

From Here to Eternity Film Summary

From Here to Eternity by James Jones

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Context

From Here to Eternity chronicles the easy life in Hawaii in the months before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. When Prew arrives at the base, his biggest worry is being forced to box; he quit a year earlier because he accidentally caused a friend to go blind. For his resistance, he is relegated to kitchen duty.

Prew and his best friend, Angelo, go into the city one night, and Prew meets Lorene, whose real name is Alma. The two begin a relationship when he can get some leave from the base. One night, Angelo skips guard duty and is put in the stockade, where the head officer hates him.

Angelo escapes, but he is mortally wounded. He finds Prew, and Prew holds him in his arms as Angelo dies. Then Prew finds the stockade sergeant in the city and murders him. Since he can't go back to the base, he stays with Alma. After the bombing, though, Prew tries to return and is killed, since they can't see who he is in the dark.

Throughout all this, Karen and Warden have an affair under the nose of her husband, Dana. It eventually ends, though, because Warden simply doesn't want to become an officer or leave Hawaii. At the end of the film, Warden finds Prew and says that Prew is the most stubborn man he's ever met.

Fred Zinnemann directed *From Here to Eternity*. He received four Oscars, and the first was for a short, *That Mothers Might Live* (1938). He also directed such excellent films as *High Noon* (1952), *Oklahoma!* (1955), *The Nun's Story* (1959), *The Sundowners* (1960), *A Man for All Seasons* (1966) and *Julia* (1977).

Burt Lancaster performs as Warden in this classic film. Lancaster made his name in film as an instant success in *The Killers* (1946). In *I Walk Alone* (1947), he costarred with his friend, Kirk Douglas. Lancaster also made appearances in a variety of films, including *All My Sons* (1948), *The Crimson Pirate* (1952), *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957) and *Elmer Gantry* (1960).

Montgomery Clift gives an excellent performance in *From Here to Eternity*. Although Clift was widely popular after his performance in the 1948 films *Red River* and *The Search*, *A Place in the Sun* (1951) insured his place in Hollywood history. Clift was a gay actor who was cast as a leading man and sex symbol. His sensuality and good looks made him a favorite with both men and women alike. Clift also played a major role in *From Here to Eternity* and *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961); however, following a devastating car accident, his alcohol and drug problems made Clift an unreliable actor and eventually destroyed him.

Deborah Kerr first switched from ballet to film when appearing with Rex Harrison in *Major Barbara* (1941). Her kiss in the sand with Burt Lancaster made her a major sex symbol. Some of her other fabulous performances include roles in films like *Black*

Narcissus (1946), *Julius Caesar* (1953), *The King and I* (1956) and *The Sundowners* (1960).

From Here to Eternity swept the Academy Awards with eight Oscars: Best Actor in a Supporting Role for Frank Sinatra; Best Actress in a Supporting Role for Donna Reed; Best Cinematography, Black-and-White for Burnett Guffey; Best Director for Fred Zinnemann; Best Film Editing for William A. Lyon; Best Picture for Buddy Adler; Best Sound, Recording for John P. Livadary (Columbia SSD); and Best Writing, Screenplay for Daniel Taradash. The film also won two Golden Globe Awards: Best Motion Picture Director for Fred Zinnemann and Best Supporting Actor for Frank Sinatra.



Summary and Analysis

From Here to Eternity is the story of one of America's greatest tragedies. It begins as viewers see soldiers marching through the Schofield Barracks in Hawaii in 1941. Pvt. Robert E. Lee "Prew" Prewitt has just been transferred, and his friend Pvt. Angelo Maggio meets him. Maggio knows that Prew is the best bugler they have. Prew decides to have a look around while waiting for the captain. He begins playing pool until another man, 1st Sgt. Milton Warden, tells him to stop and follow him.

A few minutes later the captain, Capt. Dana "Dynamite" Holmes, comes in to talk to Prew. Dynamite tells Prew that people can move up quickly if he likes them. Prew admits that he's transferring due to personal reasons. Warden forces him to tell the truth. After being put down from his spot as first bugler, Prew transferred. The men are not impressed. Dynamite says he's the regimental boxing coach, so he pulled a few strings. Prew admits that he quit fighting because he once hurt a man badly. Dynamite refuses to give up; he even offers Prew the first bugler position to go back to boxing. When Prew still refuses, Dynamite warns Prew not to make any mistakes.

Warden leads Prew to his barracks and warns him that he made a huge mistake going against the captain. A moment later a beautiful girl, Capt. Holmes' wife, drives up in a fancy car. Warden explains that the captain wants to be a major, so Prew will eventually have to fight, if not for the captain, then for Warden, so that his job is easier. Prew understands that if a man goes his own way, he has no hope.

Warden and Prew stop in to get some supplies. While Warden is talking to the man in charge, they watch Mrs. Holmes walk toward them and talk about her good looks. Warden offers to help her, and she says she's heard a lot about him. He says he was born smart, and she says she loves that and walks away.

That night, the captain finally arrives home. He tells his wife that he got stuck talking to the general at the officer's club. She thinks he should spend more time with the company to get the promotion. Dynamite explains that he was busy with business. She points out that she's not as stupid as he thinks; she knows he goes out with other women. He thinks she has no right to accuse him.

At the officer's club, the company boxers gather round Prew to talk to him about boxing with them. The men really want him to box with them, but he continues to ignore them. He finally tells them that he quit fighting and that they can't make him fight. Prew tells them to bring out what they have; he can take it.

In the barracks that night, Prew asks if there is some military rule that he has to fight. The guy he's with, whose name is Angelo, says no. Prew then asks about Warden. The man says that Warden is fair but tough. He's the best soldier in the military and is known around the world for his bravery.



The next day, the men continue their duties at the camp. The men are trained to reload their guns quickly so that they will be ready for battle. The officer checks Prew's gun, but because it's not perfect, Prew is forced to run seven laps. He spends a whole day working hard in training. He is treated worse than others because he refuses to fight.

That afternoon, Sgt. Warden goes to the captain's house in the pouring rain. He needs to get some papers signed, but he asks Karen, Holmes' wife, not to call Dynamite at the club. She's drinking, and when Warden says he could use a drink too, she gives him one. Karen tells him that the maid could be home at any time, and he tells her that he know the maid is out for the day.

Karen realizes that the papers aren't really important. She despises Warden for being so confident, but he explains that he doesn't want to see a beautiful woman go to waste. She begins to drink as well and talks about the waste of not having a child in a home. Karen begins to cry but tries to stop. Warden gets ready to leave, and Karen isn't sure that's what she wants. He comes back, takes her in his arms and kisses her passionately.

The next morning, Prew and Angelo are in line. Prew doesn't want to go out that night, but Angelo lets him know that there will be beautiful girls there. In the office, Warden also gets a warning about Karen from another man.

That night, though, Warden meets Karen on the beach. She's afraid that he thinks she's a tramp. Karen becomes worried, and Warden points out that he showed up on time and is risking his job for this. She calms down, and since they both have on bathing suits, they go down on the beach.

In the city, Prew and Angelo enjoy their night on the town. The two men are drunk. They go to a club called the New Congress Club. Prew tries to go on inside, but the woman at the desk stops him to get him to pay his dues. In exchange, he can come to the club, dance, drink and relax with women for the month as long as he's a gentleman. He agrees and goes inside. Although he is introduced to some other women, Prew stares at a beautiful woman, Lorene.

Prew makes a beeline to her, and she is impressed with him. They both share that they liked each other from the moment they saw each other. They are disturbed a moment later when Angelo gets in a fight with the piano player, and Prew holds him back. The man playing is in charge of the stockade. Angelo goes to drink and dance with a girl, and when Prew looks back over, another man, Bill, is with Lorene. Lorene is thrilled with Bill's stories about surfing. Prew doesn't want to hear the stories, and Lorene takes Bill into another room.

At the beach, Karen and Warden climb down to the water and strip down to their bathing suits. When Lorene comes back out to Prew, he explains that not all Army men are safe. She decides to get permission for them to spend some time up in the parlor.

Back at the beach, Karen and Warden kiss passionately in the surf and then run back over to the blanket to embrace some more. The camera shows her wedding ring, and



she tells Warden that nobody has ever made her feel the way he does. Warden asks her about the other men, and she can't deny it. He asks for the story behind it and won't let her leave until she tells him.

Karen tells her story. She had only been married two years when she found out her husband was cheating. By that time, she was pregnant. One night when Dana went out to a meeting, she asked him to come back with the doctor, but since he was with another woman, he forgot. When he came in later, he was drunk, fell on the couch and passed out. The baby boy was born an hour later, but he was already dead. She can't have children anymore, so she started going out with men. He tells her to stop and listen, and she says that until she met him she didn't think it was possible.

In the parlor at the club, Lorene and Prew kiss on the couch, and Lorene tells her story. After being dumped by her boyfriend, she heard about the money that could be made in Hawaii. She came to make a pile of money so that she can be set for life. In the middle of her story, Angelo comes in and brings the whiskey to share. After he leaves, Prew tells Lorene why he doesn't want to box anymore. His friend was supposed to go to the top, but after they fought one day, his friend ended up being blind.

That night, the guys play around. Prew refuses to clean up in the gym after being spit upon. Dana then punishes Prew for his defiance. Prew still refuses to apologize after his punishment, and Dana's mad that he is going to have to court marshal Prew. Warden then convinces Dana not to let him go.

A week or so later, Warden tries to convince Prew not to do KP and instead start boxing. Prew continues to refuse. After a month, their plans to get him to box still haven't worked.

Another day at the officer's club, Angelo shows pictures of his family. The piano player from the club, who also runs the stockade, comes in and kisses the picture. Then Angelo hits him in the head with a chair, and the man pulls a knife. Warden runs in front of Angelo and refuses to let him get killed.

The next night, Prew gets in a hurry to go to the city to see Lorene. Angelo is upstairs alone, and his pass is taken away so that he can be a guard. As the last person dressed, he has to take the job, but he is extremely angry at the change in plans.

At the club, Prew is mad at Lorene for wanting to visit with the other men as well. He begs her to get out for the night, but he can't seem to understand that this is her job. She pushes him out of the room. Then the owner comes out to hurry Lorene along. Lorene finally tells him that her real name is Alma Burke. Later, Alma shows up at the bar after telling the owner she was sick.

Prew explains to Lorene that he loves the Army. He ran away from home and learned to play the bugle in the Army. He was even able to play in front of the President once. Angelo finally shows up completely drunk and explains that he was supposed to be on guard duty but walked away from it. Prew wants to take Angelo back, and Alma tells him to go ahead as Angelo runs outside.



While Prew goes to get a cab, Angelo sees some of the soldiers and begins to attack them. They beat him up and drag him away. The next day, everyone is standing together talking about Angelo's court marshal. Angelo is sent to the stockade, where the soldier from the bar meets him.

Elsewhere, Prew and Alma go to her house. She gives him a key to use even when she's not there. They meet her roommate, who is on her way out. Alma thinks her roommate would be great for Angelo. Warden and Karen, meanwhile, are enjoying a romantic date at a restaurant. Suddenly, though, Dana and some women walk in, and they have to leave quickly to avoid him.

As Warden and Karen drive back to the base, they are quiet. She feels like they can't go on this way much longer. Warden knows she might be able to get a divorce, but he couldn't transfer. She wants him to become an officer so he can move. He hates officers, though, and doesn't want to become one. She doesn't think he loves her, and he tells her he wishes he didn't. Karen begins to cry, and they admit they've never been so miserable as since they met each other.

Prew and Alma enjoy a night alone at her house. He begins to kiss her and tells her that he wants to marry her. She doesn't feel that she's good enough for him and doesn't want him to spoil anything. He hopes she'll wait until the next year when he can move up and return to the States. Prew even offers to fight for her. Finally, she tells him that she just doesn't want to be a soldier's wife. Alma wants to be proper and can be in another year after making some more money. She believes that when you're proper, you're safe. He wishes her luck, but she needs him because she's lonely.

Karen asks Dana for a divorce the next day, and he wants to know who is to blame. He is convinced it must be a civilian. She decides to go for a walk. The next day, Prew finds out that Angelo is being mistreated in the stockade and keeps spitting in the guard, Fatso's, eye. Then, he got put into solitary for threatening to try to escape. A moment later, a man walks up and threatens Prew to try to get him to take part in the boxing championship. The man steps on Prew's hand, and they get into a fight. Prew refuses to do anything but defend himself, though, as others gather around.

That afternoon, Warden gets a commendation from Dana to become an officer. The man in charge of the detail runs in to tell them that Prew is fighting. He has finally started fighting back but won't go for the guy's face, since he's scared to blind him. They refuse to let Dana blame it on Prew, so everyone finally gets back to work.

That night, the guys hang out, sing and drink. While Prew goes to get another beer, he finds Warden sitting around on the ground. They share a bottle and praise Prew's handling of the fight that afternoon. Prew refuses to leave Warden, and they talk about their troubles. Warden doesn't want to be an officer, but both Prew and a girl think he'd do a good job. They also talk about Prew's girl. Suddenly, a car drives up, and the guy yells at them for being in the middle of the road. Then, Angelo finds them, and he has been beaten to a pulp. He escaped by hiding on the back of a truck. The tailgate



opened, though, and he fell out in the road. Fatso almost killed him, and Angelo warns Prew about him. Then, Angelo slumps over, dead.

Angelo's bedroll is rolled up as the taps are played while the men get ready to go to bed. There are tears in their eyes as they remember him. Prew is playing the bugle for his best friend. Everyone stops what they're doing to listen sadly.

In the city, Prew sees Fatso come out of a club. Prew asks him to step around the corner so they can talk. They go into a dark alleyway, and Fatso asks what's going on. Prew accuses Fatso of killing Angelo, and he wants a piece of him before the Army gets him. Prew pulls Fatso's own knife, the one he used on Angelo, on him. After it falls to the ground, the two begin fighting. After they land on the ground, Fatso falls away with a knife through him, and Prew walks away.

Then, Prew goes to Alma's house. She is terribly worried about him as he falls to the ground. He says everything is okay; he doesn't plan to die. Warden sees a newspaper article about Fatso's death; no one has any clues yet. A man comes in and says Prew is still absent, and Warden says not to worry about it.

In the Commanding General's office, a man reads findings against Holmes that he has been using unfair methods to try to get Prew to box. They are only upset that they have to keep him in uniform until the court marshal can be called. Otherwise, they give him the option to write his own letter of resignation. That afternoon, Holmes takes down his things. The Commanding Generals talk to the men about what has been happening in the regiment. They put the boxer who beat Prew in lockup and demote him down to private.

Warden then gets a call and replies that the parcel has already arrived. Karen is on the line and says it's important. He promises to see her in about an hour. Dana wants Karen to go with him back to the States. Warden admits that he didn't put in his commission, and she is disappointed in him.

Suddenly, Warden jumps up because he thought he saw Prew. He comes back and tells her that Prew is AWOL. Then he explains that he simply doesn't want to become an officer. She understands that he doesn't want to marry her because he's in love with the Army. He tells her he loves her, and she says she knows. She's going back to Dana because she doesn't know what else to do. He stops her, but then they say goodbye.

At Alma's house, she shows Prew the newspaper article. He has been drinking for days and is in a terrible mood. She is becoming increasingly frustrated with him. Later that morning, the bells are ringing, and the men are eating dinner in the breakfast hall beneath a clock.

Suddenly, the men hear planes and look out the window to see a group of planes flying over. The room begins to shake, and they believe it's dynamite for a practice run. The explosions come closer and get more violent as they run outside to see a man get shot down. The base is under attack.



All the men run outside and go into action. As they run around the courtyard, the planes fly low and shoot as the men fall to the ground to avoid the bullets. On the radio, Alma hears that this is a real attack; the enemy is bombing Pearl Harbor. Warden takes charge and tells the men to get their guns and stay in their bunkers so that they don't get hurt.

Viewers watch footage of the bombings as Pearl Harbor is attacked. Warden forces the man in charge of ammunition to let the men in, and he gives directions to everyone. Warden puts on his helmet and gets ready to go back outside as the bombs continue to fall. He climbs to the top of a building to shoot at the airplanes. He and several other men fire on the planes as they fly past. They finally hit one of them, and the plane goes down over the trees.

Prew listens to the radio broadcast about the dangers because of the attack. The girls get back from giving blood at the hospital, and they report on the state of things. They find out that the planes are Japanese, and Prew becomes angry. He gets ready and decides to go back to the company. She doesn't understand, and he's not well. He knows they need every guy they can get. He reassures her that he'll make it, but she continues to beg. He explains to her that he's a soldier, turns out the lights and leaves.

Back at the base, the soldiers discuss what will happen to them. Prew sneaks onto the base and heads toward his barracks. His side is bleeding again, though, and he is getting weaker as he goes. A soldier sees him running across a field and shoots. He keeps running until at last they shoot him fatally, and he falls into a ditch, dead.

Warden runs up to the scene later and identifies Prew. He is given Prew's card and explains that he was stubborn so he didn't call out. Prew loved the Army more than any other soldier he ever knew. He talks to Prew and tells him that if he'd just boxed, he would have had it easy, and there won't be any championship this year anyway. He yells at the others to move Prew.

As Karen watches from the boat, she and Alma stand together and talk about how beautiful Hawaii is. They will both miss the island terribly. She throws their leis into the water and tells Alma the legend that if they float toward the land, you'll come back, and if they float toward the ocean, you never will.

Alma then tells Karen that she'll never return because her fiancy was killed on December 7th. His plane taxied to the edge, but it was hit by the Japanese. He was awarded the Silver Star, and his mother gave it to her. Alma says he was in the newspaper, and his name was Robert E. Lee Prewitt. Karen recognizes the name, and they stand together watching the leis floating on the water.



Characters

1st Sgt. Milton Warden, played by Burt Lancaster

Description

Milton Warden serves under Holmes. He has proved himself time and time again, but he has no desire to move up the ranks. Thus, he remains content with his lot. Warden is one of the first people to meet Prew and pities the man's stubborn nature.

Warden is lonely, as is Holmes's wife, Karen. Over the course of the film, they begin an affair that only comes to an end when he admits to her that he wants to stay in Hawaii and has no plans to consider a promotion.

Analysis

Warden is a smart, levelheaded guy who has become an important helper to Holmes. He has gained enough trust to take charge of many people. Warden respects Prew's desire to not fight, but he is frustrated that it keeps causing him problems with Holmes.

Warden falls in love with Karen. She is a beautiful, smart woman, and he cannot resist. He later learns that she has also had other affairs, but he still wants to be with her. When she wants him to take a promotion and move, however, he finally has to bring the affair to an end.

Warden shows his courage when the base is bombed. He tells the men where to go and single handedly creates an effort to attack the planes flying over. Warden is a strong man who takes his responsibilities very seriously.

Pvt. Robert E. Lee "Prew" Prewitt, played by Montgomery Clift

Description

Prew is known throughout the military as the best boxer around. When he quit fighting, he was transferred to Holmes, who expects him to start fighting again. Prew refuses and ends up being given kitchen duty and other laborious jobs to punish him. He never gives in, though.

Prew's best friend in the military is Angelo. He is the one who brings Prew to the city, where he meets Lorene, whose real name is Alma. When Angelo is mistreated and ends up dying at the hands of the stockade sergeant, Prew decides to get revenge.



Prew goes to the city and murders the stockade sergeant. Since he can't go back to the base, he stays with Lorene instead. He spends all his time drinking, and she finally begins to get frustrated with him. After the bombing at Pearl Harbor, though, Prew returns to help. He doesn't call out to the other soldiers, though, and is killed.

Analysis

Prew is a young, impetuous man. He refuses to comply with military expectations because of his beliefs, but he ends up causing more trouble for himself than he deserves. He is essentially kindhearted, and his fear of hurting another soldier, after blinding a friend of his, is what keeps him from boxing. Prew seldom thinks through his actions, but he just does what seems right at the moment.

Although Prew doesn't think through his actions, it's usually because his emotions have taken over. For example, after Angelo's death, Prew simply thinks about being loyal to his friend. Thus, he murders Angelo's murderer in an effort to avenge his death.

Karen Holmes, played by Deborah Kerr

Description

Karen Holmes is Holmes's wife. She is lonely and neglected and takes pride in looking good around the base. When she meets Warden, she is completely taken with him. They begin a serious affair, and she falls in love.

Karen wants Warden to take a promotion so that they can move back to the States together. Although she begs him to do this for her at first, she eventually realizes that he has no plans to be promoted, and she refuses to stay with him on the island.

Analysis

Karen is a kind woman, but she has been neglected for so long that she has become desperate. With a cheating husband, she doesn't feel that she owes him any type of loyalty. Instead she starts her own affair with Warden, one in a string of lovers she has taken.

Karen's interest in the affair, however, is selfish. She doesn't worry about what is best for Warden; instead, she is primarily concerned about herself. When Warden explains that he doesn't want to leave, she refuses to accept the answer and leaves with her lying, cheating husband.



Alma Burke (Lorene), played by Donna Reed

Description

Alma Bourke is working in a club in the city outside the base. She has come there because she knows that she can make more money there than anywhere else. When she meets Prew, though, she finally falls for a customer.

Alma supports Prew through everything. After he kills Cpl. Leva, he stays with her for a while. Although she becomes frustrated with him for his constant drinking, she still stays by his side. She is devastated when he returns to the base, as she partially knows that he will never return.

Analysis

Alma is a beautiful young woman who is focused on her career. She gives the men a good time but has no plans to fall for any of them. When she meets Prew, though, she suddenly falls for someone. Alma remains with him until he finally feels that he has to return to the base during the bombing. Alma simply lies on the floor and cries as he walks out the door forever.

Pvt. Angelo Maggio, played by Frank Sinatra

Description

Pvt. Angelo Maggio is always getting in trouble when he's drunk. He and Prew have known each other for a while, and once Prew arrives, he begins to watch out for Angelo. On several occasions, Angelo gets into fights with the stockade sergeant, Cpl. "Fatso" Leva. When he later gets put in the stockade for skipping duty, Leva has it in for him. Angelo finally escapes but then dies in Prew's arms.

Analysis

Angelo is a good man who helps Prew when he can, but when drunk, he can't seem to stay out of trouble. He always ends up challenging the wrong person, and that leads both to his death and to Prew's.

Capt. Dana "Dynamite" Holmes, played by Philip Ober

Description

Dana Dynamite Holmes is the captain at Pearl Harbor. He loves his job, but he is a womanizer and spends much of his time with other women. His wife feels so neglected that she begins an affair with Warden.



Holmes is also the one who punishes Prew for not wanting to fight. Holmes was planning to have a winning team this year, but without Prew's cooperation, success is not likely. Holmes attitude toward Prew causes a lot of problems for everyone.

Analysis

Dana is a conceited man. He expects everyone to like him no matter what he does. He spends his time cheating on his wife and ordering everyone else around. Dana is shocked to learn that Karen is cheating on him and takes that as a good opportunity to move back to the States.

Cpl. Leva, played by Mickey Shaughnessy

Description

Cpl. Leva is the head of the stockade. Angelo keeps getting in fights with him, so when Angelo gets put in the stockade, Leva tortures him. After Angelo's death, Prew murders Leva as revenge.

Analysis

Leva is a cruel man who doesn't seem to care about anyone else. He takes out his anger on Angelo, resulting in Angelo's death.



Themes

Peace Before War

Some of the most peaceful times always seem to fall before the most dangerous times. As Angelo and Prew spend their time at the base, they struggle to make their way through life. The peace is only broken by the soldiers' own actions. Prew creates his own difficulties by refusing to box, and Angelo's inability to control himself is what puts him in danger. They face these trials of their own making when they should be enjoying the peace that, unknown to them, will not last. Prew should be enjoying his love with Alma during this time, which will be cut so short. Ultimately, the message of the film is to hold onto joy and love in times of peace, because there really is no security in life.

Price of Stubbornness

Stubbornness is sometimes equivalent to bravery, while sometimes it carries a high price. Prew displays stubbornness, taking any punishment thrown his way instead of boxing. Angelo is mistreated by the stockade sergeant many times throughout the course of the film, but he always stands up to him and is then protected by Prew.

Angelo later becomes angry when he is put on guard duty at the last minute. Rather than fighting or doing it anyway, Angelo leaves the base. Prew drags him back to the base, but Angelo is already in major trouble. He is court marshaled and sentenced to time in the stockade.

Angelo's stubbornness causes him to be put in the stockade under the control of the one man who hates him. Angelo is beaten almost to death before he escapes. Finally, he finds Prew and dies in his arms in payment for his stubborn nature.

Need for Love

Prew has been on his own for many years. He has always felt that he doesn't need anyone else. Finally, when he meets Alma, he realizes that he has been missing out on one important thing - love. He chases this love and enjoys it until he has to return to the base after the attack.

Karen and Warden also find that they cannot live without love. Karen has been living in a loveless marriage with Dana, and even he notices the change in her when her affair with Warden begins. Although neither will give up anything for the other and their romance ends, they have satisfied their need for love at least for awhile.

Style and Cinematography

From Here to Eternity is a beautiful black and white picture. It embraces the use of black and white film by using the contrasting of light, dark and grays to create an atmosphere for the film. By using light and dark to advantage, the film becomes a believable tale of the days before the bombing.

There are also many scenes that are classic in this film. One of the most well-known love scenes in the history of film is when Warden and Karen embrace in the surf on the beach. The realistic settings of the clubs in the city and the base also help bring the story to life.

Finally, the acting is impressive in this film. Only the best actors are used, and they give some of the best performances of their careers. They represent with honor the men and women of the military and the civilians near Pearl Harbor when the bombing occurred on December 7, 1941.



Motifs

Historical Event

From Here to Eternity is based on the days before the Pearl Harbor bombing. Unlike most films that just focus on the terrible bombing, this film focuses on the lives of the men and women at the base and emphasizes what a surprise the attack was for everyone there.

By using this historical event, the filmmakers are guaranteed to grab the attention of the audience. Many Americans are fascinated by the bombing, and thousands go to the site every year to honor those who died. The bombing also provides the film with a context that the characters are unaware of, but which is always in the audience's mind. This creates a pervasive dramatic irony, as the viewer is constantly aware of the coming danger.

This film brings the bombing of Pearl Harbor to life and helps commemorate the lives of those who were there. Viewers see real men and women having real struggles before everything is overshadowed by the terrible destruction.

Affair with Superior's Wife

Many films and novels discuss an affair with the spouse of a superior. Warden respects Dana, but he realizes that Dana's wife is the one who suffers in the relationship. When she seems available for a relationship, Warden can't seem to help himself when he goes to her.

Although Warden loves his job, he is willing to risk it for Karen. He spends hours with her when he knows that Dana will be out with other women. Over time, Warden realizes that this may be a more lasting relationship rather than a short affair.

When Warden discusses the future with Karen, she makes him aware that she wants him to take a promotion and move back to the States. Although he tries to explain his feelings, she refuses to listen. Eventually, Warden comes to the conclusion that he cannot sacrifice his own desires for her.

Foolish Friend

At some point in life, everyone will have at least one foolish friend. Although Prew is not the most mature person, he does seem to have himself together more than Angelo. When they go into the city, Angelo is always getting himself into trouble. He fights with Cpl. Leva, and Prew has to save him.



Prew's friendship with Angelo is much like what many other people experience. Prew is continually protecting Angelo from his mistakes. Although he tries to help, Angelo is eventually put in the stockade and killed by Leva. Prew's final gift to Angelo is to murder the man who killed Angelo.



Symbols

The Weather

In books and films, the weather almost takes on a personality of its own. Often it foreshadows the events that are about to happen or reflects the states of the main characters' souls. *From Here to Eternity* uses the weather in just this way, and it clues viewers in to the state of the characters.

One example of this in *From Here to Eternity* is when Warden goes to Karen's house to bring her a letter. It is raining outside, and viewers get the feeling that there's going to be trouble. Since Dana will definitely not be back for awhile, the couple starts their relationship in the middle of this storm.

The weather can also be used to achieve a sense of irony. Before the bombing, the day is sunny and bright. Everything is normal until the men suddenly hear the sound of the bombs falling on Pearl Harbor. The idyllic days end abruptly on such a beautiful day.

Angelo's Death

Angelo is a foolish man. He enjoys having fun and going out on the town, but he often drinks too much. Even though he tries to take care of Prew, it ends up that Prew has to take care of him.

After Angelo skips his duty one night, he is put into the stockade, which is run by Cpl. Leva, the one man who truly hates Angelo. After being beaten almost to death, Angelo escapes and finds Prew. A few moments later, though, he dies in Prew's arms.

Angelo's death is symbolic of the price of foolishness. He has made many stupid mistakes during his time in the military, and Cpl. Leva finally makes him pay for them. Angelo's death also ends up symbolizing the cost of friendship as Prew risks his life to avenge Angelo's death. Angelo's death can also be read to symbolize the senselessness of violence. Angelo gains nothing from his violent fights except death. In a way, this is a microcosm of the senseless violence of war that will soon destroy the base.

The Bombing

The bombing of Pearl Harbor is a complete surprise for everyone, especially the men in the military. On a sunny morning, they are all sitting around eating breakfast when suddenly they hear the sounds of bombs.



Warden and the others snap into action and begin making plans to protect their base. They work to shoot down some of the planes and set up guards around the base for protection. Everyone is shocked, but they work together for each other.

The bombing is symbolic of all the surprises in life. On such a beautiful day, no one could have expected such an attack, but it happened anyway. In that moment, all the petty fights and competitions are forgotten, and everyone works together for the common good. This reminds us that in life, we never know what is around the next corner. At any moment, peace and security can be interrupted, and the bombing reminds us that we should be grateful for each day.



Essay Questions

Why is Prew sent to his new station? What does his history say about his character?

Why does Prew refuse to fight?

Describe Prew's friendship with Angelo.

Who does Prew meet in the city? What does this lead to?

Why is Karen fed up with her marriage?

Describe the relationship that develops between Karen and Warden.

How does Angelo die?

Why don't Warden and Karen stay together?

What crime does Prew commit? Why?

What does Warden's performance during the bombing say about his character?

Why does Prew return to the base, and what happens there?