

All the President's Men Film Summary

All the President's Men by Alan J. Pakula

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

All the President's Men Film Summary.....	1
Contents.....	2
Context.....	3
Summary and Analysis.....	5
Characters.....	10
Themes.....	14
Style and Cinematography.....	16
Motifs.....	17
Symbols.....	19
Essay Questions.....	21

Context

All the President's Men is based on the true story of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's investigation into the Watergate break-in and subsequent cover-up. Although the story is dramatized for film, it is based on the book of the same name, which was written after the investigations were over. The movie is closely tied to the real facts presented in the book.

On June 17, 1972, a security guard named Frank Willis, along with the D.C. police, caught five men breaking into the Democratic National Committee office located in the Watergate Hotel. The men were all former CIA agents or technology specialists who had broken in three weeks earlier to put taps on the phones and around the office. Woodward found the jobs of the men to be strange and began investigating the break-in further. Through his investigations with Carl Bernstein, the truth of Watergate was uncovered and eventually led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon.

One interesting side note to the story presented in *All the President's Men* is that on May 31, 2005, Mark Felt came forward and announced that he was Deep Throat. Although his confession was, at first, received by a skeptical public, Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein, and Ben Bradlee all confirmed his identity.

Alan J. Pakula directed the film. He began his career as a producer, working on projects such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Up the Down Staircase* and *The Stalking Moon*. Pakula debuted as a director with his film, *The Sterile Cuckoo*, and continuing on to direct *All the President's Men*, *Sophie's Choice*, and *The Pelican Brief*. Pakula worked well in the legal arena and brought his intelligence and talent to the film.

Robert Redford became well-known for his role as the Sundance Kid in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), at the age of 32. He remained number one at the box office for three years for his roles in *The Way We Were* and *The Sting*. He appeared in *The Great Gatsby* in 1974, and *All the President's Men* in 1976. Redford had the all-American look that viewers, especially women, loved, so he was seen in major roles for several consecutive years.

Dustin Hoffman became a star when he played the role of Benjamin Braddock in the 1967, film *The Graduate*. Although some may be surprised, Hoffman was actually a bigger star than Redford when *All the President's Men* was filmed, and he became famous two years before Redford received his big break as the Sundance Kid. Before this film, Hoffman had played leading roles in *Midnight Cowboy*, *Alfredo, Alfredo*, *Papillon*, and *Lenny*. The combination of Hoffman and Redford, as well as the interest in the Watergate scandal, was a huge draw for audiences.

All the President's Men was nominated for eight awards at the Oscars, but only won the following four: Best Actor in a Supporting Role for Jason Robards; Best Art Direction-Set Decoration for George Jenkins and George Gaines; Best Sound for Arthur Piantadosi,



Les Fresholtz, Rick Alexander, and James E. Webb; and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium for William Goldman.

Summary and Analysis

As the film begins, someone types something on a typewriter. Then, we watch as the President arrives in Washington after traveling around the world to meet with the Congress, House, Supreme Court, and others. President Nixon prepares to address Congress and the people of the United States.

A security guard finds that a room has been broken into at the Watergate building. We watch as some men look through some papers in the room. The men are warned to be quiet. The cops see lights on the eighth floor, and they enter the building to find out what is going on. The men in the building are caught by the police.

At the newspaper, the editor tells them that there has been a break-in at National Democratic Headquarters. Carl Bernstein convinces the editor to put him on the Watergate story. The five burglars from the scene have their own counsel, and the waiting reporters find that unusual.

Bob Woodward, a lawyer with the *Washington Post*, tries to get information from a lawyer named Mr. Martin, but he finally finds Starkey, who can give him some information. Woodward found out that the burglars couldn't have arranged for their own counsel because they never made any calls. Martin tries to shake Woodward as he continues probing how the burglars got their counsel. One of the burglars had a walkie-talkie, so he thinks there may be other people involved.

In court, the men's names are revealed: Bernard Barker, anti-communist; James McCoy, security consultant, retired from the CIA; Julio Martinez; Frank Feorini; Gonzales. At the newspaper, the reporters are convinced that the men were hired to bug the Democratic headquarters, but they can't figure out why or who paid them. Woodward receives a call from police headquarters that something interesting was found in the burglars' hotel rooms. Two of them have interesting entries in their agendas. One says, "HHWH" and the other says, "Howard Hunt W Howard."

Later in his office, Woodward calls the White House. He asks for Howard Hunt and is forwarded to another office number. The secretary asks if he tried "Mullen & Company," where Hunt also works as a writer. Woodward asks the editor who Charles Colson is and discovers that Colson is special council to Nixon. Woodward finally gets in touch with Hunt and asks why his name was in the agenda book. Woodward calls another woman, who denies knowing Hunt. After talking to a publisher, Woodward finds out that Hunt formerly wrote spy novels. He finally talks to a Mr. Bennett, Hunt's boss. Bennett reveals that Hunt was with the CIA; the FBI seems to think that Hunt was involved in the break in. Hunt worked under Colson. A PR guy at the White House told Woodward, "I am convinced that neither Mr. Colson nor anyone else at the White House had any knowledge of or participation in this deplorable incident at the Democratic National Committee." Woodward tells the editor that he wasn't asking about Watergate; he was just asking about Hunt.



The editor puts Bernstein on the story. Bernstein begins polishing the copy for the article on Watergate. Woodward admits that Bernstein's article is better, so he brings his notes to Bernstein. He doesn't like the way Bernstein does things, but they are now on the story together.

Bernstein has lunch with a girl who used to work for Colson. He tries to find out more about Hunt's work at the White House, and she tells him that Hunt was doing investigative work on Teddy Kennedy. Bernstein calls the White House library to find out what books he might have checked out on Teddy Kennedy. After a moment, the librarian comes back and tells him that she was mistaken; she did not have a request from Mr. Hunt. She totally changes her story and eventually says she doesn't even know a Mr. Hunt. Woodward has also found information about a previous election in which Hunt was involved. Woodward calls Clausen about the librarian's response, and Clausen says he will call back with a response. Clausen returns his call and says that the conversation with Bernstein never happened.

Bernstein and Woodward leave to check out the Library of Congress. They try to get the information requested by the White House, but they are told that the requests are confidential. Finally, they find someone who gives them all the requests made by the White House over the past year. The men search through all the cards, but they can't find anything. They try to sell the head of the paper on the story as a front page story, but he says they don't have enough for that.

Bernstein tries to make a call to one of his contacts, but the contact says that he's not giving out any information on this story. In Woodward's paper that night, he receives a note from one of his contacts named "Deep Throat." He is instructed to put a red flag in a pot on the balcony if he wants to talk again. Woodward meets with "Deep Throat," and he tries to convince "Deep Throat" that he can trust him. Woodward begins to tell what he knows: Hunt was investigating Kennedy, and Woodward has heard about a lawyer named Liddy, who won't talk. John Mitchell resigned as the head of CRP (also known as CREEP to many), and everyone knows that his reasons aren't true. Hunt supposedly has a lawyer with twenty-five thousand dollars. Deep Throat tells him to follow the money.

The *New York Times* has found phone calls from the burglars to the re-election committee. There were at least fifteen calls for three months before the break in and eighty-nine thousand dollars in Mexican checks to the committee. Bernstein tries to get the phone records, but all he finds out is that the Miami D.A. and the head person, Martin Dardis, subpoenaed the records. However, when he goes to meet with Dardis, Bernstein learns that his appointment was cancelled. He waits for hours trying to get in to see Dardis. After he leaves, the secretary tries to schedule a new time for him the next day. She then receives a call, made by Bernstein, to come pick up some records for Dardis. Bernstein lets himself into Dardis's office and demands some time. Finally, Dardis agrees to show him everything he has on Barker. They found a cashier's check to Kenneth H. Dahlberg, who no one can seem to find. Although they can't find information on him, they do find a picture of him.



Woodward finally finds Dahlberg's number and asks about the check deposited into one of the burglars' accounts. Dahlberg tells him that he turns over all his money to the Committee to Re-elect. He insists that he is a decent person before hanging up quickly. Woodward then calls the Committee to Re-Elect and asks to talk to a Mr. McGregor. McGregor tells him that he doesn't know how the check got into the account. He explains that John Mitchell was in charge earlier. Dahlberg calls Woodward back to talk about the check. He explains that he is caught in something, and he's not sure what. Dahlberg explains that he doesn't like to carry all that cash down to his summer home in Florida, so he put it in a cashier's check. Dahlberg tells Woodward that he gave it to Stans, Nixon's head of finance, and he doesn't know what happened to it after that.

In the meeting for putting together the paper, they keep trying to shut up the information about the Watergate issue. A White House guy came up to ask why the *Post* keeps working on the story. The paper realizes that the story could be dangerous for the paper if it's not true. They wonder why the *Post* is the only paper finding information about the break in. One of the men is convinced that the story doesn't make sense. There is no reason for the Republicans to pull such a stunt.

Bernstein and Woodward have discovered that CRP has hundreds of thousands of dollars of misplaced funds. The reporters know that they have to follow the money to get the story, and the editor tells them to find some hard evidence for the case. They try to get the information from a woman they know, but they eventually tell her they won't ask her to do anything she's not comfortable with. Later that day, however, she drops off the information they needed of the list of people working for the Committee to Re-Elect. Using the list, they try to find people who work with the Committee who can give them some information.

They finally meet a Betty Milland, who tells them that there were some documents shredded at the Committee. John Mitchell and a lawyer showed up at the shredding, and Miss Milland tells them that she can't talk about it. They return to her house, and she asks them to leave before someone sees them. Woodward tells Bernstein that he wants more facts before writing more about the story. Everyone working for the Committee seems to be turning them away.

Harry tells them that the Watergate report will be postponed until after the re-nomination that night. There is evidence that the Grand Jury indictment will only be against the five burglars. Richard Nixon receives the nomination that night to run for President again. The Federal Audit Report was effectively postponed. On the same night, Carl visits a Committee worker's home. The woman is very scared, but he continues to ask questions. She was formerly the bookkeeper for both Stans and Sloan, but she refuses to tell him any information. She admits that she has to some extent been threatened if she tells the truth. She finally tells him that a special account of three hundred and fifty thousand dollars was, in her understanding, an account for taking out big wigs. She says there was a list that recorded fifteen names and how much each person received. She tells him that people are very worried at the Committee. Finally, she tells him that within two days, six million in cash came in, but she thought everything was okay, until she saw how much Liddy took. She only worries about Sloan. Sloan quit because his



wife was going to leave him for being dishonest. When Bernstein suggests that Sloan is being set up as a fall guy for John Mitchell, the woman begins to cry and says, "If you guys could get Mitchell that would be beautiful." All the evidence that could have proved that Mitchell's group had planned the break in was destroyed. Using initials, she confirms that "M" for McGruder and "L" for Liddy, and "P" for Porter were correct and that they were there and shredding stuff, and they worked under Mitchell.

Later Bernstein tells Woodward what he found out. However, they know that they have to find out the names of the workers for sure. They go back to see the bookkeeper and assure her that they are simply trying to help. She admits that Porter received more than fifty thousand, and that McGruder was the only "M" to receive money. As they write up their story, they watch a man on television talk about how extensive the investigation into Watergate really was.

The men go to see Mr. Sloan. He tells him that he believes in Nixon and doesn't think that Nixon knew anything about the incident. Sloan admits that they were not encouraged to come forward and talk, but they were never told to lie. Sloan admits that the three hundred and fifty thousand dollars in the CRP fund was really more like one million. Sloan tells them that there were several people involved, and they begin to suspect that Nixon's personal lawyer is one of them. Mitchell would give a verbal order to Sloan to hand out the money. There were five men controlling the funds: Mitchell, Stans, McGruder, and two others.

Ben Bradlee loses his temper because they have no one willing to go on record and verify the story. Bernstein calls John Mitchell to see if he has any comment on the next day's story. Mitchell becomes angry and hangs up. Bradlee asks how much they trust Deep Throat, and Woodward says that he is definitely trustworthy. Bradlee decides to run the story. One of Bernstein's contacts at the Bureau meets with him to tell him that they didn't have the information on Mitchell. All the interviews at CRP were done with a lawyer present, so people didn't feel comfortable being open.

Bernstein reports to Woodward that he got a call that morning about a lawyer named Alex Shipley, who received a call from Segretti to join a group of people to sabotage the Democratic candidate. The FBI interrogated Segretti but did not find him involved in the break in. Segretti's plane tickets show differently, however. He traveled across country multiple times during the space of a year to places where there were Democratic primaries that were possibly sabotaged. Bernstein meets with Segretti about the sabotage campaign. Segretti tells him that he would never do anything illegal such as the Watergate break in. However, Segretti would send out notes about senators with illegitimate children and other problems.

Woodward meets with Deep Throat again. Deep Throat tells Woodward that if Segretti would go on the record, Segretti could implicate people inside the White House. Deep Throat refuses to give more specific information. He says that the FBI didn't pursue the leads if they weren't related directly to the break in. Deep Throat tells him that Mitchell knew about the break in and reminds Woodward to look at the big picture. Democratic candidates' private lives were investigated; notes were sent; Democratic rallies were



cancelled, but Deep Throat points out that Segretti didn't do all of this. Woodward says the FBI and Justice know about it; suddenly a car speeds off, so the two men part.

In the office the next day, Sally comes to see Bernstein and Woodward. Clausen told her that he wrote a letter that brought down a Democratic nominee. Woodward calls Clausen about the report, but he denies saying that he wrote the letter. Clausen then calls Sally and talks to her about the situation while she has Bernstein and Woodward listening on the other lines. Clausen even calls Bradlee, concerned that Bradlee will print that Clausen was in Sally's apartment, which will upset Clausen's wife.

Woodward calls Bernstein and tells him they got a tip that money from the secret cash fund went to Segretti. Since they know that Chapin hired Segretti, and Hollaman hired Chapin, then Chapin must be the one controlling the fund. They discuss that the fifth person controlling the fund is Halliman. They decide to meet with Sloan again. They ask him to confirm that the five men are Mitchell, Stans, Haldiman, Chapin, and _____. He simply tells them that if they wrote a story like that, he would have no problem with it.

The paper is concerned about printing the story, but Bernstein calls a source and tells him that if the source is still on the line when he counts to ten, they will go ahead with the story. When the source is still on the phone, Bradlee tells them to go ahead with the story. The next morning Sloan denies mentioning Holderman in the indictment. The television stations rail against the *Washington Post* for their claims. Bernstein and Woodward try to meet with their contacts to see if they should back off the story.

Woodward falls asleep while waiting to meet with Deep Throat, but he is able to meet him in time. Deep Throat tells Woodward that he knows they put off the investigations by months because they shot too high. Deep Throat finally tells Woodward that Halderman was completely in charge of the operation, and the list of covert stuff on Mitchell is unimaginable. The entire U.S. intelligence community is involved in the scandal. The cover-up was more to hide the covert operations than to cover up Watergate. He also tells him that their lives are in danger.

Bernstein and Woodward go to Bradlee's house, so that they can talk. They tell him that there is a lot of surveillance and people's lives are in danger. The only reason Sloan didn't say Halderman's name is that he simply wasn't asked. Bradlee tells them, "You know the results of the latest Gallup Poll? Half the country never even heard of the word Watergate. Nobody gives a shit. You guys are probably pretty tired, right? Well, you should be. Go on home, get a nice hot bath. Rest up...15 minutes. Then get your asses back in gear. We're under a lot of pressure, you know, and you put us there. Nothing's riding on this except the, uh, first amendment to the Constitution, freedom of the press, and maybe the future of the country. Not that any of that matters, but if you guys * up again, I'm going to get mad. Goodnight."

As they work, everyone watches as Nixon takes the Oath of Office. As the film ends, we see the rest of the events typed out on the typewriter and ending with August 9, 1974, "Nixon Resigns."



Characters

Bob Woodward, played by Robert Redford

Description

Bob Woodward was one of the lead reporters in the *Washington Post's* investigation into the Watergate scandal. Woodward attended the arraignment for the burglars and was surprised to see a top lawyer representing them. When he also realized that each person was a former member of the CIA or a technology expert, Woodward became suspicious of the whole situation.

After bringing the odd circumstances to the attention of his *Post* colleagues, including Carl Bernstein, Woodward and Bernstein began a deeper investigation into Watergate and the Committee to Re-Elect the President. Eventually, their investigations, as well as those of other reporters and the FBI, led to the resignation of President Nixon.

Analysis

Woodward is a smart, young reporter. Those two qualities serve him well as he begins a major investigation into the affairs of the White House. Being smart, he picks up on unusual circumstances such as the jobs of the burglars while his youth makes him less hesitant to follow those clues in the face of great danger. At the beginning, his youth also gave him a big ego, but he learns to work with Bernstein, so they can have a successful relationship.

As the one with the relationship with Deep Throat, Woodward becomes the primary focus of the film. Deep Throat's identity remains a mystery during the film, and remained a mystery until May 31, 2005, when Mark Felt revealed that he was, in fact, Deep Throat. Woodward's involvement with Deep Throat creates an air of mystery around Woodward as well. Thus, he becomes the primary character in the film.

Carl Bernstein, played by Dustin Hoffman

Description

Carl Bernstein was one of the reporters at *The Washington Post*. Bernstein worked with Woodward to publish the reports on the Watergate break-in. In the film, Bernstein comes across as a cocky, selfish brat at first glance. He is a great writer, and he knows it. When Woodward turns in his report, Bernstein promptly picks it up and starts making changes, so that it sounds better.

Bernstein and Woodward have a bit of a rivalry at the beginning of the film; however, they become friends as they begin investigating Watergate together. Bernstein plays



second fiddle to Woodward throughout the movie, but without Bernstein's support and wisdom, Woodward may not have been able to investigate the break-in as he did.

Analysis

Bernstein is not the focus of the film; Woodward is. However, from what little we learn of Bernstein's character, we can talk a little more about him. Bernstein is a smart guy and a great writer. When it comes to writing, he definitely beats Woodward, which is part of the reason Bradlee makes them work together.

Because of his reputation with the ladies, Bernstein has access to some important people with information during the case. His research and commitment to the case helps keep both him and Woodward going when things get really difficult.

Ben Bradlee, played by Jason Robards

Description

Ben Bradlee was the vice president and executive editor of the *Washington Post* at the time of the Watergate investigation. Bradlee was a brilliant leader of the newspaper as he realized the importance of following a case that was becoming increasingly dangerous for both the reporters and the newspaper.

Analysis

Bradlee is a great encouragement to the young reporters. Although he is skeptical of their story at first and demands more evidence, Bradlee finally comes on board. Once he commits himself to printing their stories, he stands by them all the way until the end.

Harry M. Rosenfeld, played by Jack Warden

Description

Harry M. Rosenfeld was the metro editor at the *Washington Post* when Watergate happened. He was directly over Woodward and Bernstein and was the closest to the story from the beginning. Rosenfeld was actually the one who assigned Woodward to cover the case of the burglary at the Watergate building.

Analysis

Rosenfeld was an encouragement to the young reporters and stood by their side when critics made snide comments or tried to get the story out of the paper. Rosenfeld continually encouraged Simons and Bradlee and convinced them that the reporters were on to a real story.



Howard Simons, played by Martin Balsam

Description

Howard Simons was the managing editor at the *Washington Post*. Simons offered encouragement to the young reporters, but he was also very careful about what he allowed to go to press. Simons realized the impact of the story, especially if the reporters' information turned out to be false.

Analysis

In the film, Simons seems to come across as a skeptic much of the time. As much as he wants to support the reporters, he also wants to protect his job and the paper. Simons tells the reporters and Rosenfeld to get more specific information before he is willing to give them the front page.

Deep Throat/Mark Felt, played by Hal Holbrook

Description

Deep Throat is the mysterious source, high in government, who came to Woodward with information. Although Deep Throat refused to give many specifics, he did allow Woodward to ask him questions, and he would tell him whether he was on the right trail. The best advice Deep Throat gives to Woodward is to "Follow the money."

Analysis

Deep Throat can be seen either as a villain or a hero. He helped the reporters to uncover the truth about the Watergate break-in, but by doing so, he broke his oaths and revealed classified government information. Meeting in darkened parking garages and using secret signals, Deep Throat worked hard to keep his identity a secret. He gives both good and bad information to the reporters, but without his help, their investigation would have been much more difficult.

Sally Aiken, played by Penny Fuller

Description

Sally Aiken works in the office with Woodward and Bernstein and is having an affair with Clausen.



Analysis

Sally uses her relationship to provide important information to the reporters, even though she could get into trouble for her actions.

Judy Hoback, played by Jane Alexander

Description

Judy Hoback works at the Committee to Re-Elect the President and reluctantly helps Woodward and Bernstein.

Analysis

Judy is nervous and scared. She believes, probably correctly, that there are people watching her home who might kill her if they found out she gave information. Finally, she reveals what the men need to know.

Hugh W. Sloan, Jr., played by Stephen Collins

Description

Sloan worked for the CRP, but he left after his wife threatened to leave him for being involved in dishonest work.

Analysis

Sloan took the noble way out by quitting; however, he also leaves out much of the important information needed by the Court.

Debbie Sloan, played by Meredith Baxter

Description

Debbie Sloan was Mark Sloan's wife, who convinces Hugh Sloan to quit his job by threatening to leave him.

Analysis

Debbie bravely stood up for honor and justice by convincing her husband to quit his job. However, she is terrified that he will now be in major trouble for the things he was involved in.



Themes

Everything Comes Into The Open Eventually

Watergate was all about deception. The Democrats were supposedly running a call girl ring out of the Watergate building, and the Republicans supposedly paid to have people break into the office and tape record activities. How much of each side's story is true is something that only a few high-ranking officials from that time probably know.

Everything about Watergate was secretive and hidden. From the burglary to Deep Throat to the facts about the entire scandal - everything was shrouded in mystery. However, eventually everything (or at least many things) came out into the open.

Although the film does not reveal the identity of Deep Throat, even that information came out eventually. On May 31, 2005, Mark Felt, one of the top FBI officials, revealed at the age of 91, that he was in fact Deep Throat. Woodward, Bernstein, and Bradlee had sworn to keep his identity secret until after his death but through the encouragement of family and friends, Felt went public in 2005; the true identity of Deep Throat was finally revealed.

Government Cannot Be Trusted

One theme of both the film and the Watergate investigation as a whole is that the government cannot be trusted. Until this time, most Americans trusted their government to make good decisions and keep the public up to date on important information. However, the reports by the *Post* and other newspapers caused the public to suspect that they were being left out. As they became more interested in the scandal surrounding Watergate, Americans became increasingly skeptical of the trustworthiness of the government.

The film allows viewers to see how the story unravels from a minor break-in into a full-scale investigation into the President and his colleagues. Woodward and Bernstein were convinced that the government could not be trusted, and they sought to show this to the public. With the help of Deep Throat, the two reporters were able to delve even deeper into the truth of the Watergate break-in, and eventually President Nixon resigned after impeachment became a very real possibility.

Keep Digging

Woodward and Bernstein refuse to give up. When things got rough and their lives are threatened, they continue to keep digging into the murky waters that were Watergate. Perseverance is a major theme in the film. At times, even their editors tell Woodward and Bernstein to simply give up on the story. It seems too dangerous and too shady to pursue. However, Woodward and Bernstein refuse to take no for an answer and



continue pursuing the leads, until they have developed a more complete story of the events surrounding the Watergate break-in.

Not only do Woodward and Bernstein keep digging, but they also convince others to open up and tell the truth. Many of the people working at the Committee to Re-Elect feel that their lives are in danger if they are even seen with Woodward and Bernstein. However, the reporters' passion for finding out the truth and revealing it to the public helps others to come clean as well.

Style and Cinematography

Alan J. Pakula directs this film in his unique and impressive style. He creates a world of intrigue and mystery that is Washington. Much of the film is shot in partial darkness to emphasize the mysterious nature of the circumstances and events happening in Washington around the time of the Watergate scandal.

The darkened style was also used to partially disguise the face of Deep Throat. Since no one knew the true identity of the man, the director saw fit to keep the face of Hal Holbrook partially disguised as well. Deep Throat was one of the main reasons that the story was so filled with intrigue and mystery. In the past, few people had used only unnamed sources for their stories, but the *Post* was having to do this on a daily basis to find out any information. Although there were hundreds of sources, Deep Throat was the most powerful and the most constant source of information to Woodward and Bernstein. The darkened scenes where he appears help build on the already-present mystery of his contribution and his identity.

Pakula also artfully laces some humor throughout the movie. Since the film is about the true story of the reporters and the Watergate investigation, it could have been told in a very dry, matter-of-fact style. However, Pakula makes the story come to life on the screen with action and humor. The two reporters are always rushing around to ask questions or to avoid being seen, but as they travel and work, they share some good laughs that help to lighten the feeling of the movie and also make it more entertaining.

The film's actors are excellent and work to keep just the right balance between humor, action and fact. Bringing their own personalities and motivations to the screen, both Hoffman and Redford give unforgettable performances. Without the fantastic actors in the film, the humor would have made the story unbelievable or over-dramatized. Instead, the humor adds to the mystery and intrigue of the film by making the characters seem real.



Motifs

Cycle

All the President's Men ends where it began - at the typewriter. The entire story takes place in and around Washington, D.C., with major emphasis on the newsroom of the *Washington Post*. Although the *Post* was not the only newspaper reporting on the break-in and investigations, it did get the most press and had the best sources. Although no one knew who the sources were at the time, or for many years after, one of the primary sources for information as Woodward and Bernstein investigated was a top FBI official, Mark Felt, who waited until May 31, 2005, to reveal his identity to the world.

The final thing we see typed in the film is that Nixon has resigned. Although the film completes a cycle, the American public did not. The ironic part is that in the beginning of the film, the public had some trust in their government, but by the time Nixon resigned, the public had gained a very cynical attitude concerning government as a whole.

Some things make a cycle but not everything. The reporters end up back at the typewriters reporting the news, only they are more famous by now. However, the whole country has been in a turmoil simply because a few men were caught breaking in to an office at a hotel.

Darkness

Darkness is a major part of the story. Because the sources want to keep their identity private, especially Deep Throat, Woodward and Bernstein only interview people at night. For instance, Woodward only meets Deep Throat late at night in darkened parking garages. Because of his status in the government, Deep Throat does not want his identity revealed.

Additionally, other people were interviewed at night as well. Judy Hoback was terrified to tell the truth, but the men went to her at night to get information. She also believed that there were people from the government watching her house, but she couldn't see them because of the darkness. Seemingly her whole life was controlled by the darkness around her, and the things, or people, that were hidden by the darkness.

The entire Watergate scandal is about darkness to a certain extent. Under the cover of night, five men break into the Democratic National Committee office and from that point on, a cover-up begins under the direction of some of the most powerful people in the land - those in the White House. They worked to keep the public in the dark about the circumstances surrounding the break-in and other events.

Unraveling Story

We all know what happens when you pull on the right piece of thread, and the yarn begins to unravel. In *All the President's Men*, this is exactly what happens, but instead of a roll of yarn unraveling, an entire Presidency begins to fall apart. Because Frank Willis realized that the Democratic National Committee office was being broken into and called the D.C. police, a major scandal began.

The first clue that tipped off reporter Bob Woodward was the occupations of the burglars. Each was either a former CIA member or an expert in communications. He realized that these were not normal burglars, and he began to pull at the string in order to unravel the story. As Woodward continued to investigate the story, he eventually began receiving important information from a source high in the government known only as Deep Throat. Deep Throat's clues and hints helped direct Woodward toward the truth of the matter.

The White House watched as their entire cover-up began to be unraveled by Woodward and Bernstein. Despite their best efforts, neither the White House nor the FBI could keep the story tied up for long. Eventually, all the information began to tumble out and major investigations began. In the end, the majority of the White House was implicated, and President Richard Nixon resigned.

Symbols

Flower Pot

When Woodward needed to get in touch with Deep Throat, he would put a red flag in a flower pot out on his balcony. Woodward places the pot on the balcony several times during the film, so he can get in touch with his source. Although the flower pot is an actual item that was used by Woodward, it is also symbolic of far more when you consider the whole story. In the big scheme of things, the flower pot is just a small part of the intrigue involved in uncovering the Watergate cover-up.

The flower pot symbolizes the intrigue and mystery surrounding Watergate and the world of politics as well. Until this time, much of the White House affairs were kept extremely private, and only those involved had access to pertinent information. For all practical purposes, the public was clueless when it came to the truth of American politics. With the advent of Woodward and Bernstein's type of investigative journalism, the mystery would be gone from politics forever.

Newspaper

The newspaper is symbolic of the relationship between Woodward and Deep Throat. When Deep Throat wanted to meet with Woodward, Woodward's newspaper would contain a drawing of a clock pointing to the time of their meeting. Woodward met Deep Throat in abandoned parking garages in the middle of the night. Their relationship was complicated because Deep Throat (now known to be Mark Felt) was an important official, and Woodward was being watched because of his articles in *The Washington Post*.

The newspaper also represents the way in which the circumstances around the burglary and subsequent cover-up and preceding events were being exposed to the world. Rather than going to the Court or the Senate, Deep Throat went instead to two young reporters at the *Post*. Many thought Deep Throat unpatriotic because of the way he conducted himself - sneaking around in the dark to give tips to young reporters.

Money

Deep Throat tells Woodward and Bernstein to "follow the money." In the film and in the true story of the Watergate scandal, the money going into CRP and being funneled out in cash to burglars and others was the real scandal. Not only were they financing break-ins into the Democratic National Committee's office, but also the group was using the money to finance other shady deals.

The money symbolizes all the intrigue and lies being spread around Washington by any number of people, both Republicans and Democrats. The time around the Watergate

investigation was a time when people were looking to make money on anything and cover up their own business at the same time. Eventually, the struggle to keep money out of the wrong hands and keep their business secret causes the fall of the Nixon Presidency.

Throughout the film, we see the reporters chasing the money from scene to scene and person to person. The money is the primary focus of the film and seems to be in some ways a symptom of the deeper problems in Washington.



Essay Questions

How does the security guard discover the break in?

What is Watergate?

Why does Woodward find it unusual that an important lawyer would have been called to represent the burglars?

What is unusual about the burglars' daytime jobs?

What is the relationship between Bernstein and Woodward at the beginning of the film? How does it change?

How does Woodward signal Deep Throat?

What does Deep Throat do for Woodward?

What are the reactions that Woodward and Bernstein get from people working the Committee for Re-Election?

How much is the slush account worth and who controls it?

What are the final results of *The Washington Post's* investigations?

Bibliography

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watergate>

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000163/>

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000602/>

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001587/>

<http://imdb.com/title/tt0074119/awards>