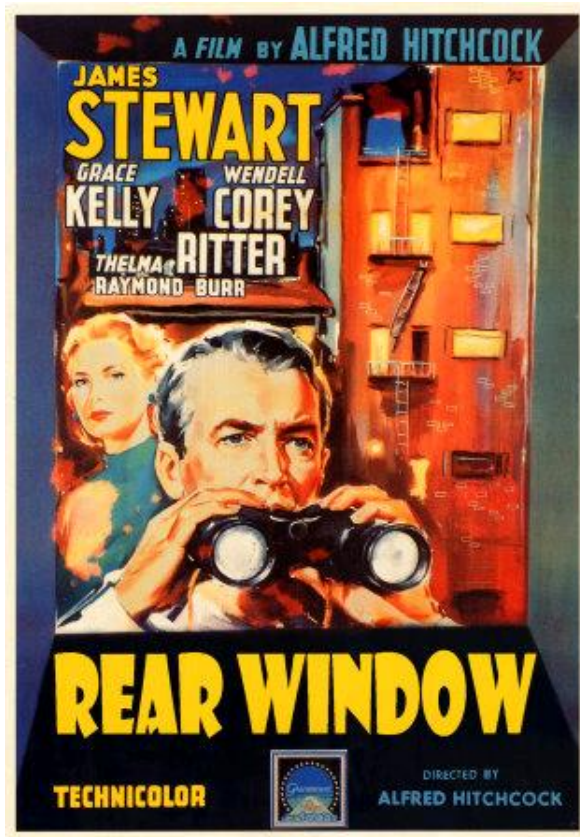


Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____ Due: _____



***Rear Window* (1954) directed by Alfred Hitchcock**

Cast

James "Jimmy" Stewart as L.B. Jefferies
Grace Kelly as Lisa Carol Fremont
Wendell Corey as Det. Lt. Thomas J. Doyle
Thelma Ritter as Stella
Raymond Burr as Lars Thorwald

Crew

Director: Alfred Hitchcock
Producer: Alfred Hitchcock
Writer: John Michael Hayes (screenplay) and Cornell Woolrich (short story)
Editor: George Tomasini
Director of Photography: Robert Burks
Music: Franz Waxman

Distribution/Studio Company: Paramount Pictures
(Universal Studios today)
MPAA Rating: PG (Based on 1983 Re-Release)
Running Time: 112 minutes

Background and Introduction to *Rear Window*

Alfred Hitchcock is one of the best directors ever, and his three American masterpieces are *North by Northwest*, *Rear Window*, and *Vertigo*. *Rear Window* is a story about a man who becomes more fascinated with the lives around him than living his own life. He uses his camera and window to peer into the lives of others. Instead of solving his own problem, he becomes involved in his neighbors' problems, especially when he thinks his neighbor has committed murder. Jeffries is chastised for his "window shopping," and we're along for the ride as viewers who are guilty of voyeurism, too. *Rear Window* offers viewers critical questions to consider regarding their relationship with films. For example, why do we enjoy watching others? When is it appropriate and immoral to do so? How do we use the stories of others to escape or run away from our own problems?

The film is based on a Cornell Woolrich (also called William Irish) short story on which this film is based, and it was first published in 1942 under the title "It Had to Be Murder," which prior to the film's production, was republished twice under the title "Rear Window."

According to studio production notes, the entire picture was shot on one set, which required months of planning and construction, which was a difficult feat to do in the 1950s. Hitchcock planned the production of the film so well that he confessed to his daughter that he felt like he had already made the film in his head; therefore, when he arrived on set, he often felt bored. The careful construction that Hitchcock doctored for his vision is evident in the final shooting script, which includes all of the shots he wanted, so camera operators were ready to go each day. In fact, Hitchcock shot the movie so well that the footage that was *not* used in the film added up to 100 feet. That's very impressive. Take note of the extensive use of **point of view shots** and see if you can spot one of Hitchcock's trademarks, his cameo in the film. For each of the Hitchcock film that we see, find Hitchcock. It's like *Where's Waldo* but with a fat, bald guy instead.

Pre-Viewing, During Viewing, and Post-Viewing Notes

Directions: Conscientious film students prepare themselves for a film by writing any notes about the film that may be important during the pre-viewing process and any notes that the group presentation will make for our post-viewing discussion of the film. Jot down any lecture or discussion material here. In addition, this page is used to record your notes while you watch the film. In the left column, describe scenes from the film that seem intriguing, interesting, or relative to your life. In the right column, write a response to the scene you described in the left column. You may write what you think the scene means, what the scene reminds you of, what you don't understand, how you feel about it, or any other comments.

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Comprehension Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions as you watch the film.

1. Like *Back to the Future*, Hitchcock provides a wealth of information about the plot in an opening **pan** of L.B. Jeffries' room. What information is listed in this shot? Other information about Jeffries is revealed in the phone call conversation with his publisher. Answer the following questions:
 - a. How much longer will Jeffries be in the leg cast?
 - b. What is Jeffries' occupation? How did Jeffries injure himself?
 - c. If Jeffries injured himself while at work, what does that say about Jeffries' character?
2. How does Stella **foreshadow** what occurs later in the film?
3. One characteristic of Hitchcock's works is that he makes a cameo appearance in his works. Where does Hitchcock appear in *Rear Window*?
4. The fight between Thurgood and his wife is never revealed, but what do you assume happens?
5. Why doesn't Jeffries want to marry Lisa? How are they different personally and/or professionally?
6. Jeffries argues that Lisa wouldn't fit into lifestyle because of the grueling nature of his "I'd like to be a part of [your life] somehow." How does Lisa become involved in Jeffries' life? How does Hitchcock use the camera to portray her shift?
7. Lt. Thomas J. Doyle, Jeffries' friend, is contacted to provide information about the Thorwalds. What is his opinion about Jeffries' opinion? Generally speaking, are authority figures helpful in mystery stories? Why or why not?

8. What shocking event happens in the neighborhood to the couple who sleeps on the fire escape? Who is the only neighbor who doesn't emerge from his/her apartment?
9. Lisa and Stella are both **dynamic characters**. How do both of them change later in the film?
10. How does Thorwald discover who has been watching him?
11. In the final **pan** of the courtyard, we see Jeffries' neighbors one last time. How have they changed?

Characterization

Directions: Jeffries forms a lot of his opinions on relationships and marriage based on observations of his neighbors. Explain what each couple teaches Jeffries about relationships and how his perceptions of their relationships help him form ideas and concepts about his and Lisa's relationship.

- a. The Thorwalds –
- b. Miss Lonelyhearts/the composer –
- c. the newlywed couple –
- d. Miss Torso/the Army private –
- e. the couple who sleeps on the fire escape –

Discussion Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions after you watch the film. We'll discuss them in a seminar.

1. What is Jeffries' main **inner conflict** in the film? What is his major **external conflict**? How does Jeffries use the external conflict to distract him from solving the inner conflict?
2. Who is your favorite neighbor? Why?
3. Jeffries derives his pleasure from watching others. Stella says, "We've become a race of peeping toms." Like Jeffries, we become peeping toms or voyeurs. Do you feel the shame that Stella suggests? Why or why not? How do we use movies to tell us information about our own lives?
4. How does Jeffries use his camera as an instrument of truth and a weapon throughout the film?
5. What do you make of the last shot of the film? Does Lisa change who she is to appeal to Jeffries? In other words, does she stay true to who she is or does she "sell out" her femininity?
6. Some actors grew upset with Hitchcock because he used filmmaking skills (e.g. editing) so skillfully that they felt that their acting came second to filmmaking. Pick an actor in the film who acts well in the film and explain *how* the actor is still able to hold his or her weight, even with Hitchcock's filming.
7. Some critics argue that Hitchcock's ideal of love is skeptical. Do you agree? What values on love does the film suggest? Think of all the couples in *Rear Window*.