

His Girl Friday Film Summary

His Girl Friday by Howard Hawks

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



Contents

His Girl Friday Film Summary.....	1
Contents.....	2
Context.....	3
Summary and Analysis.....	4
Characters.....	11
Themes.....	16
Style and Cinematography.....	17
Motifs.....	18
Symbols.....	19
Essay Questions.....	21

Context

His Girl Friday is the story of Walter and Hildy, a divorced couple who met and fell in love because of their careers as reporters. As her editor, he helped her make her way in the business, but now she has come back to visit and tell him of her desire to quit reporting and her impending marriage to Bruce.

During Walter and Hildy's discussions and his attempts to break up her new love, a criminal named Earl is sentenced to death and then escapes soon after Hildy interviews him as her last reporting job. As she and Walter follow the story after Earl finds her, they end up falling in love all over again.

Howard Hawks has created some of the greatest of the classic movies, but he was little appreciated during his own time. He was nominated for just one Academy Award, and his peers and the critics largely overlooked his work. Hawks directed such films as *The Road to Glory* (1926), *Scarface* (1932), *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), *His Girl Friday* (1940), *The Big Sleep*, *I Was a Male War Bride* (1949), *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) and *Hatari!* (1962).

Cary Grant had roles in over 60 movies and was the main star in dozens of those films. *His Girl Friday* was one of Grant's most successful roles, and no discussion of his success would be complete without it. Grant starred in such films as *Once Upon a Honeymoon* (1942), *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944), *The Bishop's Wife* (1947), *I Was a Male War Bride* (1949), *An Affair to Remember* (1957), *North by Northwest* (1959), *The Grass Is Greener* (1960), *Charade* (1963), *Father Goose* (1964), and *Walk Don't Run* (1966).

Rosalind Russell's performance in *His Girl Friday* is classic. Her quick-witted responses and hilarious escapades always connect her to this role. She participated in stage productions first before landing a role in *The Women* (1939). During her career, she won Oscar nominations for roles in such films as *Sister Kenny* (1946) and *Auntie Mame* (1958).

His Girl Friday may not have won an Academy Award, but it did jumpstart the entire genre of reporter films.



Summary and Analysis

His Girl Friday takes place in the supposedly "Dark Ages of Reporting," when reporters would do anything short of murder to get a story. The film does, however, reassure viewers that this should bear no resemblance to reporters of today. After the beginning description of the setting and reassurances, the audience watches as Hildegaard "Hildy" Johnson comes in, and she leaves Bruce, her new fiancy, in the outer office. He says that even those ten minutes will be a long time to be away from her.

Everyone in the newspaper office is excited to see Hildy, and she goes in to see her ex-husband, Walter Burns. Louis, a thief, is there with Walter and says that he is retired. They both light up cigarettes while Hildy tells Walter they haven't seen each other in about four months. Hildy tells him that she never dreams about him anymore, and Walter tells her he wishes she hadn't divorced him since it made him feel unwanted. She tells him that was the point, but he tells her that divorce doesn't mean anything these days because they have something nothing could change.

Hildy becomes angry because Walter promised not to make problems but still sent out a plane to remind her of his dimple. She is angry that their honeymoon was ruined by a story. She also tells him that she doesn't want any more phone calls or telegrams. He invites her to work for the paper again and re-marry him. She explains that she is planning to move to a new paper, and he tells her she will never be as good on another paper. He's angry with her for convincing him to propose to her by giving him "google eyes."

When Walter's phone rings, he begins shouting at his "sweetie," but it's actually one of the reporters. Sweeney, the main reporter, is gone that day because he's having a baby, and Walter begs Hildy to write for just one day. He tries to raise her salary, and then she shows him her engagement ring. She plans to get married and get away from the newspaper business. She wants to be a woman instead of a newspaperman and have a halfway normal life.

Hildy tells Walter that Bruce is in the insurance business and makes decent money. She's excited about his wanting a home and children. Walter becomes extremely upset when he discovers that the wedding is set for the following day. He wishes her the best and asks to meet Bruce. Walter walks out and talks to a very old man, and then Bruce tries to break in. Finally, Bruce introduces himself, and Walter stops talking to the old man, Pete Davis. Walter makes Bruce feel uncomfortable, and then he invites them to lunch. Hildy whispers to Walter that he's wasting his time.

At the restaurant, Gus, the waiter, greets Hildy and Walter since he knows them well, and Walter sits between Bruce and Hildy. Bruce tells Walter that he loves Hildy because he never knows what she's going to say or do. Walter reminds her that she can come back to be a journalist any time. Bruce asks her whether she's really sure she wants to quit. Bruce reassures Walter that he plans to give Hildy a good home in Albany where



they will live with his mother for the first year. Then, Walter springs into an old story about him and Hildy covering a story in Albany.

Walter begins to talk to Bruce about getting an insurance policy. Bruce shares that they will be leaving at 4:00 that afternoon to ride up to Albany with Bruce's mother. Then, Walter spills water on himself. He pulls Gus aside and tells Gus to bring a message about a call to him in a few minutes. Gus comes over a moment later, and Walter leaves the table and calls to get Duffy to stop the train. When that doesn't work, he settles for sending Sweeney out on vacation. He also tells Duffy that Hildy will be coming back to the paper and to him, even though she doesn't know it yet.

Walter comes back to the table to tell them that the Earl Williams case is a bad deal. To be re-elected, the mayor plans to hang the man. Hildy suggests doing an interview and publishing that next to the examiner's report so that the interview will show that the man is insane. Walter tries to convince Hildy to do it, but she refuses. Then Bruce thinks she should do it to save a man's life, and she tells Walter to do it himself or have Sweeney do it. Walter then tells her that Sweeney had twins and can't be found. He tries to convince Bruce to make Hildy stay, and Hildy remembers that Sweeney has been married only four months.

Walter then starts to work on Bruce. He offers to let Bruce write a large policy for him if he will just get Hildy to stay. Hildy decides that they could use the commission on the policy, and she agrees to go see Earl Williams. Hildy makes Bruce give her the only money they have, so that he can't lose it gambling with Walter.

At the criminal courts pressroom, the guys are playing cards, talking on the phones and discussing the Williams case. After the audience watches them for a few minutes, Hildy walks in and tells the guys that she's getting married. They all laugh at the idea of her settling down. Hildy hears the sirens and the practice at the gallows, and she wonders what is going on. Hildy gets all the information about Williams from the other reporters and discovers that he lost his job after the company he worked for went under.

At the news office, the doctor finishes examining Walter for the insurance policy. Bruce asks who the beneficiary should be, and Walter says to put Hildy down since he owes her for being a bad husband. Bruce feels weird about that, but Walter convinces him that Hildy shouldn't have to worry about money in her old age. Walter reminds Bruce that he still loves Hildy and hopes that she'll think kindly of him after he's gone. Bruce feels horrible for coming between them and begins to blow his nose. Duffy brings in the certified check, and Walter hands it over to Bruce.

Bruce then calls Hildy to let her know that he received the check. She is concerned that he's still in the office, and she tells Bruce that he should put the check in the lining of his hat for good luck. She convinces him that it's an old newspaper superstition. Outside the room, Walter shows Louis who Bruce is so that Louis can get the check back. Louis follows Bruce out the door.



Now that Bruce has the check, Hildy goes downstairs to see Williams and bribes the guard. Williams explains to her that everything was an accident but that he's still sane. He says that after losing his job, he heard some speeches but ignored them for the most part. However, he does vividly remember a guy who talked about production for use. When the policeman came at him, she asks what he thought about. She asks whether he might have been thinking about production for use, that the gun he was holding was produced to be used, and he agrees that he must have thought about that. She agrees to write about that in her newspaper. She wants to convince the public that he was influenced by the speeches and was simply using the gun for its proper use.

Upstairs, the guys in the pressroom wonder whether Walter will let Hildy go. One of them points out that when he didn't want a guy to go to Hollywood, Walter had the man thrown in jail. Another says that the new marriage won't last six months because Hildy can't stay away from the paper longer than that, especially after they saw her face when the sirens were wailing earlier.

While the reporters are talking, Molly Malloy comes in to tell them that she is tired of them making a fool of her. Hildy then comes in and listens to the conversation. Molly says that she saw Earl only once when he was walking alone, wet, in the streets, and she brought him in to keep him warm. She swears that she is a decent girl. They tell her to visit her "boyfriend" before he gets killed the next morning. She hears a bang, rushes to the window and sees the gallows. They try to throw her out, and Hildy walks her out of the pressroom.

While the reporters sit quietly, Hildy receives a phone call. Hildy walks back in and takes her call. Bruce is on the line, and she rushes out to go to him. She runs into the sheriff on her way out. Pete hands over the tickets for the hanging. Hildy is in hurry and leaves. The newspapermen try to convince him to schedule the hanging earlier, but he refuses.

At the prison, Bruce sits in a cell. Louis accused him of stealing a watch, but Hildy finally convinces the police to let him out. Bruce is convinced that Walter could have nothing to do with it because he is such a nice man. A moment later, he finds his wallet missing. Hildy stops the cab and leaves Bruce for a moment so that she can tell Walter that she's off the job.

In the pressroom, the guys read what Hildy wrote about the gun being produced for use. One of them reads the interview, and they decide that she can't give up the newspaper business so easily. Meanwhile, Hildy calls Walter and tells him that she got the interview, but there will be no story. She tears up the story, and he hears her tear it. Hildy grabs her stuff and tells the guys goodbye while she leaves to start a normal life. Then the phone rings, and Walter is on the line again.

At the prison, Pete goes in to see the doctor, and they discuss how to have the interview with the press. Earl asks to go back to the jail to rest, but they have to ask him some more questions. In the pressroom, Hildy is telling everyone goodbye, when suddenly they hear guns firing. Earl Williams has escaped. Hildy stands away from the other



pressmen, but then she calls Walter and tells him the news before running out to get the story.

Outside the jail, Hildy sees and tackles Warden Cooley. Upstairs at the pressroom, the phones are ringing, and finally Endicott, one of the reporters, comes in and gives his paper the story. We learn that Earl was being questioned, and after a few minutes, he shot his way out. No one knows where he got the gun, or they won't talk about it. Another reporter comes in, and several deputies have been sent to the hospital. A couple of scrubwomen were shot by accident. Earl was apparently seen boarding a southbound train.

Hildy then comes into the pressroom, calls Walter, and tells him that she got the whole story from the warden. She used all of Bruce's money, and Walter swears on his mother's grave that he'll send more down in a few minutes. She tells him that his mother isn't dead, and he changes it to his grandmother. Finally, she tells him that the expert was sticking pins in Earl to get his reaction. He decided to re-enact the crime to judge Earl's reflexes. Hartwell supplied the gun, and Earl shot the expert. Hildy tells Walter that Bruce is waiting downstairs in a taxi, and Walter tells her that he'll have the money over there quickly.

In Walter's office, Walter turns to a beautiful woman and tells her to go down and handle the Bruce situation. Walter sends Louis, who is also in the office, over to the pressroom with \$450 of counterfeit money and wishes Hildy well on her honeymoon. One of the other reporters comes in and sends in his second rate story about the manhunt. Then, Bruce calls upstairs and says he was arrested for "mashing," but he tells Hildy that the girl had a dizzy spell. He only tried to help her. Hildy asks whether she's a blonde, and she says that she knows exactly what happened. She recognizes the girl as a prostitute that she and Walter know from the newspaper business. She calls Walter to give him a piece of her mind, but he's not there. Hildy tells Bruce that she'll be over in twenty minutes because she has to take care of something there first.

Hildy asks the reporters for money, but they don't have any. The mayor comes in and refuses to make a statement. He is looking for Sheriff Hartwell, but they don't know where he is. They ask a lot of questions, and another reporter comes in saying that the governor thinks that there is going to be a Red uprising the next day. The voters can save the trouble of impeaching the mayor and the sheriff by simply not voting them back in. Finally, the Sheriff gets out what he wants to say and tells everyone that they've received a tip that Earl went back to his old neighborhood.

In the mayor's office, the sheriff finds out that he's going to be scratched from the ticket the next week. They both know that Earl isn't a Red, but the sheriff thought that the slogan would get them more votes. The mayor realizes that if Earl doesn't hang, they're going to lose thousands of votes. A door opens, and another man comes in to see the sheriff. He has a reprieve from the governor, who has been out fishing and hunting. The local politicians believe that the governor is just out to get them.



The phone then rings with news that Williams is surrounded at his old house, and the mayor tells the man, Patty Bone, that he never came with the message about the reprieve. The mayor offers to triple the man's pay, but he doesn't want to move to the city. They kick him out of the office, and the mayor has the sheriff tell the police to shoot to kill with a \$500 reward to the man who makes the shot at Earl Williams.

Upstairs, Louis finally arrives to see Hildy. She gets angry that he and Evangeline have been working for Walter. She also asks for Bruce's wallet, but he reminds her to tell her fiancy to be more careful. After she shouts at him for trying to take her suitcase, Louis runs out. Hildy gets on the phone, but suddenly Earl is behind her with a gun in his hand. She asks him to put the gun down, but he doesn't trust her. He promises to shoot her if she tries any tricks. He agrees that he doesn't want to kill anyone; he just wants to be left alone. She finally pulls the gun away from him after he shoots once, and she locks the doors so that no one can get inside.

Hildy calls Walter, and Bruce rings in on the other line at the same moment. Bruce wants her to come down to the station, but she can't go right now. He doesn't understand, so she hangs up on him. On the other phone, Hildy tells Walter to get down to the pressroom as quickly as possible. Molly begins banging on the door and says that she must find Earl. He speaks up and asks her to come in. Hildy makes them be quiet so that no one knows they're there. Then, the reporters come to the door, so Hildy hides Earl in the desk. The reporters talk to Molly, and she tells them to leave her alone. The police call the newspapers to tell them that Williams wasn't in the house.

The reporters decide to stay put, and they discuss how Earl got out of the jail. They notice that Hildy's ready to get rid of them, and they're afraid she's going to scoop them. A moment later, Mrs. Baldwin, Bruce's mother, comes in and lectures Hildy on the way she's treating him. Mrs. Baldwin complains that Hildy knows a murderer, and Molly distracts the reporters by telling them that she knows where Williams is. Molly decides to give them a wonderful story, and she jumps out of the window. When they look down, they discover that she's not dead.

As the reporters rush out, Walter rushes in. He speaks to Earl and tells him to stay hidden. Mrs. Baldwin demands to know who he is, but Walter has Louis carry her out by force. Walter locks the door and grabs Hildy's arm so that she can't leave and get Bruce out of jail. Walter tells her that she can't desert him while all this is going on. Hildy says that she just captured a killer, and she's going to go. He tells her that she can get married anytime, but with this story, she can get rid of all the terrible politicians in the city. They plan to let the governor know the real situation the next morning, and she will become famous.

Walter decides that they will take Earl safely to his office, and Hildy begins working on the story while Walter calls the paper. Bruce comes into the office and wants to ask Hildy a question. She finds out that he got out of jail through no help of hers, and he's worried about his reputation. Bruce wants to know where his mother went, and Hildy tells him and gives him the money. He tells her that he's taking the 9:00 train, and she makes a mistake on her story. Bruce wants to know whether Hildy really wants to go



with him or not. He tries to pull her out of the office, and she tells him that this is the biggest thing in her life. Bruce finally walks out and tells her to meet him at the train if she really wants to come.

Tired of being in such a small space, Earl tries to get out of the desk, but Walter tells him to keep hiding in there. Hildy asks what happened to Bruce, and Walter tells her that Bruce will be coming back soon. Bensinger, the reporter, bangs on the door, and he is honored to have Walter in the office. Walter gives Bensinger a raise and a new job with Walter's newspaper instead of his old paper and then sends him over to the news office.

Hildy suddenly remembers that Bruce wasn't coming back. He was leaving on the 9:00 train, and she missed it. She tells Walter that he's ruined her life. Louis then comes in and explains that his taxi ran into a police car. Louis ran away, and Hildy's afraid that Bruce's mother is dead. Walter's more worried about her letting the police know the scoop. She calls the hospital, and the police to find Mrs. Baldwin.

Walter then sends Louis to find some men so that they can get the desk out of the office. Hildy decides that she's leaving, and suddenly a gang of reporters, along with the sheriff, attacks Hildy. They accuse her of having Williams hidden. The sheriff tries to have the men take her out, and Walter pulls the sheriff's own gun on him. The sheriff realizes that they must have seen Williams and begins questioning her again. Walter shouts at the sheriff, and then the sheriff threatens to arrest them and impound their belongings, starting with the desk.

There's another knock at the door, and Mrs. Baldwin comes in with two police officers. She points Walter out as the man who kidnapped her. Walter tells her that they've never met before. Mrs. Baldwin reveals that Earl was hiding, and Walter bangs on the desk three times. This was his signal to Earl, and Earl hits back. The sheriff pulls his gun while the reporters get on the phone. Mrs. Baldwin rushes out, and Bruce meets her.

Walter tries to call Duffy at his office, but the police won't let him. The sheriff prepares to get Williams and begins counting down. They open the desk and find Williams. The sheriff has Hildy and Walter arrested. The reporters rush to find Mrs. Baldwin. The sheriff calls the Warden, and the mayor comes in and tells them that they're through.

A few moments later, Joe comes in again with the reprieve. He told his wife about the situation, and she convinced him not to lie. Walter and Hildy read the reprieve and accuse the sheriff and the mayor of trying to murder an innocent man to win an election. The man begins to tell his story. The mayor takes the cuffs off, and he begins to talk big. Walter and Hildy tell them both that they'll be in jail after the newspaper's special edition gets out the next morning.

Walter tries to call Duffy while Hildy begins to reminisce about how they got together and worked together. Walter tells Hildy that she better go on to Bruce, but she says that Bruce is already gone. Walter tries to be noble and send her away. He tells her that part



of him will go with her, and he is jealous that Bruce can give her a life that he can't give. Walter kisses her and wishes her good luck.

The other phone rings as Hildy starts to leave, and Bruce is calling to say that he's in the police station again. He has been arrested for possession of counterfeit money. Hildy begins to cry as Walter tries to sneak out. He comes back to check on her and is worried that she's crying as she never has before. She is upset that she thought Walter was really sending her away. She didn't know that he'd had Bruce arrested again. She was afraid that Walter didn't really love her, and he asks how she could think such a silly thing. Then, she tells him to send down some honest money and send Bruce back to where he belongs.

After taking care of Bruce, Walter calls Duffy at his office and tells him that Walter and Hildy are getting married and going on a two-week honeymoon as soon as she writes the story. Hildy is excited about the long honeymoon, and Walter asks where she wants to go. She picks Niagara Falls. A moment later, Walter receives a call about a strike in Albany, which happens to be on the way to Niagara Falls. Hildy agrees to honeymoon for a while in Albany. They walk out the door as Hildy carries her large suitcase all by herself, and Walter walks off in front of her.



Characters

Walter Burns, played by Cary Grant

Description

Walter Burns is a fast-talking newspaperman who has been an editor for years. He actually met and fell in love with his wife while she was working as one of his reporters. Walter's love for the newspaper eventually led to Hildy leaving him, as she was tired of always coming second in his life.

When Hildy returns with her new love, Walter realizes how much he loves her and doesn't want to lose her. He becomes obsessed with the idea of drawing her away from her fiancé, Bruce. He uses her love for the newspaper to get her to stay in town just a little longer.

As Hildy works on the story, Walter has plenty of opportunity to see her separately from Bruce. He shows her what she's missing and reminds her how much she loves the newspaper and him. Finally, Walter wins back his true love.

Analysis

Walter is a selfish man who seems to think of little besides his own happiness. He will use any kind of conniving trick to get his way. He neglected Hildy until he realized he was going to lose her, and then he goes into overdrive trying to win her back.

Many men love competition, and Walter thrives on it. He really begins working to get Hildy back only when he realizes how close he has come to losing her to Bruce. Since he now has someone to fight for her love, he works hard and gets her back.

Hildegard "Hildy" Johnson, played by Rosalind Russell

Description

Hildy is a beautiful, talented, successful woman who has finally decided to settle down. Her first marriage to Walter did not go as planned, since she always came in second to his work. After years of frustration, she left him and met Bruce soon after.

Hildy has decided that she wants to settle down and have babies, but Walter has decided that he wants her back now that she's slipping through his fingers. Hildy wants nothing to do with Walter, but when he offers her the opportunity to write one last story, she just can't resist.



As Hildy enjoys her passion, writing, she begins to recognize many good qualities about Walter and realizes that she doesn't want to leave the newspaper life. Hildy's love for the business and Walter overwhelms her love for Bruce, so she goes after the life she loves.

Analysis

Hildy thinks that she wants to have a normal life with Walter. After enduring so much drama over the years with Walter, she is ready to really settle down and start a family. However, she doesn't know herself nearly as well as Walter knows her.

Hildy learns throughout the course of the film that she thrives on the crazy and complicated life she is able to have with Walter. She loves her job and resents Bruce when he is unable to understand this part of her. Hildy finally returns to her first loves, the newspaper and Walter.

Bruce Baldwin, played by Ralph Bellamy

Description

Bruce is Hildy's new fancy. He is down to earth and wants a normal family and a house with a white picket fence. He is everything Hildy thinks she wants, but he really represents everything she actually despises. Bruce depends on his mother more than anyone else, and eventually, he gets fed up with Hildy's concern for her career and Walter's treatment, so he leaves.

Analysis

Bruce is a momma's boy. He can't take care of himself without his mother's help. Hildy is more of a "man" than he is. Bruce never takes charge of anything, and he loses Hildy because he cannot stand up to her or understand who she is.

Earl Williams, played by John Qualen

Description

Earl Williams is a man who is waiting to be hanged. The city officials want to make an example of him to help their political careers, and they actually try to ignore the governor's reprieve when it is sent. Williams ends up escaping and finds Hildy who interviewed him earlier. She and Walter help hide him so that they can get the exclusive story and the fame for finding him.



Analysis

Earl is scared and upset. He is a confused man who seems to need help more than imprisonment. He never meant to get into trouble, and he can't understand why everyone is after him. He decides to escape rather than be unfairly hanged. Earl is not quite right. He seems to have some mental problems, but he is happy to accept the help Hildy and Walter offer.

Molly Malloy, played by Helen Mack

Description

Molly is Earl's girlfriend, and she is terribly worried about him. She is often hysterical and begs Hildy to help them.

Analysis

Unlike Hildy, Molly is the kind of woman who can't take care of herself at all. She depends on everyone else to give her answers and take care of everything. Together, Molly and Earl elicit the audience's pity.

Sheriff Peter B. "Pinky" Hartwell, played by Gene Lockhart

Description

The sheriff of the town is an idiot. He has no idea how to be a decent sheriff, and he is always making foolish mistakes. It is his fault that Earl gets away in the first place.

Analysis

The sheriff represents the bumbling side of the law that is always mocked. He seems to have little talent for upholding the law, and he breaks it more than his prisoners.

Fred, the Mayor, played by Clarence Kolb

Description

Fred is the mayor of the city. He makes a lot of bad decisions concerning Earl and puts too much trust in the sheriff.



Analysis

Fred causes a lot of problems for his city because of the Earl episode, but he refuses to admit his mistakes. Instead, he tries to pin it on the sheriff, who is also at fault. Fred cares more about his political career than what is right or wrong.

Louis, played by Abner Biberman

Description

Louis is a thug whom Walter has befriended over the years. Louis brings him good information and does dirty work for him. For instance, Louis steals Bruce's wallet and later kidnaps his mother.

Analysis

Louis helps the audience see some of Walter's unsavory connections while helping us understand the life of the city. Though he is on the wrong side of the law, he ultimately works for justice and love through Walter, who follows the Machiavellian idiom, "All's fair in love and war."

Duffy, played by Frank Orth

Description

Duffy is Walter's helper at the newspaper. He listens as Hildy and Walter rant and rave about each other. When they really need him for the story, though, he goes home sick because of his diabetes.

Analysis

Duffy remembers Walter and Hildy's relationship, and like Walter, he is not convinced that they are through for good. He can still see the love and attraction between them.

Mrs. Baldwin, played by Alma Kruger

Description

Mrs. Baldwin is Bruce's nosy mother. She causes all types of problems because she sees the attraction between Walter and Hildy. Walter even has Louis kidnap her, so that they can keep her away as she begins to blow Earl's cover and hiding place.



Analysis

Mrs. Baldwin helps to make every scene funnier. She crazily tries to protect her son as she bosses him, and everyone else, about.

Joe Pettibone, played by Billy Gilbert

Description

Joe Pettibone is a witless character who is delivering a reprieve for Earl. He is convinced by the mayor and the sheriff to leave and pretend that it never happened in exchange for a new, higher-paying job. However, when his wife finds out the truth, she tells him to go back and tell the truth, so he obeys.

Analysis

Joe knows very little about the city and the intrigue that goes on in the government. He basically just follows his wife's lead to make decisions; thus, he ultimately delivers Earl's reprieve.



Themes

Lasting Love

Some love lasts forever. It may not always be easy or pretty, but it survives because of the feelings between two people and the common threads that tie them to one another. Walter and Hildy have one of those loves that lasts through even the most difficult challenges.

Walter and Hildy are madly in love. They have had many problems, though, and after Hildy becomes fed up with Walter, they divorce. Now that she is remarrying, he cannot bear to lose her. Hildy doesn't think she has any feelings left for Walter, but she discovers that she cannot stay away from him.

Another key to their lasting love is that Walter and Hildy work together and have common ties in their lives. Their love for the newspaper brought them together in the first place, and their love for the paper helped to keep them together. Their experience draws them together again and reminds them of their love for each other.

Enjoying Your Work

Enjoying work is one of the keys to living a happy life. Many people spend their lives hating their work, but both Walter and Hildy have avoided this dilemma. In fact, they are so in love with their profession that they also often forget that they care for each other as well.

Walter's focus on work has caused Hildy to divorce him. Since they never had a honeymoon, and he always puts work before her, she gets fed up. After she leaves him, she finds a stolid man named Bruce and tries to fall in love with him, but her love for her work won't allow her to become a housewife. Finally, she understands that the things she hates about Walter are the things that she does herself.

Thrill of the Chase

Walter and Hildy chase everything from each other to their stories. When Hildy decides to leave Walter, he tries to live with that, but when she wants to give up her passion for reporting, he refuses to let her off so easily. Walter decides that not only will he not allow Hildy to leave her job, but he will also win her back.

Hildy interviews Earl Williams and realizes how much she has missed being in the newsroom. As everything escalates, she recognizes that she can never leave this behind to be a housewife. She chases her stories while Walter chases her. In the end, they both get exactly what they want.

Style and Cinematography

His Girl Friday was a groundbreaking film. Before this film, the news reporter genre had not really begun. From this point on, this became one of the most popular genres over the next few years. *His Girl Friday* is remembered as a major film in the industry for its popular success.

The quick-witted conversations make *His Girl Friday* especially memorable. The film moves quickly as the characters share a playful banter throughout the action. There are even times where it is difficult to understand everyone as they talk at once. This is one of the fastest-moving movie scripts of its time, and viewers still love it.

One of the most important achievements of this film is the cast of actors and actresses. They are absolutely terrific and make the movie what it is. The good chemistry between Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell carries the film to great heights, even with viewers today.



Motifs

Newspaper Room

Walter and Hildy have spent their lives in the newspaper room. Both love the business and have let it take over their lives to the detriment of their relationship. Hildy has decided that she is tired of working and finishing second to the newspaper, but Walter realizes that she will never be able to give it up.

Much of the film revolves around the newspaper room, as Walter tries to remind Hildy of the life she loves both at the newspaper and with him. After her first interview, Hildy is constantly running in and out of the room, and the other men even realize that she can never give up her first love.

The newspaper room is also where Earl's story is played out. After Hildy's interview, he escapes and finds her. She convinces him to hide there so that she can write the exclusive story of his capture. Finally, she turns him over to the police and returns to her two great loves: the paper and Walter.

Difficult Husband

What woman has not had to deal with a difficult man? For Hildy, she has finally had enough and is ready to settle down to a calmer life. She has met Bruce and is ready to get married when she stops by to say one last goodbye to Walter. She is ready to choose stability and normalcy over passion and fervor.

Walter has always been difficult and put work before Hildy for years. He has no remorse for his past behavior, but he also doesn't like seeing Hildy with another man. Walter makes up his mind to be difficult by winning Hildy back. He uses the newspaper to capture her interest and then goes on to win her heart. Ultimately, Hildy realizes that the impassioned and wild behavior that drives her crazy is also what she craves.

Motivated Woman

Hildy is one motivated woman. She has spent years making a name for herself in the business, and she receives great respect from all the men in the industry. Her biological clock is ticking, though, and she's decided that this is her only chance to start a family, even though she has to do it without Walter.

When Walter gives Hildy a final assignment, though, she realizes that she can never change. She has always been motivated and loved her job, and the idea of having children simply isn't enough to make up for all she would be missing. Although some might think her selfish, Hildy decides to do what she loves and returns to the newspaper and to the difficult, yet challenging, Walter.

Symbols

The Newsroom

Everything comes back to the newsroom. Hildy has finally decided to leave the newsroom for good. She is tired of coming second in Walter's life, and she wants to settle down and start a family at last. She realizes that Walter will never slow down, and she leaves him for a more down-to-earth guy named Bruce.

When Walter decides to get Hildy back, he realizes there is only one way to do it. She has forgotten her love of reporting, so he reminds her by convincing her to return to the newsroom for one last time. As she enters the newsroom, the men realize that she can never leave and be happy. Eventually, Hildy understands that as well.

The newsroom symbolizes the love of work. Hildy is thrilled with her work and is motivated by it almost completely. She thinks she wants to settle down and have a family, but she really loves her career and the excitement of being a reporter. Finally, she also realizes how much she loves Walter as well, and they come back together.

The Accused Man

When Hildy decides to take one last reporting job, she is assigned to interview Earl Williams. He has been convicted to die by hanging the next morning even though he has not received a fair trial. He doesn't even totally understand why he has been arrested and sentenced.

Earl is representative of the suffering, hard-pressed lower class. He symbolizes all those who have been oppressed by the police and society in general. Despite Earl's greatest hopes, he has been unfairly judged by association.

As viewers witness Earl's treatment, we are filled with sympathy for the man. After losing his job, he has been treated even more terribly. Although he seems to be a little confused or slow, he is suffering a difficult time, and viewers feel sympathy and pity for him.

The Mother-in-Law

Bruce's mother is completely overbearing. She has been controlling her son's life for years and will protect him at all costs. Bruce's mother doesn't want to let go of him for fear that he will be taken away from her by Hildy.

Bruce's mother represents the difficulties of any relationship as well as a parent's desire to keep his or her children with them. Bruce and Hildy have several problems with their relationship. For one, even though Hildy believes that she's ready to slow down and

start a family, she is not truly interested in that. When she does realize that she wants to keep working, Bruce isn't at all supportive.

Bruce's mother, like any mother, wants to keep her son close. She makes life very difficult when she feels that Hildy is treating her son poorly. When she finally gets sick and tired of the treatment, Bruce gives Hildy an ultimatum, and she decides to choose work and Walter over Bruce and his mother.



Essay Questions

Why does Hildy come to see Walter?

How does Walter try to remind Hildy of the old days?

Describe the differences between Walter and Bruce.

Why does Walter take Hildy and Bruce to lunch?

How does Walter convince Hildy to work with him for the day?

What schemes does Walter come up with to get Bruce into trouble?

Describe Earl Williams's plight.

How does Earl escape?

Who catches Earl and how?

How do Walter and Hildy finally get back together? Do you think this is due only to Walter's conniving, or is Hildy also responsible for the reunion?