Featuring:** Dana Andrews, Teresa Wright, Frederic March, Myrna Loy, and Virginia Mayo

**Director:** William Wyler

**Viewing Time:** 172 Minutes

#### Academy Awards

- Best Picture
- Best Actor in a Leading Role , Fredric March
- Best Actor in a Supporting Role, Harold Russell
- Best Director, William Wyler
- Best Writing, Screenplay, Robert E. Sherwood
- Best Film Editing, Daniel Mandell
- Best Music, Scoring of a Dramatic or Comedy Picture, Hugo Friedhofer

#### Academy Award Nomination

- Best Sound Recording, Gordon Sawyer



### Film History

William Wyler had flown combat missions over Europe and worked hard to get accurate depictions in the film of the combat veterans he had encountered. Wyler sought out Harold Russell, a non-actor, to take on the exacting role of Homer Parrish. The disabled World War II veteran Harold Russell was awarded an Honorary Oscar for “bringing hope and courage to his fellow veterans” through his role as Homer.”



## The Interwoven Threads of Culture, History, and Relationships in *The Best Years of Our Lives*: Exploring the Meaning of True Friendship



By centering the story around Butch's restaurant, Wyler captures the cultural experience of community and allows for the audience to participate in that experience with the characters. Here we see one of the greatest composers of the Great American Songbook, Hoagy Carmichael, playing the character of Homer's Uncle Butch. Throughout the film, Uncle Butch serves as Homer's supportive guide at every turn. Each homecoming scene for the three returning servicemen focuses the attention of the audience on the IDEA of a common home. Homer comes home first, then Al, and finally Fred. Homer has to confront his handicap in an awkward reunion with his family and the family of his sweetheart, Wilma. Al is able to come home to his family in one of the most famous scenes in classic Hollywood history. This was based on William Wyler's own homecoming. Finally, Fred has to find out from his family that his wife, Marie, has left and gone to an apartment.



After the war, the combat aircraft featured in the film were being disassembled for reuse as scrap material. The scene with Dana Andrews as Fred Derry walking among aircraft ruins was filmed at the Ontario Army Airfield in Ontario, California. The former training facility had been converted into a scrap yard, housing nearly 2,000 former combat aircraft in various states of disassembly and reclamation. Wyler and cinematographer Gregg Toland used innovative camera techniques to help the audience capture the feelings and interior state of mind of Dana Andrews' character.



**Understanding how place, time, ideas and human nature unite in culture over time**

Reflecting on community and culture in *The Best Years of Our Lives*  
& Mr. Gower and George in *It's a Wonderful Life*

William Wyler presents a mosaic of American life, using his characters to illuminate the meaning of culture and community in the post-war year of 1946. Wyler's genius was to take each scene, and with the help of his photographer, Greg Toland, make it an essential part of the whole. *The Best Years of Our Lives* presents the cultural contours of how Americans lived in time, place, and ideas about life and human nature – in their common lives together as a people. These two scenes show contrasting civil life: standing up *for* a fellow soldier after the war and standing up *against* false ideologies.



It is good for the students of today to see the stories of the great classic films which tell their tales with a realistic mix of supporting and lead players. The philosophers say we are either blobs in a materialistic universe or, in the tradition of the postmodernists, we each create ourselves. These movies, however, fight those narratives and tell the truth about human nature. Wyler shows that all along the way, we have the free will to make crucial, moral choices.

There are so many threads within the fabric of *It's a Wonderful Life*, interwoven to dramatize great truth about human experience. Capra was able to use the contrast between Bedford Falls and Pottersville to highlight the world of family, neighborhood, and town.



# *A Tale of Two Cities*

This 1935 film version of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* is considered by many film critics to be the very best of all. The good reason for this critical judgment is the performance of Ronald Colman as Sydney Carton. Colman's subtle, moving portrait of the British lawyer who sacrifices his life for the woman he loves is unforgettable and compelling.

## Film Facts

**Year:** 1935

**Starring:** Ronald Colman, Elizabeth Allen

**Director:** Jack Conway

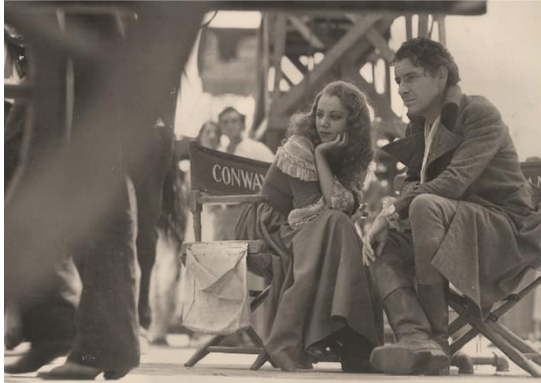
**Viewing Time:** 123 minutes

**Setting:** London and Paris, before and during the French Revolution



Students can compare the characters of Miss Pross and Madame De Farge, considering the necessity of acting against the threat of evil. Aristotle's idea of the mean helps one to explore the context of the characters and the virtue narrative he proposes.

## Film History



*A Tale of Two Cities* was the last film David O. Selznick produced at MGM before becoming an independent producer. Two years later, Selznick would make movie history with *Gone with the Wind* at his own studio.

The film is transferred from the novel to the screen with two great dramatic elements intact. First, we see the sweeping images of Paris and London before and during the French Revolution. Second, we see intimate portraits of characters caught up in the historic conflict making life and death moral choices. A timeless truth is conveyed: Wherever we human beings find ourselves, in history and in life, we are called by our very nature to be morally responsible to each other. Unlike many contemporary films where the metaphysical foundations of the world are often left up in the air, the classic realism of *A Tale of Two Cities* proclaims we live in a world that has a moral order.

### Ronald Colman's Sidney Carton



Sidney Carton's character develops through the film from a cynical and selfish person to a hero giving up his life for those he loves.

At the beginning of the story, Sidney is seen as clever and able to use his skills to get his own way. What happens that causes his character to change and for Sidney to grow in virtue? What events lead up to Sidney's decision to give his life in place of Charles Darnay?



*"It is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done. It is a far, far better rest that I go than I have ever known."*





Reflecting on the French and American Revolutions: Hamilton's Memorandum to Washington

*"...there is in nature a common principle of the just and unjust that all people in some way discern, even if they have no association or commerce with each other.*

-Aristotle

*"What is right and true is also eternal and does not begin or end with written statutes...in the very definition of the term 'law' there inheres the idea and principle of choosing what is just and true."*

-Cicero

The above quotes from Aristotle and Cicero reflect the classical line of thought that can be traced in the history of political theory from Socrates onward.

In his memorandum of May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1793 to President Washington, Hamilton reflects this classical understanding that the American Revolution reflected a fundamentally different anthropology from the French Revolution. This may not have been exactly apparent at the beginning of the revolution in France, but it was certainly revealed over time as a dark and inhumane series of events that shocked the world.

Hamilton says in part that he does not agree with those who considered the two revolutions to be comparable. He notes that the leaders of the revolution in France are "notorious prompters of those bloody scenes, [who] reign triumphantly in the Convention and take a conspicuous part in its measures...When I perceive passion, tumult, and violence, usurping these seats where reason and cool deliberation ought to preside –I acknowledge that I am glad to believe there is no real resemblance between what was the cause of America and what is the cause of France –that the difference is no less great than that between Liberty and Licentiousness."

*"It was the best of times; it was the worst of times..."*



## ***Judgment at Nuremberg* – Understanding the Realities of Good and Evil in a broken world**

We can think of how the thought and political theory came to support a philosophy such as Nazi Germany. *Judgement at Nuremberg* is a 3-hour film that teachers and facilitators will curate with the wider context of this historic era. . It is best taught to students as part of a course of study that crosses the disciplines of history, political science, social psychology ethics, sociology and film history. *Judgement at Nuremberg* provokes today’s students the opportunity for deep inquiry . In every season of political and cultural life, it is the job of eighty percent of us to figure it out that the most important thing in our civil life together is to understand that we share a common humanity. Eighty percent of us who can take in the hard lessons of human nature in general, and the bitter lessons of Nazi atrocities in particular, can help each other to overcome the polarization that threatens our country. Abby Mann’s script takes us into a deep dive - exploring human nature, with screen legends Spencer Tracy, Judy Garland, Montgomery Clift , Burt Lancaster and the Oscar winning heralded performance of Maximilian Shell . Shell’s Oscar is an inspiring reminder that aesthetic excellence was the prevailing standard for Academy Awards in 1962.

### **Film Facts**

**Year:** 1961

**Starring:** Spencer Tracy, Burt Lancaster, Richard Widmark, Marlene Dietrich, Maximilian Schell, Judy Garland, Montgomery Clift, William Shatner, Werner Klemperer

**Director:** Stanley Kramer

**Screenwriter:** Abby Mann

**Viewing Time:** 178 minutes

**Academy Awards:** 11 nominations and 2 awards, Best Actor in Leading Role (Maximilian Schell) and Best Screenplay (Abby Mann)

### **Film History**

*Judgement at Nuremberg* inspires our moral imagination to confront deep existential questions of moral choice and the responsibility human beings by the social and moral nature bear towards one another. The screenplay by Abby Mann allows the drama to present these existential truths about human nature. Every scene asks the same fundamental question: *are we prepared to uphold justice and the common good in times of crisis?*



## *Judgment at Nuremberg* and Dr. Heinrich Rommen



The picture to the left depicts young Nazi-resistance fighter Sophie Scholl. Realizing the real nature of Hitler's regime, Sophie resolved to stand up against it. Sophie and her brother Hans formed the White Rose movement and she is quoted as saying, "*Somebody, after all, had to make a start. What we wrote and said is also believed by many others. They just don't dare express themselves as we did.*" Eventually, Sophie and her brother were found out by the Nazi Regime and were executed on February 22nd, 1943.

*Judgment at Nuremberg* was an expanded version of a Playhouse 90 television production that aired in 1959. Abby Mann won the Academy Award for Best Writing. In the film's final scenes with Spencer Tracy, Abby Mann's screenplay captures the essential moral truths that were at stake in the Nuremberg War Trials.

*"There are those in our country today, too, who speak of the "protection" of the country. Of "survival". The answer to that is: survival as what? A country isn't a rock. And it isn't an extension of one's self. It's what it stands for, when standing for something is the most difficult! Before the people of the world - let it now be noted in our decision here that this is what we stand for: justice, truth... and the value of a single human being!"*

*-Judge Haywood played by Spencer Tracy*



## **Dr. Heinrich Rommen: Just War Seminar**

In his Just War seminar at Georgetown in 1962, Dr. Rommen introduced us to the idea of Classical Moral Inquiry with his own recollection of looking across the trench at a French soldier in World War I. They looked into each other's eyes and knew they could not fire. He escaped from the Gestapo in the late 30s.



The fundamental belief that every single human being has value and dignity captured in this stirring speech at the film's close, is in the arc of WWI and WWII's history. I was blessed to be a graduate student participating in the amazing Just War Seminar (1962) , taught at Georgetown University by the renowned political philosopher, Heinrich Rommen.

## “Nothing but” vs “Something More”

*Is life as we know it “nothing but” or is there “something more?”*

*Goodbye Mr. Chips (1939), The Snake Pit (1948), Roman Holiday (1953), & The 39 Steps (1935)*

Classic films made in the 30s, 40s, 50s, and early 60s carry the flow of life in the lives of people as individuals, as members of families, as persons who fall in love, and as persons who are interacting with one another in community and society. *Goodbye Mr Chips*, *The Snake Pit*, *Roman Holiday* and *The 39 Steps*, all carry the idea of culture as the common way of life of a people. This *idea* of place, time, and the people who are there, is captured by each film’s visual narrative. The collaborative aspect of classic moviemaking mirrors the nature of community that a healthy society ought to have to endure.



## Unit 5: “That’s Entertainment” - *the landscape of our human condition*

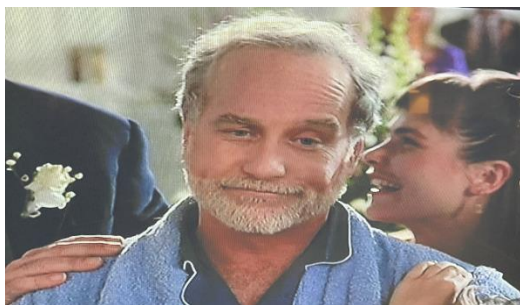
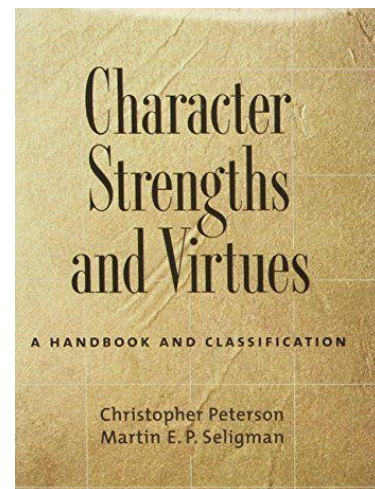
*Gratitude, friendship, humor and the five directors who voluntarily served in WWII*

Peterson and Seligman’s *Character Strengths and Virtues*: Invaluable resource for the eighty percent of us who long for greater unity and want to join together to rebuild the social capital true unity requires. For many years Martin Seligman and other social scientists over the years gathered together to build and sustain the widely recognized social science of positive psychology. The basic aim of this field of psychological study is to focus on the positive traits – in the title of Peterson and Seligman’s handbook, the Character Strengths and Virtues that mark, measure and sustain human flourishing.

***Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others” -Cicero***

Authors Peterson and Seligman have presented here the social science documentation for human traits and sensibilities such as, courage, justice, and transcendence. Highlighted are insights on gratitude, friendship, humor, and citizenship.

A person with a good sense of humor understands the human condition and is less susceptible to ideological reductions of who we are. As Neil Postman in *The End of Education* notes, ‘a sense of humor...is the greatest enemy of fanaticism.’



Consider the favorite of many movie fans, Richard Dreyfuss and Bill Murray in *What About Bob?* The psychologist, Dr. Leo Marvin, must come to terms with his patient who has brought out the worst in his character throughout the film. Now, as he recovers from mental illness himself, he accepts Bob into his family.

In this unit, we pull together the elements of transcendence identified by Peterson and Seligman: We start with the gratitude and friendship in the films of Jimmy Stewart, taking a look at one of his lesser-known films, the 1953 biopic, *Carbine Williams*. Jimmy Stewart’s entire life and career exemplifies the ethos of community and the ideals of engaged citizenship in a free society. We move on to examine the power of humor and end with a profile of the five directors who volunteered for and survived WWII: Frank Capra, George Stevens, William Wyler, John Ford and John Huston.

## *Carbine Williams*

The real Marshall “Carbine” Williams consulted with MGM and afterwards vouched for the film’s authenticity. It must have been something of a challenge for the MGM studio to create a credible screen biography of this unique and complex man. As the film shows, Williams had highly complex relationships with his father, his wife, and his son. Often the hardships he endured were rooted in his own temperament as a “rugged individualist” (as he is described by Warden Peoples at the beginning of the film). It is a tribute to the collaborative art of film-making—especially in the Golden Age—that the character of the real man is captured so successfully on screen.

### Film Facts: *Carbine Williams*

**Year:** 1952

**Starring:** James Stewart, Wendell Corey, Jean Hagen

**Director:** Richard Thorpe

**Screenwriter:** Art Cohn

**Viewing Time:** 91 Minutes



*Handout: Carbine Williams and Three Philosophies of Life*

*Carbine Williams and Three Philosophies of Life –  
Expressive Individualism, Fatalism, and Classic Realism: The Ideas are in the Images*

As the film unfolds, Marsh Williams carries such deep bitterness for his harsh prison sentence that he does not want to see or communicate with his wife and family. He changes from being an *Expressive Individualist* to a *Fatalist*. Williams considers himself a dead man. Then later, with the opportunity to use his natural gifts of invention, along with the trust and friendship he builds with the prison warden, Williams begins to look at the world as a *Classic Realist*. In this remarkable true story, Williams transitions from a convicted murderer to a renowned inventor reunited with his wife and son.

The three worldviews debated by philosophers over the centuries – Expressive Individualism, Fatalism and Classic Realism are dramatically in play in this remarkable story. As the film begins, we see Marsh Williams in the mode of a “rugged individualist” determined to make a living as a bootlegger, even though Prohibition has made bootlegging a federal crime.

These three very different philosophies of human nature— *Expressive Individualism*, *Fatalism*, and *Classic Realism*—have been debated since the time of Ancient Greece. *Carbine Williams* chronicles the true story of a man who lived out all three of these philosophies in one lifetime.



*“When the highest good is settled in philosophy, everything is settled...If the highest good is not known, the guide for living our lives cannot be known; and the result of this error is that people are not able to know where they should take refuge. However, after the ends of things are known, and when what is the ultimate good and ultimate evil is understood, a way of life is discovered.”*

**-Cicero**

Handout: Carbine Williams and Three Philosophies of Life (Continued)

*Expressive Individualism.* In this worldview one's own radical autonomy is the highest value. Reality is purely subjective and self-defined. Williams expresses this self-defining view when he tells his father he will not accept his terms: *"You keep the share and divide it up with the others. I don't want it."*



*Fatalism.* In this worldview human beings are driven by impersonal forces outside of their control. For the fatalist, free will is not a significant factor in life's arena. Holding this view of life Williams considers himself a dead man and does not want to communicate with his wife and his family.

*Classic Realism.* This philosophy of life affirms that reality exists and that we live in the real world with each other and share a common human nature. Classic Realism holds that human beings (even deeply flawed human beings like Carbine Williams) are social by nature and have the capacity to reason and make moral choices. This capacity for moral choice makes us accountable to one another. After deep suffering in prison, Williams changes from a flawed and bitter human being to a man of integrity.



Warden Peoples confronts Marsh Williams with the truth about how he is treating his wife and family: *"It's always what you want. Don't you think they've got rights, too?"*



The warden shows the enormous trust that he has in the character in Marsh Williams: *"If he escapes, I'll serve out his thirty-year term."*



Warden Peoples writes to Maggie:

*"I wonder if I have changed him as much as he has changed me...For the first time I believe that Marsh in his own way is helping himself out."*



## Humor and the Habits of the Heart

*Singin' in the Rain, Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House, The Court Jester & What About Bob?*

Genuine humor will always transcend time and place even as it tells a story of very specific times and places. In the Hollywood of the 20s of *Singin' in The Rain*, the medieval world of *The Court Jester*, Postwar America in *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House*, and the close out of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with *What About Bob?* We are participants with the characters in a common world. We are not merely observers being entertained.

### *Singin' in the Rain*

Gene Kelly, Debbie Reynolds and Donald O'Connor manage to save a Hollywood studio in the Hollywood transition to the talkies. Thanks is given to Adolph Green and Betty Comden the screenwriters who brought the story to life. Jean Hagen, as Lina Lamont, is also noted for her comic genius.



### *The Court Jester*

The medieval world comes in for fun here, especially the idea of monarchy, the real king is an infant. Danny Kaye comically presents an unlikely hero through humor. In a world where knights would take on quests for self-glory, Kaye presents a character that humbly relies on the help of others, making *The Court Jester* an example of citizenship for us today.

**The famed comedian Bob Newhart reflects on the power of humor saying:**  
***“I’ve noticed that people with a sense of humor tend to be less egocentric and more realistic in their view of the world. They also tend to be more humble in success and less defeated in times of travail.”***

### *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House.*

This is a fun take on the American Dream post WWII. The hilarious story takes up the age- old question of what it means to “build” a home.



### *What About Bob?*

This is a 90s look at the dangers of self-satisfaction and professional achievement versus the spirit of service and sacrifice that others need us to choose in our lives as social beings.

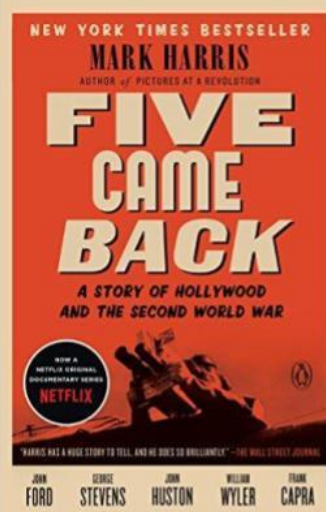
## Five Movies from the Five Who Came Back

*“We live in a deranged age, more deranged than usual, because in spite of great scientific and technological advances, man has not the faintest idea of who he is or what he is doing.”*

-Walker Percy

American novelist and author of *Lost in the Cosmos*

### Five Directors Who Voluntarily Served Our Country in World War II



*Mark Harris comments:*

**“Filmmakers could not win the war, but Capra, Ford, Huston, Stevens and Wyler had already shown that they could win the people. That was more than enough to secure the five men --the most influential and innovative film directors to *volunteer* for service --a place of critical importance in the war effort”**

*(Five Came Back, page 11).*

### Reclaiming the Ethos of Community with the five directors who came back...



Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946)

John Huston's *Key Largo* (1948)

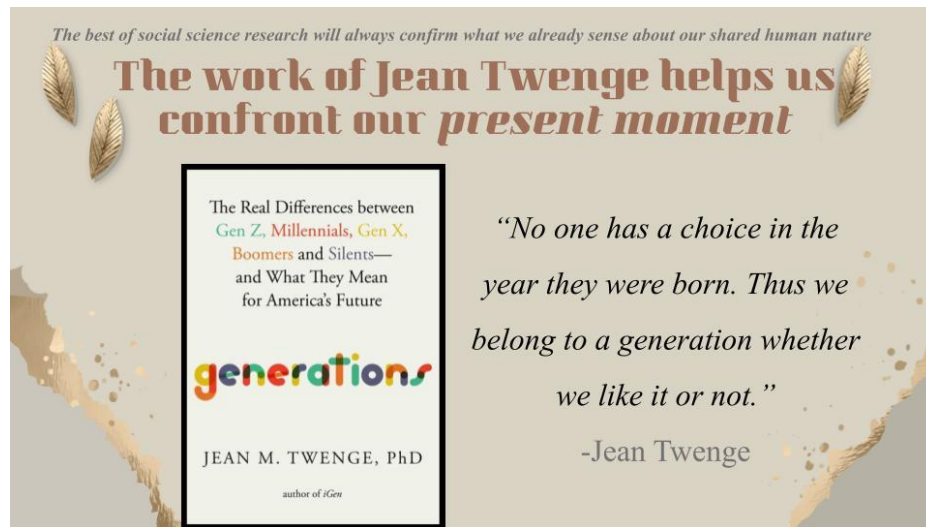
George Stevens' *Shane* (1953)

William Wyler's *The Big Country* (1958)

John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962)



## Appendix A: Making the Transcendent Tangible & Teachable



We include here some thoughts on how classic films can be the vehicle for greater and deeper unity across the generations for understanding the human condition. Social scientist Jean Twenge has done the work of gathering all the data to help generations come together.

*“The United States is currently populated by six generations: Silents, (born 1925-1945), Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1979), Millennials (1980-1994), Generation Z (aka iGen or Zoomers, 1995-2012), and as-yet-unnamed generation born after 2013 (I call them Polars; some marketers have called them Alphas). Generations aren't just an American phenomenon; most other countries have similar generational divisions, though with their own cultural twists. Appreciation of generational differences is crucial for understanding family relationships, the workplace, mental health, politics, economic policy, marketing, and public discourse.”*

But the vital message given by Jean Twenge is that across the generations we must take a deeper look into each other as full human persons in the habits of the heart. From the left to the right, and in the center, everybody loves the message of Alexis de Tocqueville. But to carry out the great French philosopher's advice, is to work together for the common good of our political community. No one should be discouraged to embark on this journey, for we have many role models in classic movie storytelling.

The collaborative art of film making lends itself to social capital building in a fragmented society such as ours. Pottersville is a preview of the places that our young people are growing up in today. In the same way, the great performances in *12 Angry Men*, give us what comes from reality to amplify the imaginative. Finally, a high school student's paper on *No Way Out*, represents the capability of high school students to grasp the greater themes and truths gleaned from film study.

CLASSIC CINEMA CONVERSATIONS

# 12 ANGRY MEN

## Character Sheet



*Juror 1*



*Juror 2*



*Juror 3*



*Juror 4*



*Juror 5*



*Juror 6*



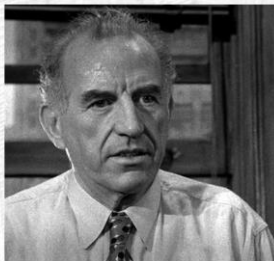
*Juror 7*



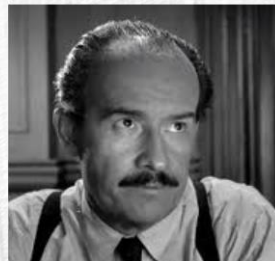
*Juror 8*



*Juror 9*



*Juror 10*



*Juror 11*



*Juror 12*



# CHARACTER SHEET

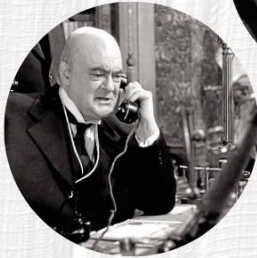
## IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

*Mr. Gower*



*Ma Bailey*

*Mr. Potter*



*Uncle Billy*



*George and Mary Bailey*

*Tom*



*Violet*

*Ms. Davis*



*Ernie*

*Mr. Martini*



*Bert*

## A Student's Paper on Joseph Mankiewicz's *No Way Out* (1950)

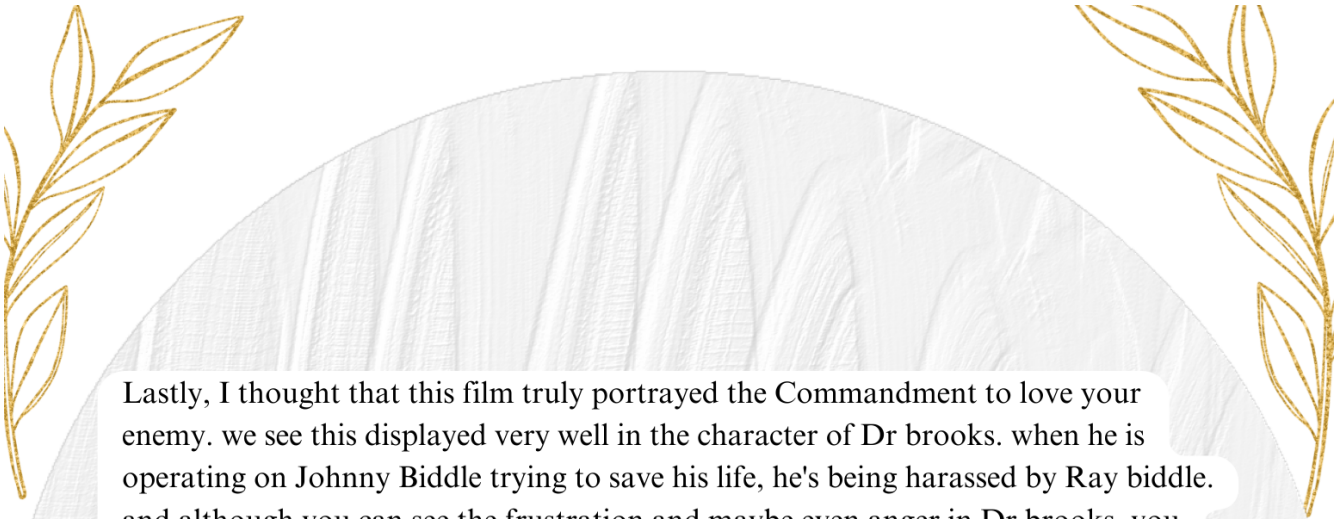
### End of year paper

*from a high school student in our film study course*

I honestly enjoyed all the films that we watched this year, so it was difficult to choose one as my favorite. But I decided to choose the 1950 film *No Way Out*, starring Sydney Poitier. This was the second movie that we watched this year. I thought that there were many great themes shown throughout this film.

First, it showed those who do not have the truth, but are faced with it and choose to either accept it or reject it. Edith Biddle came to learn the truth and chose to accept it. She was raised to have a hatred for black people for no other reason than that they were of a different color. But after she met Dr. Brooks, when he came to see her about doing an autopsy, she saw that he was not any different and she saw the genuine concern that he had in trying to prove his innocence and she works to help him and in the end saves his life. She is willing to face the truth and admit that she was wrong, whereas we see Ray Bittle on the other hand who will not let anything change his mind, even after the autopsy is done and Dr Brooks is found innocent he continues to blame Dr Brooks for the death of his brother. I thought this movie really contrasted well those who come to the truth and accept it compared to those who out of Pride or hatred or whatever reason chose not to accept the truth, even when they are face to face with it.

Second, I loved the scenes in the film when they showed Dr Brooks with his family and the way that they interacted with each other and how they were so supportive of each other. I thought it really portrayed a good and healthy family life that we do not see in today's society as a whole. Dr Brooks and his wife, Cora, had a beautiful relationship. He was able to come home and tell her what was on his mind and about his day and she was there to support him and encourage him. Also at the end when Dr Brooks leaves the hospital Cora goes on the walk with him and talks the whole night with him. Their relationship really shows the beautiful relationship that a couple should have. They were always there for each other, and you could truly see the love that they have for each other. Although we do not see very much of Dr Brooks and his family in the film, I thought they were particularly important.



Lastly, I thought that this film truly portrayed the Commandment to love your enemy. we see this displayed very well in the character of Dr brooks. when he is operating on Johnny Biddle trying to save his life, he's being harassed by Ray biddle. and although you can see the frustration and maybe even anger in Dr brooks, you never lets it out at ray. and even after all the insults and spitting and rude comments from Ray to Dr Brooks and then Ray escaping and almost killing him, Dr Brooks still saves Ray's life in the end. Dr Brooks truly saw the dignity in every person, even in those who were so hateful. this film really shows how we must treat each person with love and dignity no matter what the circumstances. that was something else that I found very profound about this film.

There was really not a film that I did not like, but Double Indemnity was one that was a little hard to watch because we didn't see any redemption in the end, which was kind of disappointing, but I thought that this film really portrayed human nature very well and how prone we are to give into our passions and to commit sin. in the film we saw Walter Neff and Phyllis dietrickson who valued money and pleasure even over the Dignity of life they were willing to kill innocent life in order to receive these desires. today we see the same thing, those who are selfish and only looking out for their personal gain. We also see many people today who do not value the dignity of life.

Let us strive to overcome our sins so that we Will be better able to help others. let us also be the ones to stand up for life and see the Dignity of every person and not be like a Walter or a Phyllis but rather like a Dr Brooks and show that same love and dignity to every person, even our enemies

**When hosting your own program, we recommend using at least three great classic films. There's no doubt that young people today are hungry for deeper and greater community. This high schooler's paper shows the power and potential of films to touch the hearts of young people. In our years of conducting film study events and classes, we have found that most of the students benefit from the opportunity to express themselves and think critically about the films.**

## Appendix B: Timeless Quotes to Integrate with Your Classic Film Studies

We have collected various quotes from over the centuries –human beings seeking to make meaning out of life and human nature. We hope these quotes help educators and students:

- Engage with human nature
- Come out of the cave
- Work towards living together harmoniously in a free society



*“We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”*

-Abraham Lincoln

*“It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force.”*

-The Federalist, Number 1

*“Man was destined for society. His morality, therefore, was to be formed to this object, He was endowed with a sense of right and wrong merely relative to this. This sense is as much a part of his nature as the sense of hearing, seeing, feeling; it is the true foundation of morality...It is given to all human beings in a stronger or weaker degree, as force of members is given them in a greater or less degree. It may be strengthened by exercise, as may any particular limb of the body. The sense is submitted, indeed, in some degree, to the guidance of reason; but it is a small stock which is required for this; even a less one than what we call common sense. State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well and often better than the latter because he has not been led astray by artificial rules.”*

-Thomas Jefferson in a letter to John Adams

*" For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning. Imagination...is not the cause of truth, but its condition."*

~ C S Lewis, Mere Christianity

*For Friendship is nothing else than an accord in all things, human and divine, conjoined with mutual goodwill and affection, and I am inclined to think that, with the exception of wisdom, no better thing has been given to man by the immortal gods."*

~Marcus Tullius Cicero, On Friendship



“ON THE INFLUENCE OF MORES ON THE MAINTENANCE OF A DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IN THE  
UNITED STATES

*I said above that I consider mores to be one of the great general causes to which the maintenance of a democratic republic in the United States can be attributed. I understand here the expression moeurs in the sense the ancients attached to the word mores; not only do I apply it to mores properly so-called, which one could call habits of the heart, but to the different notions that men possess, to the various opinions that are current in their midst, and to the sum of ideas of which the habits of the mind are formed.”*

-Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

*“A just law is a man made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law.”*

-Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,”  
April 16, 1963.

*“All the other animals that are social or gregarious are so instinctively. The organization of the beehive, of the ant colony, of the termite colony, these are all instinctive organizations. They do not change from century to century, from generation to generation. But humans form by reason the conventions, the constitutions, the laws, the rules unto which they live. And that is why in human families or in human states, political societies, there is such a great variability from tribe to tribe, culture to culture, epoch to epoch, century to century. Man is the only animal who devises the constitutions and laws under which he lives. This is the evidence of his reason and freedom. In fact, instead of saying man is the only political animal, what I perhaps should say even more sharply here is that man is the only constitutional animal.”*

~ Mortimer Adler, *How to Think about The Great Ideas*

*“The immortality of the soul is a matter which is of so great consequence to us and which touches us so profoundly that we must have lost all feeling to be indifferent as to knowing what it is. All our actions and thoughts must take such different courses, according as there are or are not external joys to hope for, that it is impossible to take one step with sense and judgement unless we regulate our course by our view of this point which ought to be our ultimate end.”*

~Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*

*“This is one of the fundamental questions of political theory: are we to understand civil authority as arising by a transfer of rights already possessed by men without a state? Those who maintain this always assume a private right of punishment in a state of nature. We deny this and take an alternative view: civil society is the bearer of rights of coercion not possibly existent among men without government.”*

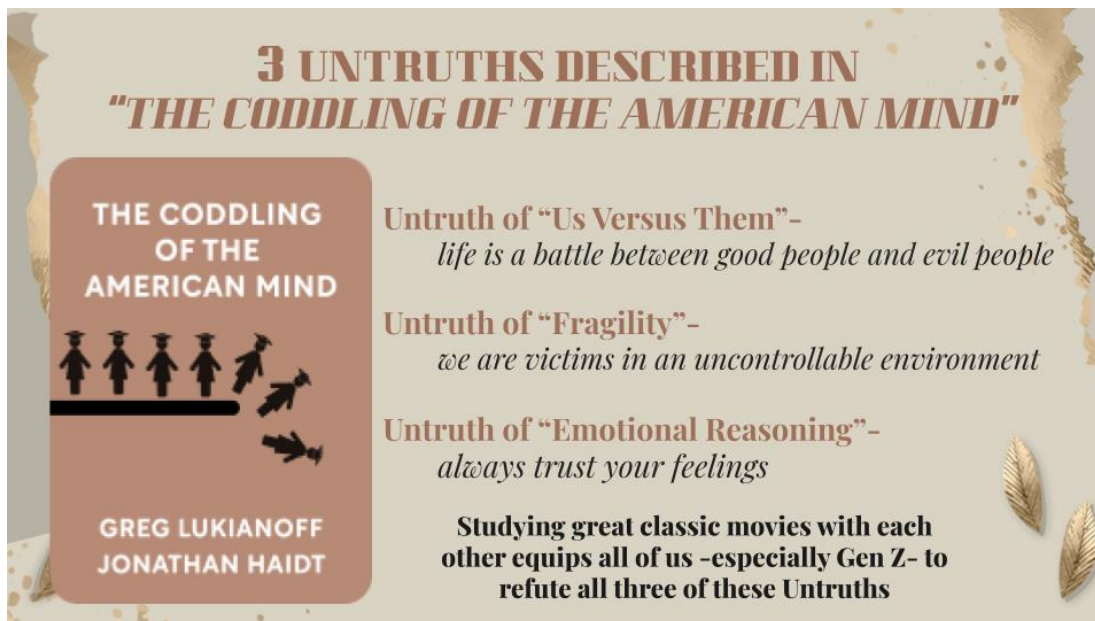
~Elizabeth Anscombe

*“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”*

-The Declaration of Independence

## Appendix C: Rebuilding the “WE” –Scholarship and social science research helps us restore social capital in our civil society

Throughout the units of our Civic Engagement curriculum, readers will find many quotes for students to reflect and integrate into their study of themes and characters in the great classic films included here. What do the 80% of us who want to mend our torn social and political fabric need to give us confidence that this rising generation can not only learn to live as participating citizens of a free society but *pass on* the civic lessons they learn with film classics to the generations that follow them. This appendix provides important scholarship and research that build for all of us - or at least 80% of us - the confidence to rebuild right where we are. Here we take a look at the knowledge base we are standing on in 2024 with scholarship and social science research.



“Loneliness and isolation, mistrust and suspicion, alienation and polarization—these are the characteristic maladies of this era. But because they are failures of sociality, they too often fall into the blind spots of our individualistic culture. This crisis of connectedness has been described in a variety of ways. A number of analysts across the political spectrum have argued that it must be ultimately philosophical or metaphysical—essentially that contemporary liberalism is so committed to the ideal of individual liberation that it lacks the conceptual framework to articulate ideals of solidarity or even of community. We depend on these deeper social foundations and yet we lack the tools to maintain or reconstruct them, and we have lost the words with which to speak about what we owe each other.”

–Yuval Levin, *A Time to Build*

“Durkheim showed that nearly all societies have created rituals and communal practices for pulling “up,” temporarily, into the realm of the sacred, where the self recedes and collective interests predominate....This is one of the founding insights of sociology: Strong communities don’t just magically appear whenever people congregate and communicate. The strongest and most satisfying communities come into being when something lifts people out of the lower level so that they have powerful collective experiences. They all enter the realm of the sacred together, at the same time. When they return to the profane level where they need to be most of the time to address the necessities of life, they have greater trust and affection for each other as a result of their time together in the sacred realm.”

--Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation*, Chapter 8

“By grasping that our divisions have deepened, in part by our abandonment of the constitutional system's core approach to unity, we could find our way toward a constitutional restoration and, with it, a recovery of both our capacity for unity and our desire for it....This need not be – indeed, it cannot be – a partisan enterprise. The Madisonian system does not imply a specific policy agenda in the traditional sense. It exists to facilitate our political disagreements and so does not belong to one side or another of those disagreements. But it does require us to take the anthropological assumptions that underlie the Constitution seriously – its insistence on the limits of human knowledge, the importance of social order, the connection between institutional structure and political culture, and the republican ideal of the citizen. The Constitution rests on these foundations, but it also teaches us to understand them by habituating us in a set of civic practices built upon them. And so, given the condition of American politics now, renewal and revitalization call for recovering our practice of constitutionalism so that we may also recover our understanding of it.”

-Yuval Levin, *American Covenant – How the Constitution Unified our Nation and Could Again*



***A final note on the primacy of culture in our common life together***

This was the lobby staircase of the Fox Theater in San Francisco located on Market Street (Civic Center). The theater opened in 1929 and operated until 1963 when it was unfortunately and even tragically closed and demolished. Many people who grew up in San Francisco bemoan the loss of this beautiful theater that had such awe and majesty and that added charm to their culture. Some attribute the destruction of great works of beauty and culture such as the Fox Theater to the disillusionment of people who went through the horrors of the Second World War. In every era enough of us must work together to protect the goods of life we share.

# EGI AT THE MOVIES



These great classic movies allow educators to go “person to person” with their students, each film having its own characters and themes that highlight the diversity and mystery of human nature.

## Contact EGI!

We welcome any questions or inquiries about our work. We would love to hear from you!

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