Love & Life at the Movies: Growing in Love with the Film Classics

Civic Friendship and the Common Good

*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Shane*

Two Classic Film Studies: A Curriculum for Teens and Young Adults
Designed by the Educational Guidance Institute
Civic Friendship and the Common Good: 
*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington and Shane*

Two Classic Film Studies 
Designed by the Educational Guidance Institute 
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Dedication by Onalee McGraw 
Director of Educational Guidance Institute

This study guide is dedicated to my beloved husband, Bill McGraw, with whom I shared forty-eight years of married life and many viewings of these cherished classics.

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# Civic Friendship and the Common Good
## Featuring *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Shane*

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Sharing the Mission to Renew our Culture Through the Film Classics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Plan Implementation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mr. Smith Goes To Washington (1939)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</em> Lesson Plan</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</em>: Film Background</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part One: A Senator is Appointed</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Two: Mr. Smith Introduces His Bill</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Three: A Crisis for Jefferson Smith</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Four: There’s No Compromise with the Truth</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POST VIEWING DISCUSSION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on the Final Scene in <em>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</em></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article on the Final Screening Prior to the Fall of France</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Cheers of French Audience for <em>Smith Goes To Washington</em> From <em>The Hollywood Reporter</em>, November 4, 1942</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Five: Program Application</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLOSE UP</strong>: The Relationship of Jimmy Stewart’s Jeff Smith and Jean Arthur’s Saunders</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. HANDOUTS: Movie Quotes, Character Traits, List of Key Terms, Key Terms Fill-Ins</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Supplementary Materials</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Answer Keys</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Shane (1953)

Shane Lesson Plan .................................................................................................................. 58

Shane Film Background ........................................................................................................ 59

Part One: A Stranger Arrives ................................................................................................. 63

Part Two: The Fight at the Store .......................................................................................... 65

Part Three: A Death and a New Resolution ......................................................................... 69

Part Four: The Showdown .................................................................................................... 72

POST VIEWING DISCUSSION: The Civic Virtues that Support the Common Good............ 76

Part Five: Program Application ............................................................................................ 78

CLOSE UP: Family, Community, and the Common Good in Shane ................................. 80

Appendices .............................................................................................................................. 82

A. HANDOUTS: Movie Quotes, Character Traits, List of Key Terms,
   Key Terms Fill-Ins ................................................................................................................. 83

B. Supplementary Materials .................................................................................................. 87

C. Answer Keys ....................................................................................................................... 95
OVERVIEW

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington and Shane - Images of Civic Friendship and the Common Good

The idea of the Common Good is universal and timeless in human experience. The Common Good is the concept that standards of truth and goodness exist and they transcend the desires and feelings of solitary individuals. The Common Good makes us a part of something greater than ourselves. Our social nature as human beings connects us together in community and civil society.

In keeping with the social nature of man, the good of each individual is necessarily related to the common good, which in turn can be defined only in reference to the human person. Catechism of the Catholic Church (1905)

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939) displays the ideals of truth and goodness as the foundation for a healthy society.

Shane (1953) depicts frontier families struggling against ruthless power and tyranny. Two men, a gunfighter and a rancher, team up to inspire courage and solidarity in building a genuine and lasting community.
Introduction

Sharing the Mission to Renew our Culture Through the Film Classics

We all have very different life experiences, but we all share the same human condition. A truly great classic film shines the light of truth on our lives and illuminates the human condition. Classic films are remembered and viewed again and again because they help us discover who we are and how to live together in the human family.

The films included in the Educational Guidance Institute Study Guides and Lesson Plans have been chosen according to high standards for screenplay, direction, acting, casting, and artistic integrity. The clear and consistent moral content of these films serves to elevate the human spirit and inspire the moral imagination for the good, the true and the beautiful.

Our popular culture bombards young people with negativity and explicit sexuality. The study of classic films provides an opportunity through positive images to gain a new perspective on the existential questions of love and life. By observing the behavior of the characters in these films, students gain an awareness of their capacity to develop lasting and committed relationships, and to work for the common good in community and civil society.

The teaching philosophy underlying this film study curriculum is based on a whole person perspective of human nature that transcends the boundaries of culture, race, era or social status. Young people have the capacity to understand, appreciate and practice the moral ideals of good character. Most important of all, classic films reach the places in the heart where love can grow.
Criteria for Film Selection

Every film Educational Guidance Institute selects for study has been shaped by the following criteria:

- Is the film a true classic in that its story, character development and production values can win the attention and respect of most students in the age group for which the curriculum has been designed?

- Is the film itself an important part of film history? Has it received positive reviews and evaluations from a variety of film critics? Do film critics from different perspectives admire the values projected in the film?

- Does the story broaden the historical and cultural perspective of students and present the universal qualities of human beings, which transcend racial, ethnic and religious boundaries and divisions?

- Are the characters believable and natural? Do the main characters come across as whole and realistic persons reflecting a common sense view of human nature?

- Does the story depict relationships between women and men in a way that strengthens the institutions of marriage and the family?

- Do major characters undergo a positive growth in virtue over the course of the story?

- Do the plot of the story and the life events of its characters reflect the development of universal values, norms and virtues in a way that is clear and unambiguous?
Curriculum Learning Objectives

Understanding and Connecting Personal, Community and Universal Values to the Common Good

Personal values sometimes conflict with the values of the community in which one lives. If everyone simply acts on his or her own personal preferences and inclinations, the result will be confusion, conflict and anarchy. On the other hand, if everyone simply follows the crowd, justice and the common good may suffer. Achieving a harmony of values in a community or culture, given the limitations of human nature, is always a struggle.

Viewing and analyzing classic films helps the students to:

- Know, appreciate and practice the qualities of good character necessary for success in love and life;
- Recognize the role of the family and the community as vital to the development of individuals;
- Integrate qualities of good character and universal values in personal, family and social relationships — now and in the future.

Virtue Formation

Through these timeless visual stories, students grow in awareness and appreciation of such universal virtues as wisdom, temperance (self-control), justice, honesty, tolerance, courage and compassion.

Through the example of the characters portrayed in the films, the students will:

- Examine universal ethical and moral questions;
- Learn how to turn universal values into personal virtues;
- Increase their capacity for empathy and compassion for others;
- Understand how our consciences help us to recognize right from wrong;
- Develop good habits of heart and mind;
- Apply the moral lessons of the film to their daily life situations.
Critical Thinking, Vocabulary Skills & Introduction to Film Criticism

Restoring high standards of academic excellence is a challenge. Students can develop higher personal standards for academic excellence when given an educational experience that simultaneously promotes cognitive, emotional, moral and social intelligence.

Students learn good habits of the heart and mind as whole persons by:

- Growing in appreciation of the historical, cultural, and artistic heritage of the selected films;
- Learning the key elements that make a film a classic;
- Enhancing development of vocabulary and moral literacy;
- Developing analytic skills of character and plot analysis;
- Integrating entertainment values with cultural, moral and intellectual enrichment;
- Intensifying a critical awareness of contemporary entertainment and media.

Lesson Plan Implementation

Review the Movie

For maximum effectiveness, it is strongly recommended that the film be reviewed prior to showing it to the students. In doing so, educators will become more familiar with the plot, characters, timing of film segments and discussion questions.

Introducing the Movie to the Students

Some students may have difficulty understanding the rationale for viewing classic films in class. At the very beginning the teacher must make it clear to the students that the purpose of viewing these films is primarily educational and not simply for their entertainment.

Timing

Although the lesson plan is structured for 45-minute class periods, it is adaptable to a number of different time formats. The film may be shown in its entirety or in two or more segments, with discussion occurring after each viewing, as time allows. A synopsis of each film segment is provided to assist the teacher in following the film’s events.
Discussion Questions and Themes

Class discussion periods are an important means of ensuring that the students understand the main themes of the film and are able to identify important personality traits of the characters depicted in the film. There may not be sufficient time for every discussion point that is provided for each segment, but there will always be ample content for use in helping students along in their discussion.

Post Viewing and Close Up Discussion Handouts

These handouts are especially important when there is no additional time to explore the vocabulary, character traits, and other additional discussion. These handouts allow the students to capture the essence of the film “in the moment” immediately after viewing.

Appendix A – Handouts for Distribution to Students

Movie Quotes, Character Traits, Key Terms, Key Terms Fill In.

Additional handouts in Appendix A: for Mr. Smith, “The Meaning of Friendship” handout and for Shane “The Four Cardinal Virtues” handout.

Appendix B - Supplementary Materials

The Motion Picture Production Code, What Makes a Film a Classic, Famous Quote to Consider, Essay Questions

The purpose of the supplementary materials is to provide an additional opportunity for the students to analyze the film and to express their thoughts. The teacher may use any or all of these materials, as time allows. They include:

- Famous Quote relevant to the movie’s overall message. This is provided as additional discussion material, if time allows.
- Essay Question that gives the students an opportunity to develop their thoughts on the film’s message in writing.

Appendix C - Teacher Answer Keys

Answer Keys for The Movie Quotes handout as well as for the Optional Supplementary Materials are provided for the teacher’s use. The possible responses suggested are by no means exhaustive.
Love & Life at the Movies:
Growing in Love with the Film Classics

MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON
LESSON PLAN

A Heroic Defense of the Common Good
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

The creative vision of a film’s director is often responsible for that film joining the ranks of “great” motion pictures. Like the Founding Fathers, director Frank Capra realized that the effective defense of American ideals does not depend on the virtue of a few, but has to be upheld by a large number of its citizens. His vision for the film was that his hero, Jefferson Smith, would filibuster for the cause of truth and the common good. In his autobiography, The Name Above the Title, Capra explains that it seemed initially that Jefferson Smith would be “crushed and flattened” by the power of a political machine, until “gutty ideals, the words of Lincoln, the wit of Jean Arthur [as Saunders], plus a one-man filibuster, and the conscience of the White Knight [Senator Paine]” – all worked together to bring about the triumph of good over evil (p. 257).

Capra seemed to have all the ingredients necessary for a successful film: a powerful screenplay, an excellent cast that included Jimmy Stewart in the lead role of Jefferson Smith and his own impressive skills as a director to assure its success. (Capra won his third Oscar for Best Director during the filming of Mr. Smith). However, as he immersed himself in the atmosphere of Washington, D.C. to prepare for the filming in the fall of 1938, he could feel the thick clouds of war descending on the nation. Japan was invading China, and the Nazis had already invaded Austria and Czechoslovakia. Capra began to worry that his film would be viewed as an untimely and unsuitable “satire about government officials” while the threat of war was hanging over the whole world.

To gain direction and inspiration, Capra imitated his hero, Jefferson Smith. He visited the Lincoln Memorial, where, along with other tourists, he read the words of the Gettysburg Address. Next to him a young boy was reading Lincoln’s words aloud to his grandfather. All doubt left him. Capra later described his feelings:

It is never untimely to yank the rope of freedom’s bell.

– Frank Capra

I left the Lincoln Memorial with this growing conviction about our film: The more uncertain are the people of the world, the more their hard-won freedoms are scattered and lost in the winds of chance, the more they need a ringing statement of America’s democratic ideals. The soul of our film would be anchored in Lincoln. Our Jefferson Smith would be a young Abe Lincoln, tailored to the rail-splitter’s simplicity, compassion, ideals, humor, and unswerving moral courage under pressure. And back we went to Hollywood to get to work on Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. The panic was over. It is never untimely to yank the rope of freedom’s bell (The Name Above the Title, p. 260).
**Story Line**

*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* is director Frank Capra’s memorable tribute to the ideals of American democracy. The film features James Stewart as Jefferson Smith, the “common man” who as a young, inexperienced U.S. Senator finds himself defending the common good.

Jefferson Smith is a man whose main ambition is to help the youth of his state grow up to be good citizens. When the death of a sitting senator creates a vacancy, the corrupt and powerful Jim Taylor, who runs a machine that controls the political life of the state, goes along with the governor’s selection of Jeff Smith to fill the appointment.

Joseph Paine, the senior senator from Smith’s home state, was the best friend of Jeff Smith’s father. Although Smith does not know it, Paine has been built up by Taylor to be the “silver knight,” a statesman who appears to be above corruption but who has in fact sold out his ideals in exchange for political perks and power. (Taylor is grooming him to run for the presidency.) Taylor’s men figure that Smith will be so naive and idealistic that he will not realize that behind the scenes they are plotting to line the pockets of the Taylor machine by having a dam built in the very area that Smith wants to build a National Boys Camp.

Clarissa Saunders, the savvy and worldly-wise secretary to Smith’s predecessor, is weary of Washington’s political life and wants to quit her job. She believes Smith to be oblivious to the realities of politics in Washington and is initially skeptical of his idealistic patriotism. Paine, however, needs Saunders to keep an eye on Smith and prevent him from interfering with the plans of Taylor and his men. He promises her a bonus and the possibility of eventually having a more important job if and when his aspirations to the presidency are realized.

When Smith realizes that he is just filling a chair in the Senate, he persuades Saunders to help him introduce a bill that would turn the Willet Creek property in his state into a National Boys Camp. The Taylor machine pulls out all the stops to prevent this, even forging documents to falsely show Smith as the owner of the Willet Creek property and thus discrediting him to his congressional colleagues. Senator Paine moves to have Smith expelled from the Senate.

With the help of Saunders, who has begun to appreciate Smith’s true patriotism and honesty, Smith conducts a filibuster. In the end, the cause of truth prevails because the conscience of Senator Paine prevents him from being a part of Smith’s destruction.
Film History

*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* stands as a lasting testimony to the abiding ideals of virtuous citizenship and integrity in public service: ideals that were, and still are today, the foundation of America’s experiment in democracy. Receiving eleven Academy Award nominations and winning the 1939 Oscar for Best Motion Picture Story, it is considered one of Frank Capra’s finest films. In 2004, more than six decades after its release, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* was chosen by Republicans and Democrats alike as the winner of the Turner Classic Movies survey for favorite film with a political theme – a tribute to its enduring popularity.

Film Facts for *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington*

- Starring: Jimmy Stewart, Jean Arthur, Claude Rains, Thomas Mitchell
- Directed by Frank Capra
- 1939 Black and White; Total Viewing Time: 130 minutes
- *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* opened in October 1939, a few weeks after war had broken out in Europe. On September 1st, Hitler had invaded Poland; two days later, England and France declared war on Germany. As Capra puts it, “The speed and light of Hitler’s *blitzkrieg* terrified the free world” (*The Name Above the Title*, p. 288).
- Frank Capra insisted on a personal interview with every performer who appeared on the screen, believing that for his pictures, “There were no big or small parts.” For Capra, “All parts were star parts.”
- Director Capra describes his leading man and leading lady, Jimmy Stewart and Jean Arthur, as a “made-to-order natural team—the simon-pure idealist, and the cynical, fed-up-with-politics Washington secretary with a dormant heart of gold” (p. 261).
- Another important cast member was Claude Rains (Joe Paine), who was already famous as the corrupt police-inspector sidekick of Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*. Rains’ line in *Casablanca*, “Round up the usual suspects,” is one of the most famous quotes of movie trivia. Capra saw in Claude Rains the perfect Joe Paine, for, as he described this distinguished British actor, “he had the artistry, power, and depth to play the soul-tortured idealist whose feet have turned to clay” (p. 262).
- The similarities between scenes in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and Capra’s later masterpiece, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, are evident throughout the film. The central focus of each is the character and personality of one man, played by Jimmy Stewart. In both films, Stewart’s screen mother is played by Beulah Bondi.
- With meticulous eye to detail, the central set of the film – the U.S. Senate Chamber – was built as an exact replica on the Columbia Studio lot in Hollywood.
- *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* was the final English-language film to be shown in France before the Nazi-imposed ban on American and British films went into effect in 1942.
In his autobiography, Frank Capra tells about the Nazi-ordered countrywide ban on British and American films in France during World War II. *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* was the final English-language film to be shown before the ban went into effect. It was “roundly cheered” by the French people, and one can only imagine what they must have been feeling as they watched Jefferson Smith at the feet of Lincoln at a time when they themselves had lost their freedom to the crushing power of the Hitler war machine.
"Without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods."
~ Aristotle

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

Instructional Objectives for Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

- Understand the importance of civic virtue
- Understand the qualities of a true friendship

Themes for Mr. Smith Goes to Washington Film Segments

- A person who is trustworthy in handling small things can usually be trusted to handle more important things.
- Self-knowledge gives us a realistic perspective on our strengths and weaknesses.
- In moments of crisis, good character enables us to do what is right.
- It is difficult to defend truth and the common good without the help of others.
PART ONE:
A SENATOR IS APPOINTED

Film time: 30 minutes

1. The theme for the first segment:

   A person who is trustworthy in handling small things can usually be trusted to handle more important things.

Tell the students that this theme will be apparent in the film segment and should be kept in mind while watching the film.

2. Present the key terms:

   Trustworthy: truthful and responsible; reliable

   Humility: the ability to honestly assess one’s personal strengths and weaknesses, and not overestimate one’s own importance

   Cynical: scornful or suspicious of the motives or virtues of other people

3. Start the film.

   Segment One ends when Jeff is in the taxi with Saunders and says, “Oh, movie houses.”

Plot Synopsis of Segment 1

A new senator is appointed. A senator from an unnamed Western state dies suddenly and a replacement must be found. The political boss of the state, Jim Taylor, who runs a tightly controlled political machine, tells the other state senator, Joseph Paine, that they must find someone who will not upset the corrupt scheme they are planning: to build a dam on property that the Taylor machine has been buying under phony names at Willet Creek. The bill that would allow this to happen has already passed in the House and will soon be coming up for a vote in the Senate. Taylor and Paine agree on a man they know will take orders, and they inform the governor, whose job it is to appoint the replacement senator, that they want him to name the person they have chosen.
The governor’s children have a hero. At dinner that evening, the governor’s children urge him to instead appoint Jefferson Smith, the head of the Boy Rangers in the state. Smith has just put out a forest fire, and this act of heroism has become news all over the state. Sensing that by appointing this “hero of 50,000 boys and 100,000 men” he will win the approval of the people, the governor appoints Smith. He assures Taylor and Paine that Smith will be too inexperienced to interfere with their Willet Creek Dam project, saying: “A simpleton of all times . . . knows Lincoln and Washington by heart . . . never in politics in his life – wouldn’t know what it was all about in two years, let alone two months.”

At his election banquet, Smith says, “I can’t help feeling that there’s been a big mistake somehow.” He talks about how his father had been a close friend of Senator Paine, and that his father had said that Joseph Paine was the finest man he ever knew. Smith is clearly in awe of Paine and amazed that he is in the position in which he suddenly finds himself. He promises one thing: that he “will do nothing to disgrace the office of United States Senator.”

On the train to Washington, Jeff Smith and Senator Paine talk about the idealism of Jeff’s dad, Clayton Smith, the “champion of lost causes.” They say that the only causes worth fighting for are the lost causes. Jeff’s father had fought against a mining syndicate for the rights of one miner and was ultimately killed because of it. Jeff says to Joe Paine, thinking about his father, “One man by himself can’t get very far, can he?”

The Senator and the Senator-elect arrive in Washington and are greeted by Paine’s beautiful and sophisticated daughter, Susan, and her friends. Seeing the Dome of the U.S. Capitol in the distance, Smith slips away to explore Washington, leaving his entourage to wonder what has happened to him. Saunders, the secretary in Smith’s office, does not seem unduly anxious about his disappearance. She describes him to her friend Diz, a newspaper reporter, as “Boy Ranger” and “Daniel Boone, lost in the wilds of Washington.”

“That this nation, under God, will have a new birth of freedom.” In the meantime, Jeff is touring Washington: visiting the monuments, reading the words of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and seeing The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington Cemetery. At his last stop on the tour, Jeff stands before the statue of Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial and reflects on the sacrifices that have been made to preserve freedom in the United States.

Saunders and Diz. By now Saunders is more than ready to go home, and she tells Diz that she wishes she had quit when Senator Foley, Jeff’s predecessor, died. She says that she is tired of politics and that she wants to move her life in a different direction. Saunders can’t imagine being a secretary to the young new senator: “secretary to a leader of little squirts.” Diz wants to marry her, but she just wants to remain good friends.
Smith finds his office. When Smith finally arrives, Saunders notifies Paine that he is there, telling him, “He came in on his own power and he’s sober.” As they leave for the hotel, Saunders is anxious to keep Smith from wandering off again.

Smith and Saunders ride to the hotel in a taxi. Smith asks Saunders about the routine in the morning, and Saunders tells him that the Senate will convene at twelve noon. Smith is pleased because this will give him time to visit Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, in the morning.

DISCUSSING SEGMENT ONE

During the segment, the students should be thinking about the significance of the Movie Quotes and taking notes on their handouts. Have them share their thoughts. Refer to the talking points just below the discussion questions to help guide and direct discussion.

QUOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

“A young patriot, recites Lincoln and Jefferson, turned loose in our nation’s capital? Yeah, I think it’s all right.” – Senator Paine

“Honorary appointment! You scratch this thing and you’ll find they need a dope here for a couple of months.” – Ms. Saunders to Diz

What kind of character qualities does Jeff Smith have that will help him to be a good United States senator? What qualities does he still need to develop to be effective in his office?

Jeff’s Strengths

- **Patriotic:** Jeff loves his country and truly wants what is best for her. He understands the vision of the Founding Fathers.
- **Appreciative:** Jeff is thankful for the beautiful country he lives in and takes time to learn the history of his nation and appreciate the beauty of nature. He wants to pass on this love of nature and country to the boys of America.
- **Courageous:** Jeff showed courage in fighting the forest fire. He also learned a lot from his father, Clayton Smith, who always fought for what he believed to be right, even though it cost him his life.
- **Generous:** Jeff gives of himself—his time and his energy—to help the young boys of his state understand what it means to truly be a man and an American.
- **Humble:** Jeff does not think that he knows everything. He can hardly believe that he has been chosen as senator. Also, once in Washington, he does not assume that he will have his own private office.
• **Honest:** Many people vouch for the honesty and dependability of Jeff Smith. This is also apparent in his demeanor; he is up front with everyone he meets.

**Jeff’s Weaknesses**

• **Naïve:** While Jeff Smith is a man of high ideals and excellent character, he is still very naïve. This will limit his effectiveness as a U.S. senator because he is not prepared to deal with the dishonesty that occurs in the political sphere. To be an effective senator, Jeff will need to gain a more practical understanding of how Washington works and the kind of people with whom he will be dealing.

• **Impulsive:** Even though Jefferson Smith is a man of tremendous integrity, he is quick to jump into things based on emotion. He sometimes fails to consider the possible consequences of what he is about to do, or what is needed in order to accomplish his goal.

**What kind of character qualities does Saunders have? How might those qualities make her an effective advisor for Senator Smith? What qualities does Saunders still need to develop in order to be at peace with herself and satisfied with her life and her work?**

**Saunders’ Strength**

• **Practical:** Saunders understands the cut-throat politics of Washington. She recognizes that Jeff Smith’s “honorary appointment” to the Senate is really just a ploy to allow Taylor and Paine to pursue their political agenda without interference.

  This practical understanding of politics prevents Saunders from being fooled by the people around her. If she chooses to, she could use this practical wisdom to help Smith, who is very naïve, and hence easily taken advantage of.

**Saunders’ Weaknesses**

• **Cynical:** However, along with her practicality, Saunders has allowed the politics of Washington to make her cynical. She recognizes that she knows more about politics than the inexperienced Senator Smith and this leads her to be sarcastic towards him in a rather degrading way. She mocks the talent that he does possess (an influential leader of the youth) and calls herself a “secretary to a leader of little squirts.” To Saunders, Jeff is just another annoyance she has to deal with, in a job that she hates.

• **Saunders needs to develop the qualities of faith and optimism.** She holds a very influential position in the senator’s office and could do a lot of good, if she only had a little faith in humanity and expectation that the honest people in Washington and around the country could really bring about some good in the world. Only when she embraces these qualities will she feel at peace with herself, her work, and her life – knowing that she can and is making a difference.
Character Concept: Humility

It is difficult to remain humble when one is famous or in a position of power. This is because adulation from the public can go to one’s head, making it hard not to become proud. Also, one can get the feeling that he or she is indispensable, making it difficult not to feel more important than one actually is. Jeff Smith shows his humility when, at the banquet held in his honor, he tells the guests that he “can’t help feeling that there’s been a big mistake somehow.”

PART TWO:
MR. SMITH INTRODUCES HIS BILL

Film time: 31 minutes

1. Have the students take out their Movie Quotes, Character Traits and Key Terms handouts.

2. Present the theme for the second segment:
   
   Self-knowledge gives us a realistic perspective on our strengths and weaknesses.

Remind the students that this theme will be apparent in the film segment and should be kept in mind while watching the film.

3. Present the key terms
   
   Self-knowledge: the ability to see ourselves objectively and to have a realistic perspective on our lives

   Moral Energy: the ability to put moral values into action

4. Ask the students to explain where the story line left off.
   
   Saunders and Smith talk as they ride in the taxi.

5. Start the film.

Segment Two ends with Senator Paine and Chick McGann in a taxicab, working out a way to distract Smith.
Plot Synopsis of Segment 2

Mr. Smith and the Press. Saunders talks things over in a bar with Diz; another reporter overhears them talking and smells a story. Saunders agrees to let him interview Smith, but only in a group. In his office the next day, Smith meets with a group of reporters who photograph him and ask him all sorts of questions. Smith answers them candidly and talks about starting a National Boys Camp.

Saunders speaks with Senator Paine. Saunders tells Paine that she wants to quit, but Paine tells her, “if certain things happen, I’m taking everybody up with me and you’ll get one of the biggest jobs in Washington.” Saunders replies that when she got to Washington, her “eyes were big blue question marks; now they’re big green dollar marks.” Paine tells her that if she keeps Jeff Smith away from anything that “smacks of politics,” including Willet Creek Dam, he’ll give her a bonus.

Senator Smith’s first day in the Senate. The page boy tells Jeff that his desk used to belong to Daniel Webster. He points out the majority and minority leaders, the location of the Press Gallery, the visitors’ seats, and the Diplomatic Corps section. In gratitude, Jeff gives the page a Boy Ranger pin. The Senate is called to order, but before Smith is sworn into office, his suitability as a senator is called into question by one of the other senators regarding a newspaper article that has made him appear ridiculous. Senator Paine comes to his defense and the President of the Senate administers the oath of office.

Smith starts swinging. As he leaves the Senate chamber, Smith looks at the negative newspaper article to which the senator had referred and becomes enraged by the ridicule he has received in the press. He goes out, finds the reporters who were responsible, and starts punching them and knocking them down.

At a bar where the reporters get together, Smith confronts them over what they have done, but they challenge him regarding his role in the Senate. When he asks them why they don’t “tell the truth,” they say, “If it’s the truth you want, what are you doing in the Senate?” The reporters, led by Diz, tell him, “You’re not a senator. You’re an Honorary Stooge.” This disclosure gives Smith self-knowledge to confront his situation.

Smith talks to Paine. He tells Joe Paine that he needs to become knowledgeable about the bills in the Senate, but Paine tells him that he will advise him when any votes come up. Paine then encourages Smith to follow up on his idea of creating a National Boys Camp. When Susan Paine comes into the room, Smith is awkward and fumbling as he talks with her. After he leaves, she refers to him as “Honest Abe,” to which her father responds, “and with honest Abe’s ideals, a rare man these days, Susan.”
Senator Smith is ready to start work on his bill. Smith returns to his office and tells Saunders that he wants to introduce a bill in the Senate that will establish a National Boys Camp in his state. He expects to have it written in a day and passed very quickly. Saunders explains to him that getting a bill passed takes a long time, and she takes him step by step through the lawmaking process. It is evident that Saunders has the know-how, and Smith has the enthusiasm, energy and vision to bring it about.

Smith shares his vision with Saunders. Smith describes to Saunders why this bill is so important. He tells her that “Boys forget what their country means by just reading ‘the Land of the Free’ in history books. When they get to be men, they forget even more. Liberty is too precious a thing to be buried in books.” Saunders is captivated by his speech.

Smith asks Saunders about her personal life. He has told her that his father used to say, “Always try to see life around you as if you’ve just come out of a tunnel.” When he asks her where she lived before coming to Washington and other questions to get to know her better, she says, “I guess I’ve always lived in a tunnel.”

Smith and Saunders begin work on the bill. Smith describes the location for his intended camp as occupying 200 acres near Willet Creek and explains that it would be built with money borrowed from the government, to eventually be paid back with contributions from the boys. Saunders is clearly startled when she hears the words “Willet Creek,” but she lets it pass without telling Smith about Paine’s bill to have a dam erected there. Paine has buried his bill in a larger “Deficiency Bill,” hoping it will pass without too much scrutiny of the dam project.

Smith introduces his bill in the Senate. Saunders and Diz listen and watch expectantly to see what Paine and one of Taylor’s men, Chick McGann, will do when Smith utters the words “Willet Creek.” Paine looks troubled; McGann runs out to telephone Taylor and alert him to what has just happened. As the young boys in the visitors’ section erupt in applause, the senators join in the applause.

Paine and McGann discuss the situation as they ride in a taxi. Paine and McGann talk over what has just happened and what will need to be done about Smith’s bill. They begin to work out a plan to distract Smith and to see to it that he is not in the Senate chamber when the Deficiency Bill (of which Smith is unaware) comes up for a vote the next day. Paine worries that it won’t work out, commenting, “This boy’s honest, not stupid.” McGann suggests using Susan to distract him, but Paine doesn’t like the idea.
DISCUSSING SEGMENT TWO

QUOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

“Finally, if your bill is still alive after all this vivisection, it comes to a vote. Yes, Sir. The big day finally arrives – and Congress adjourns.” – Saunders

“Always try to see life around you as if you’ve just come out of a tunnel.” – Jeff Smith

Jeff and Saunders have strengths that complement each other. How do Jeff’s ideals help Saunders evaluate the way she views life? How does Saunders help Jeff to be a more effective senator?

- Jeff’s patriotism helps Saunders re-discover the vision of America’s Founding Fathers and helps her appreciate the privilege and responsibility of being an American.
- Jeff treats Saunders with courtesy and personal respect, which prompts Saunders to examine her attitudes towards people, her job, and life itself. He sees her as a whole person and not just as a secretary, asking her about her background and her first name, and telling her about his father and mother.
- Saunders helps Jeff to wake up to the realities of politics. She walks him through the process of getting a bill passed and prepares him for all of the waiting and disappointments of the process.

What does it mean to see life “as if you’ve just come out of a tunnel”?

- Seeing life as if one has just come out of a tunnel means that one sees the good and the beauty of life and is grateful for it, just as one is “grateful to see daylight again after coming through a long, dark tunnel.” Jeff’s father taught him, “Don’t miss the wonders that surround you.”
- Jeff helps Saunders recognize that the privileges and freedoms she has as an American need to be appreciated and not taken for granted.

“You’re not a senator. You’re an Honorary Stooge.” – Press Club reporters

How do the reporters help Jeff Smith grow in self-knowledge and what effect does that have on the way Jeff approaches his job as a senator?

- When confronted by the reporters, Jeff Smith realizes that his patriotic passions and feelings have blurred his perspective on the realities around him. He humbly accepts the assessment of the reporters that he is just “occupying” a chair in the Senate, and then resolves to be an active participant by introducing a bill that will benefit the boys of America.
**Character Concept: Honesty**

Senator Paine says to McGann: “This boy is honest, not stupid.” Paine’s knowledge of Smith’s integrity gives him reason to worry that Smith will not sell out his ideals. At the same time, Smith’s honesty is troubling to Paine because it reminds him of the time when he, too, was a man of principle.

**PART THREE: A CRISIS FOR JEFFERSON SMITH**

Film time: 34 minutes

1. Have the students take out their Movie Quotes, Character Traits and Key Terms handouts.

2. Present the theme for the third segment:

   *In moments of crisis, good character enables us to do what is right.*

Remind the students that this theme will be apparent in the film segment and should be kept in mind while watching the film.

3. Present the key terms

   *Civic Virtue*: putting the good of the community above one’s own self-interests

   *Common Good*: the shared good of a community or society as a whole

   *Courage*: the inner strength to face fear or danger with confidence and resolution

4. Ask the students to explain where the story line left off. Paine and McGann look for a way to keep Smith away from the Senate chamber when the Deficiency Bill is discussed.

5. Start the film.

**Segment Three ends as Saunders and Smith leave the Lincoln Memorial and Smith gives a salute to the statue of Abraham Lincoln.**
Plot Synopsis of Segment 3

The fallout begins. As Senator Smith finds a large group of people in his office, Saunders immediately ushers him to a private office and shows him a pile of letters that have come from boys who support his Boys Camp. Smith reads them with enthusiasm and tells Saunders that he is very grateful for her help. He adds that he is going to tell his mother all about her. Susan Paine calls to ask Smith to escort her to a reception the next day, and Saunders takes him out to buy some new clothes.

Saunders decides to quit. She is upset because she knows that Susan Paine will hurt Smith, and she cannot stand seeing him get hurt. She suggests to Diz that they get married, but it is obvious that she is just trying to escape from the fact that she is falling for Jeff Smith and does not want to be there to see what the Taylor machine will do to him. She tells Diz that she doesn’t want to be around when his opponents try to ruin him and that she is going to quit, “bonus or no bonus.”

Saunders returns to the office and starts packing her things. As Smith looks on, wondering what she is doing, Saunders tells him that she can’t take any more and that she’s quitting. She turns to him and says, “Why don’t you go home? . . . you’re halfway decent, you don’t belong here. Now go home.” Saunders then shows Smith the Deficiency Bill, with the plan to build a dam at Willet Creek, and explains that Susan took him to the reception so that he wouldn’t be in the Senate chamber when it was read. “That’s why they sent you here in the first place, because you don’t know a dam from a bathtub.”

The Taylor machine springs into action. Smith goes to Paine and tells him that he knows about the Deficiency Bill and about the graft involved in the Willet Creek Dam project. Paine is very upset that Smith is accusing him of corruption; McGann gets on the phone with Taylor, urging him to come to Washington.

Taylor invites Smith to meet with him to talk. Paine and some other congressmen are talking with Taylor about the situation, and Paine learns that Smith is on his way to meet with them. He tells Taylor that he will have nothing to do with Taylor’s plans to ruin Smith, but when Taylor threatens to ruin Paine as well if he does not go along with it, Paine backs down. He asks Taylor not to be too “rough” on Smith.

Taylor talks with Smith. Smith comes in and Taylor tries to bribe him to go along with the Deficiency Bill and Willet Creek Dam project. Taylor makes it clear that other members of Congress from his state never have to worry about getting re-elected, because Taylor takes care of everything. When he mentions that he controls Joseph Paine as well, Smith doesn’t believe him and calls him a liar.
Smith goes to talk with Paine. Smith is expecting Paine to reassure him that he has not been told what to do by Taylor, but instead Paine tries to convince Smith that sometimes senators have to compromise. He tells Smith, “This is a man’s world, Jeff, and you’ve got to check your ideals outside the door.” He points out all the good things that he has accomplished as a senator, and that he has served the state in “a thousand honest ways.” He then tells Smith that he does not want to see him get hurt, and urges him not to work against the Deficiency Bill when it comes up for a vote.

The confrontation in the Senate. Smith gets up to state that the Willet Creek Dam section of the Deficiency Bill is corrupt. At that moment, however, Paine asks for the floor and Smith yields. Paine tells the Senate that he considers Senator Smith “unworthy to address this body.” He says that Smith’s own bill is corrupt, and that he has conclusive evidence that Smith owns the very land described in the bill. He accuses Smith of using the Senate “for his own personal profit.”

At the Privileges and Elections committee, false evidence is brought against Jeff Smith. The governor testifies that Smith purchased the land, and a phony contract with Jefferson Smith’s name on it is produced. Paine and the other men perjure themselves by testifying falsely against Smith. When it is Smith’s turn to speak, he walks out of the room. Paine puts his head in his hands, contemplating what he has done.

Saunders finds Smith at the Lincoln Memorial. Smith has become despondent and is ready to give up and go home, telling Saunders that she was right about politics in Washington. When she asks him what he will tell “the kids,” he says that he will tell them the truth.

Saunders now has the moral clarity to see what is happening, and she challenges Smith to stay and fight. She reminds him that Lincoln “had his Taylors” too, and makes him think about how he’ll answer the boys if they look up at him with hurt faces and say, “Jeff, what did you do, quit? Didn’t you do something about it?”

She tells him Lincoln was waiting for him, “waiting for a man who could see his job and sail into it.” Saunders tells him she has a plan; she will help him conduct a filibuster in the Senate to try to prevent Taylor’s corrupt scheme from succeeding.
DISCUSSING SEGMENT THREE

QUOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

“Go ahead. Be a senator. Try and mess up Mr. Taylor’s little graft. But if you can’t – and you can’t in nine million years – go home! Don’t stay around here making people feel sorry for you.”  – Saunders

Smith’s moral strength and his personal way of interacting with others make a deep impression on Saunders; she finds herself troubled at what is happening to Smith. Why does Saunders feel this way? Why does she get upset with Smith?

- After years of dealing with Washington politics, Saunders has toughened herself like Paine’s “man.” Survival is all that matters; all is fair in politics.

- Saunders is upset because Jeff has re-awakened in her the virtues of honesty and a particular concern for each and every person. He has broken through her defenses and reminded her that we all have a duty to fight for justice.

“This is a man’s world, Jeff, and you’ve got to check your ideals outside the door.”  – Senator Paine

Contrast Paine and Smith’s understandings of what it is to be a man. Which senator is right? What qualities does a real man possess?

- Senator Paine: Paine focuses on the “thousand honest ways” he has served his state and rationalizes the corruption he is willing to participate in because of the good he has done. Paine thinks that, to be a man, one must compromise with evil to achieve good. He also thinks that to be a man is to be impersonal and ruthless, willing to win at all costs; because of corruption in the world, one must be willing to play dirty.

- Jeff Smith: Smith is honest and refuses to compromise with Taylor and Paine, even when bribed and threatened. Jeff learned from his father that it takes courage and perseverance to hold fast in the fight against corruption; when he knows that something is wrong, a real man can never compromise—even to achieve something good. Smith fights for justice and for the good of boys around the country. He also understands that a real man deals with life on an individual level, person by person; Smith treats everyone with dignity and respect and is sincere with everyone he meets.

- A Real Man:
  - A real man **protects** those who are weaker than he or those who need his help.
  - A real man is **courageous**. He never compromises with evil, even to achieve something good.
  - A real man is **honest and reliable**. He never tells a lie, even to avoid trouble; the truth must always be upheld.
“Remember what you said about Mr. Lincoln? You said he was sitting up there waiting for someone to come along. You were right. He was waiting for a man who could see his job and sail into it.” — Saunders

True friends bring out the best in each other; they encourage each other to do the right thing and to be the best they can be. How does Smith bring out the best in Saunders? How does Saunders encourage Smith to do the right thing?

- **Smith** brings out the best in Saunders by instilling in her a greater sense of patriotism, a desire to promote justice, and an optimism about human nature that overcomes her cynicism. His example motivates her to embrace the cause of truth – and shows her that it is not a “lost cause.”

- **Saunders** encourages Smith to stay and fight Taylor and Paine. Smith’s hope and courage is revived when Saunders reminds him that he has a job to do in Washington and that he cannot just walk away from it. She gives Smith the encouragement he needs to take on what appears to be an almost impossible task: to conduct a filibuster to stop the Willet Creek Dam project. Smith is ready for the challenge, and he salutes the statue of Lincoln, the symbol of his inspiration.

**Character Concept:**
**Choosing the Common Good over Self-Interest**

French political thinker, historian and author of *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) explains that when each individual works with fellow citizens for the common good he is in fact working in his own best self-interest. What is good for the community is ultimately good for the individual. This concept is central theme of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.*

People who serve in public life are often confronted with a choice between doing what is best for the common good and doing what is in their own self-interest. Joseph Paine has rationalized his willingness to compromise his principles because he has served his state “in a thousand honest ways.”

His moment of truth comes when his conscience tells him that it is wrong for the Taylor machine to ruin Jeff Smith. When faced with the choice of seeing Smith’s character be destroyed or his own political career ended, he chooses to cooperate in the evil that Taylor has planned. Because he has compromised so many times in the past, he himself has become fatally compromised.
1. Have the students take out their Movie Quotes, Character Traits and Key Terms handouts.

2. Present the theme for the fourth segment:

   *It is difficult to defend truth and the common good without the help of others.*

   Remind the students that this theme will be apparent in the film segment and should be kept in mind while watching the film.

3. Present the key terms for this segment.

   *Perseverance:* the quality of holding to a course of action, belief or purpose, without giving way

   *Conscience:* the faculty of recognizing the distinction between right and wrong in regard to one’s own conduct

   *Cooperation:* working together for a common cause

4. Ask the students to explain where the story line left off. *Saunders and Smith leave the Lincoln Memorial, and Smith gives a salute to the statue of Abraham Lincoln.*

5. Start the film. The film concludes with this segment.
Plot Synopsis of Segment 4

“Pray, Diz, if you know how.” The next day, the Senate convenes and the roll is called. Smith arrives at his place just in time with his pockets filled with apples and donuts, to the surprise of the other senators. Before any business is conducted, one senator makes a motion to expel Jefferson Smith from his seat in the Senate. Smith asks to speak, and while the President of the Senate deliberates, Saunders calls out, “Let him speak.”

“The chair recognizes Senator Smith.” Smith is allowed to speak, and he reveals that the Willet Creek Dam project is a corrupt scheme designed to profit a man named Jim Taylor and his cronies. He explains that he found three congressmen in the room with Taylor the day he went up to see him and that Taylor attempted to bribe him to get his support for the Deficiency Bill. In his attempt to silence Smith, Paine announces to his fellow senators that he was also in the room and claims that they were there to urge Smith to resign. Paine then dramatically leaves the Senate chamber.

Smith asks his fellow senators to give him one week to show that the charges against him are false before voting on the Deficiency Bill. A group of senators leaves the room, showing their support for Paine. After they leave, Smith stands alone with the President of the Senate and calls for a quorum. Responding to the quorum call, the senators return to the Senate chamber.

The fight in the press. Saunders asks Diz to make sure that the people in Smith’s home state learn about what is happening in the Senate. Diz agrees to get the word out through the press.

Taylor makes Joe Paine realize that they must stop at nothing to destroy Smith. Taylor calls the newspapers in Smith’s home state, which Taylor controls, and tells them to keep all pro-Smith news from being disseminated in the state. Taylor tells Paine to go back into the Senate and “keep those senators lined up.” Paine responds that he has lost the stomach for fighting against Smith, but he returns to the Senate chamber.

The senators have a discussion. Paine will not concede one inch to Smith, but the senators are trying to work out a deal. Paine insists that it is a matter of his own honor and the honor of the Senate. In the end the senators agree to hear Smith out, but plan to be present in the Senate chamber in shifts, barely maintaining a quorum. In this way they will be able to take rests while Smith gradually becomes exhausted.

Commentary by H. V. Kaltenborn. Kaltenborn (who was a radio commentator in real life) educates the public about the filibuster through his radio broadcast, saying that it represents “democracy in action.”
In the Senate, Smith explains his goals for a Boys Camp. He wants to get boys from all over the country out of the crowded cities and learn to appreciate what America stands for through the beauty of nature. One of the senators asks if Smith will adjourn until the next morning; Smith asks the chair for clarification and learns that he may not be able to continue in the morning. Smith continues his filibuster.

Saunders gives him his “second wind.” She sends him a note saying, “You’re wonderful . . . I’m in love with you” and advises him to read the Constitution.

“Freedom of the press.” Saunders learns from Diz that Taylor has suppressed the truth about Smith in his home state. She talks with Smith’s mother and they decide to enlist the support of the Boy Rangers to get the truth out.

Smith continues his filibuster into the night. Smith is very tired, but he keeps talking, while other senators and Saunders can barely keep their eyes open. In the meantime, the Boy Rangers start distributing their papers throughout the state, but the Taylor machine effectively prevents them from doing so by seizing the papers. Parades held in honor of Smith are doused with water hoses, while rallies for Taylor and Paine are staged across the state. Boys begin to get hurt, and Mrs. Smith phones Saunders, saying, “Tell Jeff to stop.” Tearfully, Saunders agrees.

“There’s no compromise with truth.” The commentator announces that Smith has been talking for 23 hours and 16 minutes. He is by this time very tired. The Senators are watching him. Senator Paine enters the Senate and asks Smith to allow him to present the response from their home state. He brings in 50,000 telegrams asking Smith to yield the floor. Smith reads some of the telegrams and is devastated by what he reads.

Smith turns to Paine and says, “I guess this is just another lost cause, Mr. Paine.” Then, to the other senators and gallery: “All you people don’t know about lost causes, but Mr. Paine does. He said once they were the only causes worth fighting for. And he fought for them once, for the only reason any man ever fights for them, because of just one, plain, simple rule: Love thy neighbor.” He then says to Paine, “You know that rule, Mr. Paine, and I loved you for it, just as my father did. And you know that you fight for the lost causes harder than for any others; yes, you even die for them, like a man we both knew, Mr. Paine.”

Smith tells Paine that he will continue to fight until someone listens to him, and then falls in a faint. As he does, Senator Paine is overcome and rushes out of the room. The sound of gunshots is heard, and Paine is seen being restrained just outside the Senate chamber. He then breaks free and rushes back onto the Senate floor, loudly declaring that Smith had been telling the truth all along. With this news the Senate and the visitors erupt in excitement and joy; Smith is victorious in his fight for justice and truth.
DISCUSSING SEGMENT FOUR

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How is Jeff Smith an example to those around him of what it means to be a person of character?

How do Smith and Saunders, together as friends, influence the lives of those around them?

Examine this question especially in the case of Senator Paine.

• Jeff Smith has integrity and a strong faith in his country and its people. This deeply impacts those around him, especially Saunders and Paine.

  • Saunders, in observing Jeff’s day-to-day behavior, sees what it is to be truly strong and courageous. This example ignites her own moral strength and she joins with him to fight for justice and truth.

  • Paine's knowledge of Smith’s integrity gave him reason to worry that Smith would not sell out his ideals, and he was right. At the same time, Smith’s honesty is troubling to Paine because it reminds him of the time when he, too, was a man of principle. Smith refuses to participate in corruption and refuses to manipulate the law for his own purposes; rather, he stands strong in the defense of justice and also works hard for the good of boys around the country. He is even willing to stand before the Senate for hours on end to hold up the high principles in which he believes.
Smith and Saunders impact the conscience of Senator Paine.

Throughout the film, Paine has struggled with the inner conflict between the compromises he has made by becoming part of the Taylor machine, and the ideals that he once shared with Jeff Smith’s father, Clayton Smith. Having witnessed the heroic death of Smith’s father, Paine is fully aware of the stakes in the battle between good and evil. He tries to rationalize his compromise by arguing that the end justifies the means, but this philosophy cannot be sustained when the clash between good and evil reaches its zenith. As Joe Paine witnesses the commitment and unrelenting courage of Smith and Saunders, and then watches Jeff Smith fall to the floor of the Senate chamber—apparently defeated by the might of the Taylor machine—Paine experiences his “moment of truth.” In a burst of moral resurgence, he publicly repudiates all that he has said against Smith, and explains that everything Smith said is true. Through the example of Smith and Saunders, Senator Paine has finally reached the point where he must bear witness to the fact that there is no compromise with truth.

Early in the film Smith says to Senator Paine, as they are talking about Jeff’s father, “One man by himself can’t get very far, can he?” How is this idea depicted in Mr. Smith Goes to Washington?

- Smith could not have conducted the filibuster without the help of Saunders, and her knowledge of the procedures in the Senate.
- The President of the Senate recognizes Smith’s integrity and comes to Smith’s defense on more than one occasion.
- It is Joseph Paine’s heroic decision to do what is right and tell the truth about Jeff Smith that ultimately enables truth and justice to triumph.

Director’s Chair

Capra has been criticized for exaggerating the control of the Taylor machine in the scenes where the Boy Rangers are prevented from distributing their papers in support of Jeff Smith. This exaggeration was, however, Capra’s way of portraying just how forceful evil can be when corruption takes hold of the political process. While Taylor-like machines, in their struggle to maintain political power, may not actually go to the lengths that Capra depicts in the final scenes of the film, they have been known to trample on the rights of ordinary citizens through the use of force and behind-the-scenes corruption.
Reflections on the Final Scene in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*

I guess this is just another lost cause, Mr. Paine...“All you people don’t know about lost causes, but Mr. Paine does. He said once they were the only causes worth fighting for. And he fought for them once, for the only reason any man ever fights for them, because of just one, plain, simple rule: Love thy neighbor.

Jeff Smith stands in the well of the Senate and with a voice grown hoarse from filibustering proclaims the self-evident truths that bind Americans together in civic friendship. The idea of engaged citizenship is joined with the image of determination and political integrity.

When he turns to Senator Paine and says, “I guess this is just another lost cause, Mr. Paine,” audiences are not just being entertained; they are being educated and inspired. Senator Smith has shown Americans how to be engaged citizens in a nation of self-governing people.
Three years after *Mr. Smith* premiered, the nation was in the midst of WWII and Frank Capra was in the army overseas. His wife sent him a report from France just as the country was about to be taken over by the Nazis.

**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.

Frank Capra provides this news item in his autobiography, *The Name Above The Title*. 

Civic Friendship and the Common Good: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Shane*
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**Part 5: Program Application**

**Instructional objectives for Mr. Smith Goes To Washington**

- Understand the importance of civic virtue;
- Understand the qualities of a true friendship.
- Understand the dynamics in the relationship of Jeff Smith and Saunders.

**Talking Points on Civic Virtue**

The following talking points on civic virtue and the qualities of true friendship provide student opportunity for discussion. Depending on time constraints and the particular educational setting, you may wish to focus on only one of these instructional objectives.

- Civic virtue consists in putting the good of the community above one’s own self-interests. This means that one must embrace the ideals of truth and goodness as the foundation for a healthy society.

- In a healthy society, people from different backgrounds (ethnic, socio-economic, religious, etc.) work together for the good of the community and the country. They are focused on the ideals that they share in common rather than being focused on the political party they belong to or the interests of a particular group.

- No one becomes a hero overnight. The heroes of the September 11th terrorist attack – firefighters, policemen, and others who sacrificed their lives – did not just pull their heroism out of thin air. To become a real hero, daily challenges must be handled well so that a person can develop a habit of virtue. Lao-tzu, an ancient Eastern philosopher, is quoted as saying, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

- In the film, Smith has begun his journey towards greatness by being the trustworthy leader of the Boy Rangers. By doing the ordinary tasks associated with this role and doing them well, Smith is building the strength of character that will be required for serving honorably in national public office. The heroism that he showed in putting out the forest fire is a foreshadowing of the courage he later displays on the floor of the Senate.
D I S C U S S I O N  O N  C I V I C  V I R T U E

What does the film Mr. Smith Goes to Washington teach us about the role of personal responsibility and civic virtue in our own lives?

- Situations often arise where people are challenged to act rightly when they would just as soon take the easy way out. In some cases it involves overcoming the temptation to look the other way when one is aware of wrongdoing. In other cases, it involves telling the whole truth about something when one is tempted to leave out certain details which change the meaning of what one is saying.

- In Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Jeff Smith confronts Senator Paine regarding his complicity in the Taylor machine’s scheme to use the property at Willet Creek for Taylor’s personal gain. Paine has rationalized his own corruption by choosing to focus on the good that he has accomplished in the Senate and justifying his cooperation with the Taylor machine. He tells Smith that it is necessary to sometimes compromise principles in order to “get things done.” Smith knows, however, that Paine’s rationalization only demonstrates a lack of moral courage.

- There has always been the temptation to check one’s principles at the door when confronted with a moral dilemma. Doing the right thing and telling the truth in a difficult situation often involves pain or sacrifice. However, once someone starts down the path of compromising moral principles, it becomes increasingly difficult to get back on the path of virtue and undo the harm that may have been done in the process. Fortunately, everyone has the capacity to start over by admitting past mistakes and telling the truth.


- A real friendship is based on respect and kindness towards others, on common interests or values. Good friends do not base their friendship on social status or cliques, but rather on the individual value of every human person.

- True friends each have good personal character; they have a high moral standard to which they are accountable.

- Good friends bring out the best in each other. They believe that their friends are capable of greatness and they hold them to a high moral standard.

- Good friends build each other up. When one is weak, the other urges them on, reminding them of their true capacity and instilling within them the qualities of courage and perseverance.

- Good friends are there when you need them. They do not abandon you when things get tough, or if you become “un-cool.”
Close-Up: The Relationship of Jimmy Stewart’s Jeff Smith and Jean Arthur’s Saunders

“Life has taught us that love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward together in the same direction.”

– Antoine de Saint-Exupery

As the movie ends, Jeff and Saunders are the best of friends, and they are also in love; the viewer assumes that they will eventually get married. As in most classic movies, what the audience sees is the cinematic chemistry between the man and the woman as their relationship unfolds.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington shows three essential dynamics blended together in the

Jeff Smith/Saunders relationship:

1. Jeff and Saunders are partners in a civic enterprise to defend the common good of their country.

2. Jeff and Saunders are good friends who come to share the same interests and vision of the world even though they begin their relationship from two very different spheres of life.

3. In the course of living out their roles as partners in a civic enterprise and good friends with a common vision, these two people fall in love.
Close-Up (Continued):

The Relationship of Stewart’s Jeff Smith and Arthur’s Saunders

Why is friendship such an important basis for marriage?

- Close friends know each other well and love each other for who they are. They love the little quirks in each other’s personalities, the things that make each of them unique. They are also aware of the other’s weaknesses and know that they can live with those shortcomings, while encouraging each other to overcome them.

- Because good friends know each other well, they are able to become romantically involved knowing that they are comfortable with each other and feel close to each other. They know that they share the same values and that they will help each other follow their dreams and be the best persons they can be. They know that they will put each other’s good ahead of their own desires and will love each other and not use each other.

- Because of this, many of the initial questions involved in entering a relationship have already been answered. There is already a foundation of trust and intimacy. One does not need to spend time getting to know the other; rather, they can begin to build a romantic relationship upon an already existing friendship.

- Real friendship is an irreplaceable foundation for a lasting marriage. Every married couple hits the rocks now and then, and only a relationship based on a solid friendship will survive the storms and uncertainties of life. When arguments come, both spouses know that they love each other and are not going to give up on the relationship. The goal is to restore their friendship, not abandon each other.

Friends share common interests, beliefs, and goals. These similarities strengthen the relationship and provide something to hold on to when the relationship hits a dry spell and the romance diminishes.

In fact, it is these shared values that keep a couple strong and help them to re-awaken the flames of romance when they hit a rough patch in their marriage.
Appendices

(Suggested Practice for Appendices A and B: Copy and distribute to students.)

Appendix A - Handouts: Movie Quotes, Character Traits, Key Terms, Key Terms Fill-Ins, The Meaning of Friendship

Appendix B – Supplementary Materials – The Vital Elements of Classic Film and the Motion Picture Production Code, What Makes A Film A Classic, A Famous Quote to Consider, Essay Questions

Appendix C – Answer Keys
**Mr. Smith Goes to Washington**

**Movie Quotes**

*Listen for the following quotes as you watch the film, and take notes on what is happening in the movie at the time.*

**SEGMENT 1**

“A young patriot, recites Lincoln and Jefferson, turned loose in our nation’s capital? Yeah, I think it’s all right.” – Senator Paine

“Honorary appointment! You scratch this thing and you’ll find they need a dope here for a couple of months.” – Ms. Saunders to Diz

**SEGMENT 2**

“Finally, if your bill is still alive after all this vivisection, it comes to a vote. Yes, Sir. The big day finally arrives – and Congress adjourns.” – Saunders

“Always try to see life around you as if you’ve just come out of a tunnel.” – Jeff Smith

**SEGMENT 3**

“Go ahead. Be a senator. Try and mess up Mr. Taylor’s little graft. But if you can’t – and you can’t in a million years – go home! Don’t stay around here making people feel sorry for you.” – Saunders

“This is a man’s world, Jeff, and you’ve got to check your ideals outside the door.” – Senator Paine

“Remember what you said about Mr. Lincoln? You said he was sitting up there waiting for someone to come along. You were right. He was waiting for a man who could see his job and sail into it.” – Saunders

**SEGMENT 4**

“I guess this is just another lost cause, Mr. Paine...“All you people don’t know about lost causes, but Mr. Paine does. He said once they were the only causes worth fighting for. And he fought for them once, for the only reason any man ever fights for them, because of just one, plain, simple rule: Love thy neighbor.” – Jeff Smith

“I’m not fit for office! I’m not fit for any place of honor or trust!” – Senator Paine
Please use this page to take notes on the positive and negative character traits of the following film characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson Smith</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarissa Saunders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Paine</td>
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</table>
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
Key Terms

1. TRUSTWORTHY  Truthful and responsible, reliable.

2. HUMILITY  The ability to honestly assess one’s personal strengths and weaknesses and not overestimate one’s own importance.

3. CYNICAL  Scornful or suspicious of the motives or virtues of other people.

4. SELF-KNOWLEDGE  The ability to see ourselves objectively and to have a realistic perspective on our lives.

5. MORAL ENERGY  The ability to put moral values into action.

6. CIVIC VIRTUE  Putting the good of the community above one’s own self-interests.

7. COMMON GOOD  The shared good of a community or society as a whole.

8. COURAGE  The inner strength to face fear or danger with confidence and resolution.

9. PERSEVERANCE  The quality of holding to a course of action, belief, or purpose, without giving way.

10. CONSCIENCE  The faculty of recognizing the distinction between right and wrong in regard to one’s own conduct.

11. COOPERATION  Working together for a common cause.
### Mr. Smith Goes to Washington Key Terms Fill-ins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Terms</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Cynical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moral Energy</td>
<td>Civic Virtue</td>
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<td>Conscience</td>
<td>Common Good</td>
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1. In her ____________________________ state of mind, Saunders refers to Jeff Smith as Daniel Boone.

2. Smith’s ____________________________ is demonstrated by his dedication to the Boy Rangers in his state.

3. Smith’s ____________________________ character makes him a popular choice for senator with the people of his state.

4. Jeff Smith shows his ____________________________ when he wonders whether his appointment to the Senate is a mistake.

5. The ____________________________ between Smith and Saunders makes the filibuster possible.

6. The love of Saunders and the example of his hero, Abraham Lincoln, help Smith summon the ____________________________ to conduct the filibuster.

7. The ____________________________ is served when the Taylor machine’s corruption is brought to light.

8. When the reporters call Smith an “honorary stooge” he gains ________ and perspective on his role as a senator.

9. Suffering fatigue and exhaustion, Smith continues the filibuster through sheer ____________________________.

10. With the help of Saunders, Smith leaves the Lincoln Memorial with renewed ____________________________.

11. Senator Paine’s ____________________________ is constantly torn between his loyalty to the Taylor machine and the ideals he once upheld.
The Meaning of Friendship in Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
"Without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods."
~ Aristotle

The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 to 322 B.C.) has written about various kinds of friendship. This unit provides an opportunity to apply Aristotle’s insights on the meaning of friendship to Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.

Aristotle on Friendship:
Aristotle writes that there are three basic kinds of friendship: the pleasant friendship, the useful friendship, and the virtuous friendship.

- In a pleasant friendship, people are engaged with one another because they are pleasant to be around. Like a friendship of utility, this kind of friendship is also based on personal profit because one derives satisfaction from the relationship.
- In a useful friendship, people are engaged with one another because of what they receive from the friendship. They are friends because the relationship enables them to profit in some way. An example of this is a store owner and his/her regular customer.

Friendships based only on pleasure or utility are not necessarily bad. Both kinds are typically components of a virtuous friendship. However, friendships based only on pleasantness or utility are not long-lasting. When the friendship no longer provides what is useful or pleasurable, the friendship dissolves.

- The people in a virtuous friendship will have a mutual desire for each other’s well-being. True friendships develop over time and are strengthened through hardships. True friends help each other to grow in virtue and demonstrate self-giving love. A virtuous friendship is long-lasting and reciprocal.

When Aristotle describes the qualities of true friendship, we can all recognize the truth of his analysis.

A virtuous friendship exists when two or more people:

- Have taken the time to get to know each other;
- Have strong character
- Desire what is truly best for each other
- Undergo hardships together – and support each other along the way
- Help one another grow in virtue
Aristotle’s Three Kinds of Friendship in
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

• Pleasant – What is an example of a friendship of pleasure in Mr. Smith Goes to Washington?

The relationship between Jeff Smith and Susan Paine

• Useful – What is an example of a friendship of utility in Mr. Smith Goes to Washington?

The short-lived ‘romantic’ relationship between Diz and Saunders

• Virtuous – The relationship of Saunders and Jeff Smith?

Saunders and Jeff Smith grow into a virtuous, or true, friendship when they begin to share a common vision of what needs to be done to overcome evil and bring about the triumph of truth and justice.

They help one another to grow in virtue and reach their full potential as human beings.

Their friendship contains elements of utility and pleasure, but it matures into a true friendship through the shared experience of pain and suffering that Jeff undergoes at the hands of Senator Paine and the Taylor machine.
The Vital Elements of Classic Film and the Motion Picture Production Code

Classic films as an indisputable “cultural commodity of great price.”

Thomas Doherty, in his scholarly treatment of Pre-Code Hollywood (Columbia University Press, 1999), gives a critical assessment of the influence of the Motion Picture Production Code Administration (MPPCA) over the making of studio films in the period known as the “Golden Age” of Hollywood. In 1934, the studio heads unanimously agreed to make the Code they had adopted in 1930 operational. They created the MCCPA and gave it the power to issue a Code Seal on every film they made. The question of whether this power was ultimately negative or positive is a matter of extensive debate among film critics and historians, but on the subject of the greatness of the films produced under the Code there is little argument.

Discussing the great body of cinematic art produced in this era, Doherty describes it as a cultural commodity of great price, and makes his case regarding the influence of the Code on the cinematic quality of classic films:

The Code gave Hollywood the framework to thrive economically and ripen artistically and Hollywood in turn gave the Code provenance over a cultural commodity of great price . . . what makes Hollywood’s classic age ‘classical’ is not just the film style or the studio system but the moral stakes.

Thomas Doherty also authored the biography of Joseph Breen, Hollywood’s Censor (Columbia University Press, 2007). Joseph Breen was the head of the Motion Picture Production Code Administration from 1934 to 1954. In both of his accounts of Hollywood history, Doherty describes the era of the “Golden Age” and the period of Motion Picture Production Code Administration influence as closely aligned with this statement:

Hollywood’s vaunted “golden age” began with the Code and ended with its demise. An artistic flowering of incalculable cultural impact, Hollywood under the Code bequeathed the great generative legacy for screens large and small.
Background on Classic Films and the Motion Picture Production Code

The Motion Picture Production Code (also known as the Hays Code) was adopted on March 31, 1930 and began to be enforced by the Production Code Administration on July 1, 1934, after which time all films were required to obtain a certificate of approval known as the “Code Seal” before being released. While the Code was not enforced by federal, state or city governments, all of the major Hollywood studio producers and executives agreed to abide by the Code. The Code contained a set of general moral principles to guide film-makers in making decisions related to their craft. These film-makers committed themselves to self-censorship as outlined in the Code.

The Motion Picture Production Code was replaced in 1967 by the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) ratings system, which helps viewers determine a movie’s content before watching the film but does not place limits on film-makers as to what may be shown on the screen.

What the Code Said: General Principles

1. No picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence, the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.
2. Correct standards of life . . . shall be presented.
3. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.

What the Code Said: Sexuality

The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing.

1. Adultery, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated, or justified, or presented attractively.
2. Scenes of Passion
   a. They should not be introduced when not essential to the plot.
   b. Excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive postures and gestures, are not to be shown.

Relating the Motion Picture Production Code Principles to Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

The artistic vision of director Frank Capra paired well with the Motion Picture Production Code. Romance in classic films in general, and in Frank Capra’s films in particular, is consistently portrayed as a relationship between whole persons. A relationship of whole persons necessarily involves the physical, emotional, moral, intellectual and social dimensions of the human person.
If we read his autobiography, *The Name Above the Title*, we see that legendary director Frank Capra was a hopeless romantic at heart. Yet he understood that authentic love involves the whole person. In *It Happened One Night* (1934), *Meet John Doe* (1941), and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) we see his consistent pattern of creating an unforgettable image of whole person romantic love.

In *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, we see that while Jeff finds Saunders attractive physically, it is the intellectual and moral dimensions of her personality that touch his heart.

Their relationship takes a significant turn in Capra’s famous scene at the Lincoln Memorial.

He realizes that she has now embraced the very ideals of public service that he brought to his job as senator. Their complimentary relationship becomes more visible and a significant change comes over Jeff Smith.

When Saunders sends Smith a note prompting him to read the Constitution, and adds that she’s in love with him, the viewer sees Smith, tired after having already filibustered for some time, become rejuvenated and filled with a renewed resolve to keep going.

Her expression of love for him enables him to recognize that the romantic sentiments that were awakened in him at the Lincoln Memorial are blossoming into love based on the common vision they share.

We see that while Smith is attracted to the beautiful Susan Paine, he falls in love with Saunders – the person with whom he shares a whole person relationship.
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
What Makes a Film a Classic?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

A classic film…

- depicts universal truths in a way that is edifying to the viewer;
- shows positive growth in virtue on the part of the major characters;
- transcends racial, ethnic and religious boundaries and divisions;
- has production values that are generally recognized as being of a high caliber;
- has characters that are realistic and believable.

Some old films can be considered “classic” and some contemporary films will likely endure as classics. Based on the criteria mentioned as to what constitutes a classic film, which recent films would you call classics? Why?
A FAMOUS QUOTE TO CONSIDER

“Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it.”
– William Penn

Discuss this quote of William Penn (1644-1718), the Quaker founding father of Pennsylvania, as it relates to the story portrayed in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.

How does this quote reflect the idea that while many people may stand against truth and goodness, the fact that a certain thing is true and good, or false and wicked, is incontrovertible – you can’t argue with it.

How does Jeff Smith’s fight to uphold the truth help the viewer gain perspective on his or her personal struggle to uphold the truth in the challenges of daily life?

Possible discussion points include:

**Truth and Consequences: Senator Joe Paine.** In his attempt to justify his compromise with corruption, Paine tells Smith that he has brought many benefits to the state through his public service. Like Senator Joe Paine, many people struggle when making moral decisions. There is always the temptation to make decisions based on their possible outcomes, rather than on fundamental principles of right and wrong. But as we see from Paine’s willingness to compromise, people are hurt when “right” is compromised and “wrong” is protected.

**Truth and Consequences: Senator Jefferson Smith.** Smith learned respect and love for the truth from his father, who was willing to put his life on the line for a right and noble cause. Also, as the head of the Boy Rangers, Jeff Smith knows the importance of setting a good example for young people, and never compromising the truth in matters of right and wrong. For Smith, the consequences of telling the truth involve great personal sacrifice, but he knows that maintaining his integrity is more important than a political career in Washington.
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

Essay Questions

When writing an essay . . .

1) Write your essay in a logical order. Begin with answering the question very briefly in the introduction, give arguments for your answer in the following paragraphs, and conclude with a summary.

2) Use proper grammar and punctuation.

3) Check your spelling.

4) Answer the question clearly and concisely. Make sure everything you say relates to the question.

5) Finally, be creative and have fun!

Essay Questions

What two factors are primarily responsible for the final outcome of Mr. Smith Goes to Washington?

Discuss the importance of Smith’s statement: “There’s no compromise with truth.”
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
Movie Quotes Answer Key

SEGMENT 1

“A young patriot, recites Lincoln and Jefferson, turned loose in our nation’s capital? Yeah, I think it’s all right.” – Senator Paine

- Senator Paine is not worried that Smith has been appointed as U.S. Senator; he is confident that Smith will not realize what is going on with the Deficiency Bill and will leave them alone.

“Honorary appointment! You scratch this thing and you’ll find they need a dope here for a couple of months.” – Ms. Saunders to Diz

- Saunders is sharing her suspicions with Diz that there is something fishy going on and that Jeff Smith was appointed because he would not present a challenge to Paine’s political intrigues.

SEGMENT 2

“Finally, if your bill is still alive after all this vivisection, it comes to a vote. Yes, Sir. The big day finally arrives – and Congress adjourns.” – Saunders

- Saunders explains the process of passing a bill.

“Always try to see life around you as if you’ve just come out of a tunnel.” – Jeff Smith

- Smith explains his views on life to Saunders as they discuss his proposal for National Boys Camp.
SEGMENT 3

“Go ahead. Be a senator. Try and mess up Mr. Taylor’s little graft. But if you can’t – and you can’t in a million years – go home! Don’t stay around here making people feel sorry for you.” – Saunders

- The inebriated Saunders has alerted Smith to the graft hidden within the Deficiency Bill and tells him that it is useless to try and fight Paine and Taylor.

“This is a man’s world, Jeff, and you’ve got to check your ideals outside the door.” – Senator Paine

- Senator Paine believes that, to be a man, you must be willing to compromise with evil.

“Remember what you said about Mr. Lincoln? You said he was sitting up there waiting for someone to come along. You were right. He was waiting for a man who could see his job and sail into it.” – Saunders

- Saunders urges Smith to fight Paine and Taylor.

SEGMENT 4

“I guess this is just another lost cause, Mr. Paine... “All you people don’t know about lost causes, but Mr. Paine does. He said once they were the only causes worth fighting for. And he fought for them once, for the only reason any man ever fights for them, because of just one, plain, simple rule: Love thy neighbor.

“I’m not fit for office! I’m not fit for any place of honor or trust!” – Senator Paine

- Senator Paine confesses that he was trying to get graft from the Deficiency Bill and admits that everything Jeff has been saying is true.
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington Key Terms Fill-ins Answer Key

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trustworthy</th>
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<th>Self-Knowledge</th>
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1. In her **CYNICAL** state of mind, Saunders refers to Jeff Smith as Daniel Boone.

2. Smith’s **CIVIC VIRTUE** is demonstrated by his dedication to the Boy Rangers in his state.

3. Smith’s **TRUSTWORTHY** character makes him a popular choice for senator with the people of his state.

4. Jeff Smith shows his **HUMILITY** when he wonders whether his appointment to the Senate is a mistake.

5. The **COOPERATION** between Smith and Saunders makes the filibuster possible.

6. The love of Saunders and the example of his hero, Abraham Lincoln, help Jeff Smith summon the **COURAGE** to conduct the filibuster.

7. The **COMMON GOOD** is served when the Taylor machine’s corruption is brought to light.

8. When the reporters call Smith an “honorary stooge” he gains **SELF-KNOWLEDGE** and perspective on his role as a senator.

9. Suffering fatigue and exhaustion, Smith continues the filibuster through sheer **PERSEVERANCE**.

10. With the help of Saunders, Smith leaves the Lincoln Memorial with renewed **MORAL ENERGY**.

11. Senator Paine’s **CONSCIENCE** is constantly torn between his loyalty to the Taylor machine and the ideals he once upheld.
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
Essay Questions Answer Key

What two factors are primarily responsible for the final outcome of Mr. Smith Goes to Washington? Discuss the importance of Smith’s statement: “There’s no compromise with truth.”

- In the end, what defeats the Taylor machine is not just the integrity of Jeff Smith, but the conscience of Joe Paine. Had either of these elements been missing, truth and justice would not have prevailed. Smith consistently refuses to compromise, even when bribed by Taylor, when pressured to do so by Paine, and in the face of massive public opinion appearing to have turned against him (the telegrams). He says that he will continue to fight until someone listens to him.

- Paine, for his part, has been morally lax throughout the film, engaging in rationalizations to ease his conscience. He seems to think that by telling Taylor not to be too hard on Smith, he is somehow maintaining his moral integrity. In the end, however, he becomes willing to sacrifice his political career in order to actually do the right thing and bring about the triumph of justice.
THIS CONCLUDES **MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON**
Love & Life at the Movies:
Growing in Love with the Film Classics

SHANE
LESSON PLAN

Making the Difference
Shane

Story Line

The story brings Shane, a drifter and retired gunfighter (Alan Ladd) to the assistance of a homesteading family, the Starretts (Jean Arthur, Van Heflin) and others terrorized by a wealthy cattleman. When the Starretts’ young son, Joey (Brandon DeWilde), sees Shane arriving, he is immediately attracted to him and wants to be just like him. Through Joey’s intercession, Shane is convinced that the family really wants him to stay, and he decides to work for Starrett in the upkeep of the farm.

When Shane goes to town, he grasps the depth of the hostility felt toward the farmers by cattle baron Rufus Ryker and his men, who oppose the very existence of the ‘sodbusters’ on the range because it limits the number of cattle that they can raise. Following Joe Starrett’s directions, Shane avoids a fight and appears to be a coward to Ryker’s men. But in a subsequent encounter, Shane shows his courage by standing up to one of Ryker’s top men in a fistfight that turns into a huge brawl; Joe Starrett joins him and they are victorious against Ryker’s men.

The brawl and its results convince Ryker that he will need to bring in hired gunfighter Wilson (Jack Palance), to intimidate the settlers and force them to leave. When Wilson’s first victim is buried, Joe and Shane are able to convince the settlers to give Joe one more chance to make Ryker stop his campaign of terror against the homesteaders. Joe is convinced that he must deal with Ryker once and for all, but Shane is warned by one of Ryker’s men that a trap has been laid for Joe and that he should not meet with Ryker. Shane decides that he cannot allow Joe to go, telling him, “Maybe you’re a match for Ryker, maybe not. But you’re no match for Wilson.”

When Joe refuses to listen to Shane, he knocks Joe out with his pistol and rides to town to take on Wilson himself. In the final scenes, Shane succeeds in overcoming Ryker’s evil force. But when Joey urges him to come back and stay with the family, Shane knows that he must “move on.”

Film History

Some critics have described Shane as the most successful Western to be produced in the 1950s. Certainly the film ranks along with High Noon in terms of unqualified critical acclaim. Shane received 6 Academy Award nominations: Best Picture, Best Supporting Actor (Brandon De Wilde), Best Supporting Actor (Jack Palance), Best Director (George Stevens), Best Screenplay (A.B. Guthry Jr.), and Best Color Cinematography. The backdrop for the story is the breathtakingly beautiful gray-blue Grand Teton mountain range, filmed on location in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The film’s only Academy Award was won by Loyal Griggs for Best Cinematography. Whenever the discussion turns to the greatest Western films of all time, Shane will usually be considered one of the top three.
The Setting for the Story

The film is set in Wyoming in the summer of 1889.

The Story Behind the Story

Director George Stevens wanted to create in his film Shane a depiction of the age-old story of the battle between good and evil. In this case, it is the conflict between homesteaders trying to raise their families and a ruthless rancher trying to drive them out.

The story captures the appeal of the Western drama as a morality tale because morality in the West was practiced without the benefit of the law. The law was not always there to bring justice and fairness, and so people were often free to act as they pleased, which often led to tyranny and oppression. In this frontier culture where power was the major guiding force, many moral choices by both the weak and the mighty could not be avoided for long. The absence of the law made it harder to be good, and easier to do evil, or to give in to it through fear.

The classic theme of the conflict between the farmers and the cowboys has been told many times in film Westerns, but never as artfully and memorably as it is in Shane. The farmers we see in the film want to bring civilization to the area in the form of schools and churches and towns, while the cattle baron wants to have access to their land so that his cattle can graze there. The film’s greatness was achieved through the excellence of three critical elements: the directing, the screenplay, and the acting talent of the cast. In this film, there are two additional elements that contribute to the film’s greatness: the cinematography, which won an Academy Award, and the musical score.

Film Facts

- Starring: Alan Ladd, Jean Arthur, Van Heflin, Jack Palance, Brandon De Wilde
- Directed by George Stevens
- 1953 Color; Total Viewing Time: 117 minutes
- Although this film is considered by many to be one of the greatest of all the classic Westerns, it received only one Academy Award, for cinematography. It was, however, nominated in several major categories, including Best Supporting Actor, Best Director, Best Screenplay, and Best Picture.
- Alan Ladd was one of the great ‘tough guy’ actors of the forties. Shane offered Alan Ladd the greatest achievement of his film career. Ladd’s portrayal of Shane is generally considered his finest performance even though he was not nominated in the Best Actor category for that year.
• The contrast between Shane and Wilson as two gunfighters engaging in their final confrontation with each other is shown by the costuming. Shane is dressed in the classic clothing of the good frontiersman, while Wilson (Jack Palance) is all in black.

Shane always appears on any popular or film critic list as one of the greatest films of all time, and one of the greatest in the western genre. Whatever the shadows of Shane’s past life have been, his motives and intentions in the events of the story are so clearly honorable and pure that the audience is always on his side. He is mysterious and captivating. Shane embodies a deep truth of the human condition: people have the power in their reason and free will to choose good over evil. Many artists have said that the center of art is the exploration of the meaning of life. Shane explores life at a deeper level. It is not just a film about who we are as individuals but who we are as persons connected with each other in community and civil society. Shane explores not only how individuals act, but also how they should act in relation to a community and civil society.

**Director’s Chair**

Director George Stevens used the beauty of the Grand Teton Mountains as a backdrop for the story. The characters seemed small in comparison to the grandeur of the mountains. Stevens uses the mountains to integrate the topography with the story itself.
Instructional Objectives for *Shane*

- Understand that families are vital to building stable and lasting communities.
- Understand that when a common objective is threatened by tyranny, it is necessary for people to work together to resist it for the sake of the common good.

Themes for *Shane* Film Segments

- A friendship often arises when two people work together for a common goal.
- A well-formed conscience plays a critical role in making good decisions.
- When a community is threatened by tyranny, people must work together to resist it.
- True heroism requires the understanding of where one’s duty lies.
PART ONE:
A STRANGER ARRIVES

Film time: 31 minutes

1. The theme for the first segment.

A friendship often arises when two persons work together for a common goal.

Tell the students that this theme will be apparent in the film segment and should be kept in mind while watching the film.

2. Present the key terms.

Hospitality: A disposition to welcome guests in one’s house with warmth and generosity.

Teamwork: Working with other people for a common purpose.

Segment One ends as Marian tells her son Joey, “Don’t get to liking Shane too much. He’ll be moving on one day.”

Plot Synopsis of Segment 1

Shane arrives. Young Joey pretends to hunt deer while his father, Joe Starrett, works at chopping a tree stump in his front yard. Joey sees a stranger approach and watches him closely. The man arrives at the Starrett property and tells Joey, “I like a man who watches things go on around. He’ll make his mark someday.”

The Starrett family owns a small homestead in a valley dominated by a powerful cattle owner named Ryker. Joe Starrett tells the newcomer to leave, thinking that he is part of the gang that he now sees approaching. The men arrive and threaten Starrett, telling him that Ryker expects him to be gone from the range “before the snow flies.” When the men leave, Joe realizes that the newcomer, who introduces himself simply as “Shane,” is not one of them. Apologizing for his rudeness, Joe asks Shane to join them for supper.
A family dinner. Over dinner, Joe asks Shane where he is going, and Shane gives him the mysterious reply, “One place or another, some place I’ve never been.” Joe hints to Shane that he needs help with the work of the farm. Shane, without being told, goes out into the yard and starts working on the stump that Joe has been trying to dig up for two years. Together they work on the stump into the night.

An invitation to stay. Joey tells Shane that he and his mom and dad all want him to stay. Without words, Shane accepts the offer, and rides into town to get some work clothes. Joey watches his father chop wood, and asks him if he thinks Shane will teach him how to shoot. Joe says he will teach him himself once he gets the time. When Joey then asks his father why Shane didn’t wear his gun when he left, Joe tells him that Shane has gone to shop at the store, “not hold it up.”

Ernie, their neighbor, comes by to say he is giving up his farm. The Ryker gang is working to systematically drive out all the homesteaders from the area. Joe Starrett tells him that they will have a meeting that night, to figure something out.

Shane comes into town. In the bar, Ryker’s gang members start harassing and insulting Shane. They call him a “sodbuster,” and bully him. When the bartender sells Shane a bottle of soda pop, they laugh at him and one of the men aggressively throws whiskey on him. Shane leaves the store without responding to the insults.

The meeting at the Starrett home. The other men from surrounding homesteads meet with Joe to discuss what to do about Ryker. When the men start talking about the bar scene and how Shane didn’t fight back, Shane leaves the house. Joe defends Shane’s actions, telling the men that he was acting on his instructions.

Marian asks about Shane’s past. When Shane tells her, “It’s a long story,” she replies, “I think we know, Shane.” Marian warns Joey not to get too attached to Shane, saying, “He’ll be moving on one day, Joey, and you’ll be upset, if you get to liking him too much.” Marian appears to not want to get too attached to Shane herself.

Character Concept: Shane and the Virtue of Discipline

Shane is a man who can take care of himself and is not a coward. He quickly sizes up the situation in the bar, but is determined to follow Joe Starrett’s clear directions not to get involved in a conflict in town. Even though he would probably like to return the insult when one of Ryker’s men throws whiskey on him, he exercises great self-control and leaves the bar calmly.
**DISCUSSING SEGMENT ONE**

During the segment, the students should be thinking about the significance of the Movie Quotes and taking notes on their handouts. Have them share their thoughts. Refer to the talking points just below the discussion questions to help guide and direct discussion.

**QUOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

“*One place or another, some place I’ve never been.*”  – Shane

What indication does this quote give us about Shane’s past?

- His comment indicates that he does not want to revisit his past. We start to gain hints about his past as the film progresses. We know he is searching for a new life of some sort and it is evident that he is a little jumpy when he hears startling noises.

“*Don’t get to liking Shane too much. . . . He’ll be moving on one day, Joey.*”

- Marian Starrett

Why does Marian warn Joey about getting too attached to Shane?

- Marian sees that Shane is a gunfighter, and she does not want her son to see him as a role model and imitate him. She also senses that Shane is a person who doesn’t stay in one place very long, and she feels that it will be harder on Joey when Shane leaves if he has become attached to him.

**PART TWO:**

**THE FIGHT AT THE STORE**

*Film time: 30 minutes*

1. Have the students take out their Movie Quotes, Character Traits and Key Terms handouts.

2. Present the theme for the second segment:

   *A well-formed conscience plays a critical role in making good decisions.*

Remind the students that this theme will be apparent in the film segment and should be kept in mind while watching the film.
3. **Present the key term**

   *Conscience*: The ability to distinguish between right and wrong in regard to one’s own conduct.

4. **Ask the students to explain where the story line left off.**  *Joe has held a meeting with the neighbors and they are trying to decide on a course of action concerning Ryker.*

5. **Start the film.**

   *Segment Two ends as Stonewall leaves the bar and the men laugh at him.*

**Plot Synopsis of Segment 2**

**The homesteaders come to town.** The next day, the men go to town together to buy supplies with their families. Shane goes back into the bar to respond to the man who threw whiskey on him a day or so earlier. Shane imprudently throws whiskey on the man and then throws a punch. A fight ensues and Shane is able to single-handedly fight Ryker’s men.

**Ryker sees Shane’s strength and ability** as a fighter and offers Shane a job working for him. When Shane refuses, Ryker is enraged and encourages his men to beat him up. Joe enters the fight and together the two men hold their own against the gang, causing Grafton, the owner of the store to say, “You’ve won.” Angry at this unexpected victory by the homesteaders, Ryker states, “From now on when we fight with them, the air’s gonna be filled with gun smoke.”

**An unexpected moment.** That night, Marian tends the wounds of Joe and Shane. They are exhilarated by their victory in town over Ryker. Joey tells his mother that he loves Shane “almost as much as I love Pa,” and asks his mother if that is alright. Marian tells her son that Shane is “a fine man,” showing that she is feeling attracted to him, too. When Marian realizes her attraction to Shane, she asks her husband to hold her tightly.

**A stranger arrives in town** to meet Ryker in the saloon on the fourth of July. The stranger is a man named Wilson, who is a notorious gunfighter.
Preparing for the party, Marian looks through her wardrobe for a dress to wear and settles on her wedding dress. As Joey asks Shane to teach him how to shoot, Shane tells him a little bit about shooting, and demonstrates by shooting at a stone. Marian objects to this, saying, “Guns aren’t going to be my boy’s life.” Shane replies, “A gun is as good or as bad as the man using it.” Marian then tells him, “We’d all be much better off if there wasn’t a single gun left in the valley, including yours.” Joe comes home to load up the wagon, and admires Marian in her wedding dress.

As Ryker talks with Wilson in the bar, Sam Grafton, the storekeeper, senses the impending violence and tries to question Ryker about his plans. Ryker responds, “You’ve got to admit, Sam, my men have kept their six guns cased” but Grafton senses that this will now change with Wilson in the picture. When Ryker says that Starrett should listen to reason, Grafton replies, “Your reason?” Ryker then asks, “What’s the matter with you? Nothing I say strikes you right.” Grafton tells him, “It’s your own conscience eating on you.”

Stonewall, one of the homesteaders, has imprudently decided that he wants to show Ryker and his gang that he is not afraid of them. When Stonewall comes into the bar to get a drink, the men listen to his boasting and Ryker tells Wilson, “You can get him to draw without any trouble.” As Stonewall announces that neither he nor Starrett is afraid of them, Ryker tells Wilson, “It’s Starrett we want.”

**Character Concept: The Conscience of Ryker**

Conscience is defined as the ability to recognize right from wrong in one’s own actions. It is important for a person’s conscience to be well-formed, because following a poorly formed conscience can result in faulty reasoning and bad decisions.

Ryker has signed a lucrative contract for his beef, but cannot fulfill the contract as long as the valley is dotted with homesteads. He rationalizes his evil actions by focusing on the ways in which he feels he is being wronged and by thinking that in merely intimidating and harassing the homesteaders, without anyone being killed, he is not doing anything wrong.

When he sees that his strategies of harassment and looting are not going to work because of the determination of Joe Starrett (who now has the support of Shane), he decides to hire Wilson, a gunfighter noted for his quick draw and deadly aim. Ryker justifies his actions by saying that he tried to do it without guns and that this is the only way left to him. It is clear that Ryker will stop at nothing to drive out the homesteaders and that in doing so, he has to rationalize his evil actions as a necessity.
QUOTE AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

“It’s Starrett we want.” – Rufus Ryker

What is Ryker’s plan to drive the homesteaders from their land? Why does he bring in Wilson when his plan fails to work?

- Ryker’s initial plan is to try to scare the homesteaders away by threatening them and by vandalizing their property. He feels that if he can wear them down by destroying their farms and killing their animals, they’ll eventually give up and leave.

- Ryker’s plan to scare the homesteaders does not work, and he sees that Joe is leading the effort to resist him, with Shane’s help. At this point Ryker hires the professional gunfighter, Wilson, from Cheyenne. Ryker does not want to use a gun himself because he wants to appear “reasonable” to Grafton and others. He brings in Wilson because he believes that Wilson can goad the homesteaders into drawing first, knowing that Wilson is extremely quick on the draw. Ryker feels that if one of the homesteaders gets killed, the others will finally give up and leave the land. He tells Wilson that Joe must be the person that they go after because it is primarily Joe’s leadership that is thwarting Ryker’s plan from succeeding.
1. Have the students take out their Movie Quotes, Character Traits and Key Terms handouts.

2. Present the theme for the third segment:

   When a community is threatened by tyranny, people must work together to resist it for the sake of the common good.

   Remind the students that this theme will be apparent in the film segment and should be kept in mind while watching the film.

3. Present the key terms:

   - Civic Virtue: putting the good of the community above one’s own self-interests.
   - Common Good: the shared good of a community or society as a whole.

4. Ask the students to explain where the story line left off. Stonewall has just left the bar, where he has been exchanging words with Ryker and his men.

5. Start the film.

   Segment Three ends when Fred Lewis says, “Some of you come and help me; maybe we can save part of that” and Joe responds, “That’s the spirit, Fred.”
Plot Synopsis of Segment 3

The Fourth of July. Axel “Swede” Shipstead announces that it is Joe and Marian’s anniversary, and this is a great opening for the celebration. As he watches Shane and Marian dance, Joe realizes that there is an attraction between his wife and Shane. After the dance, Stonewall describes the new arrival in the bar, and they discuss the gunfighter named Wilson.

On the way home from the party, Joey asks Shane if he thinks the man Stonewall saw in the bar was Wilson. When they get home from the party, they find that Ryker has gotten there before them with Wilson and some of his men. Ryker offers to buy Starrett’s property and tells him that Joe can work for him. He explains that he feels he has a right to Joe’s land because he was there first and was one of the “men who did the work and ran the risks” in settling the land. Joe tells him that that isn’t “the way the government looks at it” and refuses Ryker’s offer. While they talk, Shane and Wilson get a feel for each other. Joe asks Shane what he makes of Wilson, and Shane replies, “He’s no cowpuncher.”

Stonewall is shot. In the bar, Ryker and his men are discussing what to do when they see Axel the Swede and Stonewall riding into town. Ryker tells Wilson that he’ll kill Joe Starrett if he has to, and they talk about a way to bait him and get him to the store. As Wilson looks out and sees Stonewall approach, he suggests that they just go after him; Ryker reminds him, “We’ve got to make this look right to Grafton.” Wilson begins a conversation with Stonewall and insults Southerners, knowing that he is likely to react to this; Stonewall draws his pistol and Wilson shoots him dead. When Grafton comes to the door demanding to know what has happened, Ryker’s men tell him, “He tried to kill Wilson.” The Swede puts Stonewall’s lifeless body on his horse and rides to Starrett’s house to tell him what has happened. Starrett decides to go to town.

Stonewall’s funeral. Starrett stops by his neighbor’s house and asks him what he will do. They tell him that they are going to leave now. Starrett tells them that they all owe it to Stonewall to be at the funeral. Stonewall is being buried on Cemetery Hill above the town, with all neighboring families gathered around.

Chris has a change of heart. Chris, one of Ryker’s men, watches Stonewall’s funeral taking place from the town with a heavy heart, realizing that what has taken place is wrong. Up on the hill, as they finish burying Stonewall, Joe makes a final plea to the families to stay. He wants everyone to hold their ground so they can have a regular settlement, “a town and churches and a school.” Shane agrees with him. They explain that families are the basis of society and that they need this space to raise their families.
The men look up and see that Ryker has set fire to Fred Lewis’ house. Joe reminds them that if they stick together, they can rebuild their homes. When Fred asks, “You’ll do that for us?” Joe responds, “Not just for you . . . for all of us here in this valley.”

**Leading the men.** From the bar, Ryker sees the men going back to try and save Fred Lewis’ house. He recognizes Joe’s role as the leader of the homesteaders: “Starrett’s holding them together.”

**DISCUSSING SEGMENT THREE**

**Character Concept: True Courage**

Courage requires a vision. What is the difference between true courage and foolish bravado? The answer is to find what is important to risk dying for. Stonewall has a false view of what courage is; he thinks that it simply means not being afraid in any situation. As a result, he foolishly goes up against somewhat who is vastly superior to him as a gunfighter.

Stonewall makes the mistake that many people make in thinking that sheer physical courage is true courage. He is rash, not courageous. True courage involves prudence, which is making good judgments about when to act and when not to act.

**QUOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

“You’ll do that for us?” – Fred Lewis

“Not just for you . . . for all of us here in this valley.” – Joe Starrett

In the discussion between the homesteaders on Cemetery Hill, how do Shane and Joe convince the settlers to persevere and fight to save their homes from Ryker’s aggression?

- As the families finish burying Stonewall, one by one they begin to leave. Joe undertakes to rally them and try to prevent them from abandoning the land to Ryker. He asks that they give him one more chance to salvage their goals, saying that Ryker “only wants to grow his beef and what we want to grow up is families.” Shane joins Joe in trying to persuade the men, and reminds them that they are there for “something that means more to you than anything else.” The men are unwilling to listen, and tell him that Ryker has the upper hand.

- However, when the homesteaders see that Ryker has set fire to Fred Lewis’ home, it jolts them into recognizing how wrong it would be to let Ryker win out. Fred says, “That’s our place. . . He had no right to do that. I built it with my own hands.”
• In response, Joe recommends that they all work together to rebuild the house: “Now if we just stick together, we can put this place right back up.” The spirit of teamwork spreads quickly, and they tell Fred that they are not just doing it for his family, but for all of them to have a future in the valley.

Contrast the characters Stonewall and Joe. What are some of the differences between them?

• Stonewall exhibits a good deal of bravado, but is basically imprudent in his conduct. He’s also easily manipulated by Wilson when Wilson insults his Southern heritage. As a result, he takes foolish chances.

• Joe is somewhat more prudent in his willingness to take risks, and keeps the overall goal of establishing a community in mind before making decisions. He weighs the advantages and disadvantages of acting in a certain way before embarking on a course of action. Joe is very firm in his convictions, but he is never boastful or arrogant in his leadership. He understands that a visit to the store is not worth dying for; but saving homes and families is. The most important thing to Joe is that people be able to live and raise their families on the land that they are entitled to have under the Homestead Act. His leadership brings the other homesteaders to understand what is at stake if they leave and let Ryker take control of their land.

PART FOUR: THE SHOWDOWN

Film time: 27 minutes

1. Have the students take out their Movie Quotes, Character Traits and Key Terms handouts.

2. Present the theme for the fourth segment:

   True heroism requires the understanding of where one’s duty lies.

Remind the students that this theme will be apparent in the film segment and should be kept in mind while watching the film.
3. Present the key terms.

Despair: To lose all hope of attaining one’s goals; to think that one’s problems are insoluble.

Perspective: The way in which one views particular events and experiences as they relate to the whole of life.

4. Ask the students to explain where the story line left off. After burying Stonewall, the men have left Cemetery Hill to try and save the burning house together.

5. Start the film. The film concludes with this segment.

Plot Synopsis of Segment 4

Leaving the cemetery, Joe warns his men who are tempted to resort to violence, “Now don’t you forget there’s a law in this country against killing.” When the homesteaders point out that the law is three days away, Joe realizes that he will have to confront Ryker himself. Meanwhile, Ryker is impatient to see Starrett and tells his men to convince him to come to town.

Marian tries to tell Joe not to go into town to kill Ryker. She asks Shane to tell him to wait, but Shane tells her, “I can’t tell Joe what’s right, Marian.” As Joe prepares to leave, Marian pleads with Joe not to go, asking “Won’t you do even this for me?”

Three members of the Ryker gang come out and talk with Joe. They identify themselves as a “peace-party from Ryker.” The leader tells Joe that Ryker wants to talk to him. Chris comes to tell Shane that Joe is up against a stacked deck. When Shane asks him why he is saying this, Chris tells Shane that he doesn’t know what has “come over” him, but he has decided to leave Ryker. Shane is grateful for this.
Joe tells Marian that he is going into this with his eyes open, but Marian pleads with him not to go. “Don’t I mean anything to you, Joe? Doesn’t Joey?” Joe sits down beside his wife and tells her that it is precisely because they mean so much to him that he is convinced this has to be done. He tells her that if anything should happen to him, he knows that she will be taken care of.

As Joe stands up to leave, Shane comes into the cabin dressed in his deerskin and holster, and tells Joe, “This is my kind of game.” When Joe asks Shane, “What’s stopping me?” Shane answers, “I am.” The two men fight in the front yard, while Marian and Joey watch from the house, and the animals are agitated. When Joe proves too hard to beat in a fist fight, Shane is forced to knock Joe out with his pistol.

Joey tells Shane, “You hit him with your gun. I hate you!” Shane tells Marian that Joe will be alright, and tells her that he will go into town instead of Joe. Marian understands that Shane is doing this for her family. She goes back to look after her husband, but Joey is sorry and runs after Shane to Grafton’s, where Ryker and Wilson are waiting.

“Quick on the draw.” When Shane reaches the saloon, he finds Ryker and Wilson. Joey watches through the door. Ryker refuses to deal with Shane, but Shane demands to talk with Wilson, calling him a low-down Yankee liar. Wilson draws quickly, but Shane draws more quickly and fires, killing Wilson and then as Ryker draws his gun, Shane shoots and kills Ryker. Shane turns to leave when Joey, who is watching from the door, cries, “Look out, Shane!” Shane turns and shoots just in time at a man with a gun on the balcony.

Good-bye, Shane. When Shane emerges from the saloon, he finds Joey wanting to talk to him. “I knew you could, Shane. . .was that him?” “That was him. . .he was fast, fast on the draw.” “You were wonderful, Shane.” Joey tells Shane he’s sorry for what he said, and Shane tells him there’s no need to apologize. Shane tells Joey to go home, and Joey asks him to come back and stay with the family. Shane says no, that he has to be going on. “A man has to be what he is, Joey. He can’t break the mold. I tried it and it didn’t work for me. . .Joey, there’s no living with a killing. There’s no going back from one. It’s a brand; and a brand sticks. Now you run on home to your mother and tell her that’s everything’s alright, and there aren’t any more guns in the valley. . .grow up to be strong and straight. . .And, Joey, take care of them, both of them.” “Yes, Shane.”

Shane leaves. As Shane turns to ride out of the valley, Joey wants him to stay, and tries to call him back. But Shane knows that he cannot stay, and rides away from the valley.
DISCUSSING SEGMENT FOUR

QUOTE AND QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

“I’m quittin’ Ryker.” – Chris

Discuss the way in which Chris plays a pivotal role in the resolution of the film.

• Chris had originally worked for Joe, but at some point decided to go to work for Ryker. In the early part of the film, Chris is hostile to Shane when he comes into the bar to buy a soda for Joey, and seems to be proud that he is one of Ryker’s men. Chris seems to start to question his allegiance to Ryker, however, when he witnesses the way in which Ryker’s hired gunfighter, Wilson, goads Stonewall into pulling his gun so that Wilson can kill him. As he watches Stonewall’s funeral from a distance, he appears to be troubled. When Chris realizes that Joe Starrett is next in line to be killed, his conscience prompts him to tell Shane that Joe is being set up, and that he doesn’t have a chance when he comes to talk with Ryker.

• If Chris had not warned Shane about the plot against Joe, Shane would not have taken the action that he did to prevent Joe from going to see Ryker. Shane is the more experienced gunfighter. He is able to take on Wilson, whereas Joe is not.

How does Shane act courageously for the common good?

• Shane knows that he is most qualified to fight Wilson. If Joe attempts to fight Wilson, he will most likely lose, as he is not a professional gunfighter. Instead of simply allowing Joe to go to his death, Shane acts courageously to go in Joe’s place. Though it may mean Shane’s life (Wilson is a fast draw), Shane is willing to risk it for the good of Joe’s family and the other homesteaders.
**Post Viewing Discussion:**

**The civic virtues that support the common good**

Shane comes into the valley and leaves without the audience’s knowing anything more about him than when he came, but we as the audience and the characters in the story are enriched by the lessons of virtue that he has shown us.

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**Friendship**

From the beginning, Shane shows his loyalty as a friend 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 says: “I’m a friend of Starrett’s.”

**Humility**

Even though up to now he was a gunfighter calling his own shots, he becomes Joe’s hired hand and follows Joe’s orders to stay out of trouble even at the risk of being called a coward: “I’m workin’ for Starrett.”

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**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.”

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**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.”

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**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.”
Post Viewing Discussion (Continued):
The civic virtues that support the common good

The character of Shane portrays the essential link between the conscience of the individual person and the critical defense of the common good in a community or a society. Three elements associated with achievement of the common good are seen in the film’s events. The first principle element in the common good is the growth of the person in civic virtue. The second element is the good of the community or society as a whole. The third element is the peace and stability that must be actively defended if the community and individuals who live in it are to flourish.

How does Shane grow in his commitment to the common good of the Starrett family and the community of the settlers in the valley?

Shane discovers for the first time in his life the joy of being welcomed into a family and having close and loving relationships with people he can trust. He knows that they need to trust and depend on him.

Shane gains a sense of solidarity working with the Starrett family and the community of settlers, realizing that they are all in survival mode.

Shane is willing to risk it for the good of Joe’s family and the other homesteaders.
Instructional objectives for *Shane*

- Families are vital to building stable and lasting communities.
- For a free society to survive, people in communities must practice civic virtue.
- In order for freedom to be preserved a community and a society need significant numbers of people willing to sacrifice for the common good.

**INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE #1:**

*Understand that families are vital to building stable and lasting communities.*

**TEACHER TALKING POINTS ON THE FAMILY**

Edmund Burke, 18th century British statesman, calls the family a “little platoon.” He says, “to be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle . . . of public affections.” When Shane leaves town, it is evident that he understands that the good of the community depends not just upon his defending it from Ryker, but also by preserving the families that make up that community.

**QUESTION**

*Explain why Ryker and his gang would not have created a community with schools, churches and businesses – a real town – whereas the families in the valley would do so. Give reasons for your answer based on situations depicted in the film.*

- Ryker and his gang are primarily interested in themselves and their own material gain. They do not create any kind of culture in the town but rather spend their time drinking in the local saloon. They do not appear to consider themselves part of a community, and they try to make the people in the town conform to their wishes through threats and intimidation.

- The families in the town, on the other hand, show that they care about one another and each family’s well-being. They celebrate the 4th of July and Joe and Marian’s wedding anniversary together; they sing and dance together; they shop together; they come together to bury the dead; and they are willing to work together to rebuild the house that Ryker has destroyed. Joe reminds them of the vision of a real town that they can build for their families if they resist Ryker’s evil designs.
INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE #2 AND #3:

- Understand that for a free society to survive, people in communities must practice civic virtue. In order for freedom to be preserved a community and a society need significant numbers of people willing to sacrifice for the common good.

REVIEW OF TALKING POINTS ON THE COMMON GOOD

- The common good entails a common happiness. We are social beings, thus, we are happier together than we could be alone. A Swedish proverb says, “Shared joy is double joy. Shared sorrow is half sorrow.”
- The common good does not work against the good of the individual; rather, it is in harmony with it and promotes it.
- The common good is safeguarded when all the members of a community do their part for the benefit of the community as a whole.
- The common good is attained when there is a basic understanding among its members concerning what is true, beautiful, and beneficial to the community as a whole.

QUESTIONS

Why is Joe so determined to prevent the homesteaders from leaving the valley? What makes families important to communities in today’s society?

- In the late 1800s in the American West, families had to struggle to build their communities because of many threatening forces. Joe knew that if most of the families were intimidated by Ryker into leaving the valley, the ones that remained would not be able to stay, either.
- Families are no less important in today’s civil society than they were in the American West in the 1800s. The lawlessness of the frontier territory depicted in Shane is perhaps more extreme than that which is experienced today in most places, but the lawlessness of gang activity and violent behavior in urban areas is threatening to the stability of communities in our own day. Just as in Shane, today’s families need to work together to strengthen and safeguard their communities.
CLOSE UP: FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND THE COMMON GOOD IN SHANE

Shane enters the valley as an ex-gunfighter traveling to “one place or another, someplace I’ve never been.” He comes to love the Starrett family and in the course of the film, he joins Joe Starrett in articulating to the other settlers the reasons why they need to stay and fight to build their community. In the end, he protects with this self-sacrifice both the family and the community that will be.

REVIEW OF TALKING POINTS ON THE COMMON GOOD

- The common good entails a common happiness. We are social beings, thus, we are happier together than we could be alone. A Swedish proverb says, “Shared joy is double joy. Shared sorrow is half sorrow.”
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CLOSE UP: FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND THE COMMON GOOD IN SHANE (CONTINUED)

The Family as the “Little Platoon”

Edmund Burke, 18th century British statesman, calls the family a “little platoon.” He says, “to be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle . . . of public affections.”

In Shane we see people reacting to the forces that threaten their community’s existence in various ways. Some, like Joe Starrett, are willing to fight to resist Ryker. Others want to take the path of least resistance and leave. Joe and Shane urge the other settlers to stay and fight for the community they have established in the valley.
Appendices

(Suggested Practice for Appendices A and B: Copy and distribute to students.)

Appendix A
Handouts: Movie Quotes, Character Traits, Key Terms, Key Terms Fill-Ins

Appendix B
Supplementary Materials – The Four Cardinal Virtues and Shane, – The Vital Elements of Classic Film and the Motion Picture Production Code, What Makes A Film A Classic, Famous Quote to Consider, Essay Questions

Appendix C
Answer Keys
Shane
Movie Quotes

Listen for the following quotes as you watch the film, and take notes on what is happening in the movie at the time.

**Segment 1**

“One place or another, some place I’ve never been.” – Shane

“Don’t get to liking Shane too much. . . . He’ll be moving on one day, Joey.”

– Marian Starrett

**Segment 2**

“Joe, hold me. Don’t say anything, just hold me, tight.” – Marian Starrett

“It’s Starrett we want.” – Rufus Ryker

**Segment 3**

“You’ll do that for us?” – Fred Lewis
“Not just for you . . . for all of us here in this valley.” – Joe Starrett

**Segment 4**

“I’m quittin’ Ryker.” – Chris
Please use this page to take notes on the positive and negative character traits of the following film characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Positive:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Marian Starrett</td>
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<td>Joe Starrett</td>
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<td>Shane</td>
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<td>Chris Calloway</td>
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<td>Ryker</td>
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**Shane**

Key Questions

1. **HOSPITALITY**  
A disposition to welcome guests in one’s house with warmth and generosity.

2. **TEAMWORK**  
Working together with other people for a common purpose.

3. **CONSCIENCE**  
The ability to distinguish between right and wrong in regard to one’s own conduct.

4. **CIVIC VIRTUE**  
Putting the good of the community above one’s own self-interests.

5. **COMMON GOOD**  
The shared good of a community or society as a whole.

6. **DESPAIR**  
To lose all hope of attaining one’s goals; to think that one’s problems are insoluble.

7. **PERSPECTIVE**  
The way in which one views particular events and experiences as they relate to the whole of life.
### Shane

#### Key Terms Fill-Ins

1. When Chris Calloway realizes that Joe is being set up by Ryker, his ____________ tells him that he must act to prevent Ryker’s plot from succeeding.

2. Joe and Shane help the people in the valley realize that the ________________ requires them to work together to oppose Ryker’s plan to drive them all away.

3. When Ryker burns the home of Fred Lewis and Lewis is ready to give up and leave the valley, the other members of the community show their sense of _________________ when they tell Lewis they will rebuild his house.

4. Joe invites Shane to stay for dinner and Marian uses their good china because they know the importance of _________________ in the life of the family.

5. Joe’s _________________ makes him willing to take on Ryker to protect the interests of the settlers in the valley.

6. It would have been easy for the settlers to give in to _____________ after Stonewall was killed and they realize that Ryker would stop at nothing to drive them from the valley.

7. Marian’s _________________ on fighting is that everyone would be better off if there were no guns in the valley, but Shane explains to her that “a gun is as good or as bad as the man using it.”
The Four Cardinal Virtues and *Shane*

**Introduction**

The Ancient Greek philosophers taught that out of all of the virtues, there are four predominant ones – *Courage, Justice, Temperance and Prudence*. These four are like hinges upon which the rest of the virtues hang.

**Objective:**

The objective for this supplementary study unit is that the students will become acquainted with the Four Cardinal Virtues and understand how they can be applied to real life situations.

**Understanding the Four Cardinal Virtues:**

Courage – Persevering in doing what is right even when afraid or under pressure.

Justice – Treating others fairly, as one would like to be treated.

Temperance – Using one’s reason to control one’s emotions and desires; self-control.

Prudence – Using one’s reason and will to choose the best the course of action.

**Applying the Four Cardinal Virtues to the characters in *Shane:***

*Ask the students to give examples of each virtue, or the lack thereof, in the film.*

**Courage:**

- Joe Starrett displays courage when he is willing to stand up to Ryker and act as the leader of the settlers in opposing Ryker’s campaign to drive them out of the valley.
- Shane displays courage by going to confront Ryker at the end of the film, knowing that he is a better gunfighter than Joe.
- Chris displays courage when he makes the decision to leave Ryker’s gang and warn Shane about the plot against Joe.
Justice:
- Shane displays his sense of justice when he stays to help Joe after witnessing the bullying techniques of Ryker’s men.
- Chris displays his sense of justice when he turns against Ryker after Stonewall has been killed, because he realizes that Ryker’s tactics are evil.

Temperance:
- Shane displays temperance when he controls his emotions in his initial visit to the bar at the community store. He does not fight back when Chris throws whiskey on him to taunt him, because Joe has specifically asked him not to get involved in a conflict in town.
- Stonewall displays a lack of temperance in his speech and his actions. He does not seem to control his emotions and is rather hot-tempered, which in the end leads to his death.

Prudence:
- Marian displays the virtue of prudence when she turns to her husband and asks him to hold her, because she realizes that she is becoming attracted to Shane. This action is a sign that she is renewing her commitment to him and controlling her desire to let herself be attracted to Shane.
- Swede displays prudence when he tries to persuade Stonewall to turn back and not go into the community store when he sees Wilson there. Swede understands that rashness is not courage, and that no good can come from Stonewall going up against Wilson.
- Shane displays prudence particularly at the end of the film when he leaves the town because he knows that his presence could have a disturbing effect on Joe and Marian’s marriage.
The Vital Elements of Classic Film and the Motion Picture Production Code

Classic films as an indisputable “cultural commodity of great price.”

Thomas Doherty, in his scholarly treatment of *Pre-Code Hollywood* (Columbia University Press, 1999), gives a critical assessment of the influence of the Motion Picture Production Code Administration (MPPCA) over the making of studio films in the period known as the “Golden Age” of Hollywood. In 1934, the studio heads unanimously agreed to make the Code they had adopted in 1930 operational. They created the MCCPA and gave it the power to issue a Code Seal on every film they made. The question of whether this power was ultimately negative or positive is a matter of extensive debate among film critics and historians, but on the subject of the greatness of the films produced under the Code there is little argument.

Discussing the great body of cinematic art produced in this era, Doherty describes it as a *cultural commodity of great price*, and makes his case regarding the influence of the Code on the cinematic quality of classic films:

The Code gave Hollywood the framework to thrive economically and ripen artistically and Hollywood in turn gave the Code provenance over a cultural commodity of great price . . . what makes Hollywood’s classic age ‘classical’ is not just the film style or the studio system but the moral stakes.

Thomas Doherty also authored the biography of Joseph Breen, *Hollywood’s Censor* (Columbia University Press, 2007). Joseph Breen was the head of the Motion Picture Production Code Administration from 1934 to 1954. In both of his accounts of Hollywood history, Doherty describes the era of the “Golden Age” and the period of Motion Picture Production Code Administration influence as closely aligned with this statement:

Hollywood’s vaunted “golden age” began with the Code and ended with its demise. An artistic flowering of incalculable cultural impact, Hollywood under the Code bequeathed the great generative legacy for screens large and small.
Background on Classic Films and the Motion Picture Production Code

The Motion Picture Production Code (also known as the Hays Code) was adopted on March 31, 1930 and began to be enforced by the Production Code Administration on July 1, 1934, after which time all films were required to obtain a certificate of approval known as the “Code Seal” before being released. While the Code was not enforced by federal, state or city governments, all of the major Hollywood studio producers and executives agreed to abide by the Code. The Code contained a set of general moral principles to guide film-makers in making decisions related to their craft. These film-makers committed themselves to self-censorship as outlined in the Code.

The Motion Picture Production Code was replaced in 1967 by the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) ratings system, which helps viewers determine a movie’s content before watching the film but does not place limits on film-makers as to what may be shown on the screen.

What the Code Said: General Principles

1. No picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence, the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.
2. Correct standards of life . . . shall be presented.
3. Law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed, nor shall sympathy be created for its violation.

What the Code Said: Particular Applications

Crimes Against the Law

These shall never be presented in such as way as to throw sympathy with the crime as against law and justice or to inspire others with a desire for imitation.

1. Murder
   a. The technique of murder must be presented in a way that will not inspire imitation.
   b. Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail.
   c. Revenge in modern times shall not be justified.

2. Methods of Crime should not be explicitly presented.
   a. Theft, robbery, safe-cracking, and dynamiting of trains, mines, buildings, etc. should not be detailed in method.
   b. Arson must be subject to the same safeguards.
   c. The use of firearms should be restricted to essentials.
   d. Methods of smuggling should not be presented.
3. *Illegal drug* traffic must never be presented.

4. *The use of liquor* in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterization will not be shown.

What the Code Said: Sexuality

*The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that low forms of sex relationship are the accepted or common thing.*

3. *Adultery, sometimes necessary plot material, must not be explicitly treated, or justified, or presented attractively.*

4. *Scenes of Passion*
   a. *They should not be introduced when not essential to the plot.*
   b. *Excessive and lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive postures and gestures, are not to be shown.*

Relating the Motion Picture Production Code Principles to *Shane*

It is evident that Joe and Marian have a happy marriage and a good family relationship, one that enables them to welcome strangers with hospitality and respect. The strength of the marriage is demonstrated by the fact that Joe does not hesitate to invite a young and handsome stranger into his home to stay.

It becomes clear as the film unfolds that Marian and Shane are attracted to each other, which Marian recognizes and consciously chooses to control. At the July 4th celebration of their wedding anniversary, Joe sees the growing attraction between his wife and Shane. He has a great trust in Marian, however, and therefore when he brings the issue up to Marian, he is not upset with her. He does not blame her for her attraction; instead, he trusts that she will not act on it and that she will remain faithful to him. He says, “Honey, you're the most honest and the finest girl that ever lived. I couldn't do what I gotta do if I hadn't always known I could trust you.” The way in which Marian resists her attraction to Shane shows the viewer that Joe's trust in her is well founded.

A potential “love triangle” is resisted not only by Marian but by Shane as well. Shane does not do anything to try to win Marian’s affection; the attraction is there, but he and Marian do not fan the flames. On the contrary, Shane displays a heroic resolution to do the right thing when he does not allow Joe to put himself in a position of getting killed, even though it would result in Marian being left free to marry Shane. Shane then leaves the valley at the end of the film, thereby removing the possibility of his being a threat to the peace of the Starrett family.

Director George Stevens skillfully shows the good effects that result when one resists the temptation to give in to an attraction to someone other than one’s spouse. The virtuous way in which Shane and Marian deal with their mutual attraction is not often depicted in contemporary films, where infidelity is made light of and its negative effects on the family is given scant notice.
**Shane**

What Makes a Film a Classic?

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

Some old films can be considered “classic” and some contemporary films will likely endure as classics. Based on the criteria mentioned as to what constitutes a classic film, which recent films would you call classics? Why?

A classic film…

- depicts universal truths in a way that is edifying to the viewer;
- shows positive growth in virtue on the part of the major characters;
- transcends racial, ethnic and religious boundaries and divisions;
- has production values that are generally recognized as being of a high caliber;
- has characters that are realistic and believable.
A FAMOUS QUOTE TO CONSIDER

“All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”
– Edmund Burke, statesman of the 19th century.

Discuss the above quote by Edmund Burke (1729-1797), British statesman and philosopher, and its relevance to the film, Shane.

Possible discussion points include:

Ryker claims to be a man of reason, but in reality he wants the valley for himself and his definition of “reason” revolves around that desire. Joe tries to “reason” with Ryker and his men based on the common good, and the need for the families in the valley to have a place to build homes, schools and churches for the good of many, not just that of one man. Ryker feels entitled to have the land in the valley for himself because he had fought for the land, but Joe points out that Ryker himself benefited from the work of the pioneers who came to the valley before he did.

If the people in the community give up and do nothing to resist Ryker’s plan to drive the families out of the valley, evil will prevail and the common good will suffer. Joe’s leadership role in the community, along with the willingness of the other families to work together and Shane’s presence as an experienced gunfighter enable the settlers to resist Ryker’s plans to drive them all out of the valley.
Shane
Essay Questions

When writing an essay . . .

1) Write your essay in a logical order. Begin with answering the question very briefly in the introduction, give arguments for your answer in the following paragraphs, and conclude with a summary.

2) Use proper grammar and punctuation.

3) Check your spelling.

4) Answer the question clearly and concisely. Make sure everything you say relates to the question.

5) Finally, be creative and have fun!

Edmund Burke, 18th century British statesman, calls the family a “little platoon.” He says, “to be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle . . . of public affections.”

Shane depicts a community in which people react in various ways to Ryker’s threat to their existence as a community. Some, like Joe Starrett, are willing to fight to resist Ryker. Others want to take the path of least resistance and leave.

Give an example of how Edmund Burke’s concept of the family as “a little platoon” can be applied to strengthen communities in today’s society based on what is depicted in the film, Shane. Consider situations such as those in schools where bullies threaten the peace of the student body or where gang activity threatens the peace of a community.
SEGMENT 1

“One place or another, some place I’ve never been.” – Shane

Joe Starrett has asked Shane where he’s going, and Shane’s reply indicates that he does not want to revisit his past. He seems to be searching for a new life.

“Don’t get to liking Shane too much. . . . He’ll be moving on one day, Joey.” – Marian Starrett

Marian sees that Shane is a gunfighter, and she does not want her son to see him as a role model and imitate him. She also senses that Shane is a person who doesn’t stay in one place very long, and she feels that it will be harder on Joey when Shane leaves if he has become attached to him.

SEGMENT 2

“Joe, hold me. Don’t say anything, just hold me, tight.” – Marian Starrett

After the fight in the bar, Marian dresses the wounds of both Shane and her husband. When Shane leaves the house, Marian stands at the door looking after him, and we understand that she is coming to realize she is attracted to Shane. Instead of turning from her husband, however, she turns to him and says, “Joe, hold me. Don’t say anything, just hold me.”

“It’s Starrett we want.” – Rufus Ryker

Ryker recognizes Joe Starrett’s leadership role among the residents of the community, and knows that he has to overcome Joe in order to get control of the valley.

SEGMENT 3

“You’ll do that for us?” – Fred Lewis

“Not just for you . . . for all of us here in this valley.” – Joe Starrett

Joe Starrett’s strong commitment to the community of people in the valley is based on his belief that what he does to help their families helps his family as well.

SEGMENT 4

“I’m quittin’ Ryker.” – Chris

As he watches Stonewall’s funeral from a distance, Chris appears to be troubled. When he realizes that Joe Starrett is next in line to be killed, his conscience prompts him to tell Shane that Joe is being set up, and that he doesn’t have a chance when he comes to talk with Ryker.
<table>
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<th>Character</th>
<th>Negative:</th>
<th>Positive:</th>
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| Marian Starrett | Hospitable: presents a festive dinner to make Shane feel at home.  
Prudent: turns to her husband when she begins to realize she’s attracted to Shane.  
Loving: Marian is attracted to Shane, but is determined to be a good wife and a good mother. |  |
| Joe Starrett | Hard-working: has built up his homestead for the past two years; takes pleasure in working with his hands.  
Determined: tells Shane, “They’ll have to shoot me to get me out of here.”  
Leader: tells Ernie that they will have a meeting to try and solve the problem. |  |
| Shane | Mysterious: when Joe asks him where he’s going, he says, “Some place I’ve never been.”  
Restrained: follows Joe’s direction not to make his fights his own, and refuses to fight with the Ryker bullies right away.  
Determined: goes in to the bar to return the soda pop bottle and face Ryker’s men, knowing full well that there may be a fight and he may have to take on all the men. |  |
| Chris Calloway | Just: follows his conscience when he finally realizes how evil Ryker is. | Opportunistic: stops working for Joe and goes over to Ryker, presumably because Ryker seems to have more power. |
| Ryker |  | Bullying: sends his men to terrorize the homesteaders.  
Greedy: wants all the land for himself. |
1. When Chris Calloway realizes that Joe is being set up by Ryker, his conscience tells him that he must act to prevent Ryker’s plot from succeeding.

2. Joe and Shane help the people in the valley realize that the common good requires them to work together to oppose Ryker’s plan to drive them all away.

3. When Ryker burns the home of Fred Lewis and Lewis is ready to give up and leave the valley, the other members of the community show their sense of teamwork when they tell Lewis they will rebuild his house.

4. Joe invites Shane to stay for dinner and Marian uses their good china because they know the importance of hospitality in the life of the family.

5. Joe’s civic virtue makes him willing to take on Ryker to protect the interests of the settlers in the valley.

6. It would have been easy for the settlers to give in to despair after Stonewall was killed and they realize that Ryker would stop at nothing to drive them from the valley.

7. Marian’s perspective on fighting was that everyone would be better off if there were no guns in the valley, but Shane explains to her that “a gun is as good or as bad as the man using it.”
Shane Essay Question Answer Key

When writing an essay . . .

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Essay Question Answer Key (Continued)

Joe’s vision for the valley is that each of the little platoons in the valley – each family that has settled there – is important to the community as a whole. It may not seem that one family leaving the valley will have an impact on the community as a whole, but Joe knows that if one family leaves, others will be influenced to want to give up as well. The idea that “one person can make a difference” is demonstrated by Joe’s constant effort to keep the vision alive for the settlers of what their valley could be if they work together. Yet each family’s participation in the effort is also critical to the success of the whole.

One example of this situation in today’s society might be what happens in communities where gang activity drives families away. If fear prevents people from defending their homes and results in their fleeing the community, the evil actions of the gang members will prevail.

Another example would be in a school community, where a group of bullies are allowed to intimidate their fellow students. If the school community as a whole does not deal with the situation, the bullies will have free reign to perpetrate their misdeeds, to the detriment of the entire student body.

Families whose children participate in sports have a responsibility to work for the common good of the team. Parents who attempt to advance their own children’s athletic careers at the expense of the good of the team do a disservice to their own child as well as to that of the team.

THIS CONCLUDES SHANE
For questions regarding the implementation of the *Love & Life at the Movies* curriculum or to inquire about the availability of other lesson plans, please contact:

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We welcome your feedback in our continuing efforts to improve this program. Please share your thoughts with us!