

A Place in the Sun Film Summary

A Place in the Sun by George Stevens

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Context

A Place in the Sun is one of America's most important social dramas. Star performances are given by an amazing cast who make this a memorable and well-loved film. Director/producer George Stevens is one of the greats in the industry, and *A Place in the Sun* is one of his best-known and most popular films.

A Place in the Sun is based on Theodore Dreiser's novel, *An American Tragedy*. Both are based on the true story of Chester Gillette, who murdered his pregnant girlfriend, Grace Brown, in 1906. Gillette was executed two years later, and according to legend, Brown haunts her old home in upstate New York. Dreiser recorded the story in his novel in 1925.

A Place in the Sun is actually a remake of an earlier 1931 film with the same name as the novel. That film was directed by Josef von Sternberg and starred Phillips Holmes, Sylvia Sydney, and Frances Dee. Although the film was not as popular as *A Place in the Sun*, *An American Tragedy* did have many followers during its time.

Montgomery Clift gives what many consider to be the best performance of his career in *A Place in the Sun*. Although Clift was widely popular after his performance in the 1948 *Red River* and *The Search*, *A Place in the Sun* insured his place in Hollywood history. Clift was homosexual, but his sensuality and good looks made him a favorite with both men and women. Clift also played a major role in *From Here to Eternity* and *Judgment at Nuremberg*; however, his alcohol and drug problems made Clift an unreliable actor and eventually destroyed him.

Elizabeth Taylor was already a popular star by the time she joined the cast of *A Place in the Sun*. In her first large role in *National Velvet*, Taylor became one of the most popular child actors in the United States. She continued to make a splash with roles in *Little Women* and *Father of the Bride*. When Taylor and Clift joined in *A Place in the Sun*, two of the most beautiful people in Hollywood brought viewers flocking to the theatres.

Shelley Winters first made her moves in Hollywood with small parts, but her part as Myrtle in *The Great Gatsby* led to her role in *A Place in the Sun*. Compared to Taylor, Shelley is not stunning, but her acting skills are among the best in Hollywood. Although Winters was nominated for the Oscar for her supporting role in *A Place in the Sun*, she did not receive an Oscar until she later won two for her supporting roles in *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *A Patch of Blue*.

A Place in the Sun was nominated for nine Academy Awards: Best Director (the first Oscar for Stevens), Best Screenplay (Michael Wilson and Harry Brown), Best B/W Cinematography (William Mellor), Best Dramatic Score, Best Film Editing, and Best B/W Costume Design (Edith Head), Best Picture, Best Actor (Montgomery Clift) and Best Actress (Shelley Winters). The film won Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best B/W Cinematography, Best Dramatic Score, Best Film Editing, and Best B/W Costume Design.



George Stevens made a variety of films, including many powerful films about America and the American way of life. Stevens made an "American trilogy" of films, and *A Place in the Sun* was the first of these films. Later, Stevens also produced and directed *Shane* (1953) and *Giant* (1956).



Summary and Analysis

As the film opens, we see a man, George, trying to hitch a ride along a busy highway. A beautiful girl in a sports car passes him and waves. Finally he gets a ride in a truck that drops him off at the Eastman factories. George asks to see Mr. Charles Eastman, and the guard gives him directions. He hands the guard a card with a note from Mr. Eastman, "George: Give this to the man at the gate. C.E." The guard sends George to the main office.

In the main office, the secretary tries to blow off George, but she finally calls Mr. Eastman at his home. They talk on the phone and Mr. Eastman tells George, who is his nephew, to stop by the house later that evening. Charles describes George to his family as motivated, but poor and uneducated. Later that evening, George arrives at the house.

George explains to Mrs. Eastman that he quit his job to come find a new job with Mr. Eastman. Mrs. Eastman asks whether his mother is still involved in her religious work, but he explains that her work could be more closely described as social work. Angela Vickers, the beautiful young woman from the sports car, arrives, and the Eastmans leave for dinner. Before they leave, Mr. Eastman tells George to see Earl, his son, the next morning.

The next morning, Earl tells George that George "is an Eastman and is expected to act accordingly." George is also warned not to mix business and pleasure, since many of the employees are women. George is taken down to the packing room to begin work. As the weeks pass, George improves his performance and even creates a report on the department's productivity.

George goes to a movie and ends up sitting beside a girl from work, Alice. As they leave, the two begin to talk. She tells him that he will be given a higher position soon, and then he will be in an office, never to be seen again. They pass a group of people singing on the street, and George is reminded of his own childhood as he watches a young boy in the group.

As George and Alice stroll toward her home, George puts his arm around her. As they talk about her family, she tells him that she doesn't know how to swim. He kisses her passionately before she goes inside her home. He asks her if they can see each other again, but she warns him that he must be careful because of company rules. As they kiss again behind a tree, we are reminded of the forbidden fruit. He asks her not to go, but she goes inside anyway.

Later, George and Alice are in his car kissing at a popular spot. A police car drives up, other cars drive off, and the policeman comes up to them and runs them off. He takes her back to her house, and they sit on the porch while it rains. We notice in the background that George has left the top down on his convertible. They begin to kiss, and she says she wishes she could ask him in, but the landlady is very strict. They turn



the radio on, but it is much louder than expected. When they can't fix it, George hurries inside to turn it down. Later, she goes inside and they begin to dance. As they dance, he closes the door. We hear her murmur, "George, oh, George." In the early morning hours, we hear the door slam shut and see him leave the house.

George is promoted the next day. George asks Charles about the production report he submitted, but Charles ignores the question and invites George to a party the next month on the 15th when they can talk. Alice complains that this is George's birthday, and she was planning a little party for him. George tells her that this is something he must do.

The scene then switches to the next month when George is at the party. He is alone and seems a bit unsure of himself. He ends up in the pool room. Angela hears him and comes inside. The two are obviously interested in one another, but they try to remain calm. They introduce themselves. George says they met last spring, but Angela doesn't remember their meeting. They flirt, and he begins to move closer to her when Charles walks in.

Charles asks if George told his mother about the promotion. Charles tells him to call her now and dials her number. George tells her about his promotion. Angela makes her way over to his side and pops the cork of a bottle of wine. His mother asks who is there, and Angela says "It's me, Momma." His mother becomes worried, but he explains that he just met the girl. His mother says, "I know you'll be a good son," and he promises that he will be.

Angela and George begin dancing as Angela's birthday gift to George. At the end of the night, they are the only couple left dancing on a floor filled with balloons and rubbish. The scene then returns to Alice's apartment where a cake sits on a table between two plates. Alice has fallen asleep waiting for George. Alice is mad, but George apologizes and tells her that he must be nice to Charles to get along. She tells him that maybe he doesn't want to see her anymore now that he is the head of a department. He apologizes and tries to calm her down. She tells him that she is pregnant.

Angela invites George to a party. He asks why she invited him, but she answers only that she had her reasons. As they dance together, Angela tells George that he seems so deep, so far away. Then he tells her that he loves her and has loved her since the moment he saw her and maybe even before he saw her. She begins to tell him why she invited him, but then she rushes them outside because people might be watching. There, she tells him that she loves him. She asks him to come up to the Lake to see her. She also says that she'll come down to the factory to see him. She says, "We'll have such wonderful times together - just the two of us." Then they embrace in one of the most passionate kisses on the silver screen.

Alice finally visits a doctor. She tells the doctor that she's been married for three months. After a lengthy discussion, she admits that she is not married. When asked about the young man, she says that he deserted her. The doctor advises her to go home and tell her family. She leaves to see George and tells him that he must marry her, but he



explains that he will lose his job. She tells him that during his September vacation, they will go out of town and get married. He goes home and circles September 1st on the calendar.

As he looks at the calendar, George hears about accidents on the lake on the radio. A few minutes later, Angela picks him up. She tells him that her parents want him to spend his vacation with them at the lake. She wants him there on the 3rd of September when his aunt and uncle come. She tells him about all the wonderful things they will do together.

George asks Alice to let him vacation with his family. George tells her that if he goes, he might get a bonus that would help them; she agrees. The scene then changes to a discussion between Angela's parents in which her mother tells her father that opposition would only make George seem more attractive, so she invited him to come up so that Angela could see whether he belonged among those she knows. Angela and George have a wonderful time at the lake.

One day as they relax by the lake, Angela tells George that it is called Loon Lake. She tells him that a man and a girl capsized the year before: the girl drowned and the man was never found. The loon begins to call. Angela tells George that eventually her family will adjust to him, and she intends to marry him despite what they may say. Back home, Alice sees a picture of George and Angela in the newspaper.

As George, Angela, and their families eat dinner one night, George receives a call. Alice is waiting for him at the bus station. She tells him that she's been lied to for the last time, and if he doesn't pick her up, she will come to the lake house and tell them everything. George tells Angela's mother that he must get home because his mother is ill. He promises to return as soon as possible.

George meets Alice at the station. She tells him that if he doesn't marry her the next day, she'll call the newspapers, tell them everything, and kill herself. She refuses to leave until he agrees to marry her in Warsaw the next day. However, when they go to get married, the courthouse is closed for Labor Day. He tells her they should go spend the day at Loon Lake.

As George and Alice head to the lake, they run out of gas a short way from the Lodge. George tells Alice that they can go the Landing, rent a boat, and have their picnic immediately. George rents the boat for the whole day and tells the man that they will be staying at the Lodge. In the log book, he signs in as Gilbert Edwards, and the man says that he knows another person by that name.

As George helps Alice into the boat, she almost falls out. The man comes down and helps them push off. Alice reassures the man that her "husband" is a great swimmer. As they row across the lake, George remains strangely silently as loons call eerily in the background. Towards dusk, George and Alice seem to be the only people out on the lake. She says, "It's lonely here. It's like we're the only two people left in the whole world. Maybe we are. Maybe when we get back to shore, everyone else will have



disappeared. I'd like that, wouldn't you?" As she begins to talk about the baby, George's expression hardens, and she says that he looks sick.

George apologizes for being so "nasty" to her recently; he explains that he has changed, but he will still stick by her. She says "I love you, George," and he simply replies that they should get back. She tells him she wishes that he loved her again. She said that they could make things work, and everything will be fine after they get married. Finally, he tells her to stop talking about it.

Alice asks if he wished that he might never have to see her again and that she were dead, and he jumps up and says that he doesn't. She begins to apologize and comes toward him. He tells her to stay where she is, and then the boat capsizes. We see splashing from the middle of the lake, and then George climbs out of the water, alone. As he crawls through the woods, he runs into a boy who tells him the road is down the trail about a quarter of a mile. Eventually, we see George get into the car and drive away.

In front of the courthouse, R. Frank Marlowe, the District Attorney takes a call from the coroner. He is told that a young couple drowned. George finally returns to Angela's home. Angela tells him that he is beginning to win over her parents and that they may be able to announce their engagement around Christmas. He asks her to run away immediately, but she tells him that she wants a big wedding.

At the lake, Marlowe and other men talk with the man who rents boats. The only identification was Alice's Eastman card. When asked about the man's name, the boat renter tells them that the man won't be found in the lake. He tells them that someone drove off in the car later that night, probably that same man. As George and Angela drive off in her boat, the radio on the dock tells the story of Alice's death the night before.

Later that evening, Angela's mother tells George to rest. As he leaves, the people begin to discuss the murder-drowning at Loon Lake. Before George can go to his room, Mr. Vickers asks to see him and tells him that he isn't completely comfortable with George and Angela's relationship. Outside the glass door, Angela walks back and forth trying to listen to the conversation. George tells Mr. Vickers about his family and his youth. He honestly says that there is little in his background to warrant approval, but he loves Angela very much. Her father tells him that he is thankful for his forthrightness. Suddenly, Angela comes in, and asks her father if his questions are answered. He says "yes," but he asks that they not do anything hasty. George and Angela decide to go for a drive so they can be alone.

Alice's landlady tells the investigators that a man had been coming around recently, but he had stopped in the last few weeks. She says that Alice told her he was one of the Eastmans, and investigator finds the clipping from the paper in Alice's room. The investigators call Marlowe.



While out on their drive, Angela and George are chased by the police. She pulls off into a secluded wooded area, but the policeman quickly finds them. The policeman writes her the third ticket of the summer, but he pauses when George tells his name. As they sit in the car, George hangs his head with tiredness and shame. He tells her that she's the only important person to him, and he warns her that people will say things about him that will make her stop loving him.

George and Angela sit in the car until dusk, George resting against her. Finally, they hear sirens in the background. However, it turns out that George was dreaming of the sirens. He wakes up with a start and she tells him that he was having a bad dream. As they drive off, we hear sirens again. George sends Angela inside and tells her that he will be in in a moment; after they embrace, she says, "Every time you leave me, remember, it's like goodbye. I like to believe, it means you can't live without me." They exchange one last passionate embrace.

After Angela goes inside, the police sirens start again, and the officer returns. George runs into the woods. Finally, he is arrested and taken to the police station, where the man from the boat dock identifies him. George denies killing Alice, and Marlowe tells George that they must take him back to the Vickers' house. George begs him not to, but Marlowe tells him he just wanted to see George's reaction. Marlowe then sends George back to the jail and goes to question the Vickers.

Angela denies knowing anything about George's relationship with Alice. Everyone else denies knowing that he was leading a "double life" as well. Marlowe tells Mr. Vickers that he wants to keep Angela's name out of the trial, and Mr. Vickers says that he will make sure that happens. Mr. Eastman tells them that he will take care of the lawyers, spending \$100,000 to protect George if he is innocent, and nothing if he is guilty. Angela enters her room alone, stares at herself in the mirror, and passes out. Her mother and sister come rushing in to care for her.

The defense attorneys talk with George, and they tell him that Angela is not to talk to him until after the trial, as part of the agreement. George tells them that he thought of killing Alice, but when they got out on the lake, he couldn't. He explains that the boat overturned, and the whole incident ended up being an accident. The defense lawyers admit to one another that they truly believe him. However, Marlowe wants George to get the chair. Angela remains home as the wind howls outside. Eventually, we see that the lake house is empty and deserted.

George's trial finally begins. The scene begins with Marlowe's remarks and continues through several witnesses who tell about Alice's love for Eastman and his treatment of Alice. All the witnesses, from Alice's landlady to the boy in the woods to the man renting boats, make George seem guilty. The defense attorney points out that "This boy is on trial for the act of murder, not for the thought of murder. Between the idea and the deed there is a world of difference." Although the prosecution did not have solid fact, Marlowe has relied on fantasy and prejudice to convince the jury. The defense finally calls George to the stand.



George gives his side of the story, telling the jury that he gave false names to protect their identity since they were getting married. He admits that he had thought in the back of his mind that he could drown her, but he discovered that he couldn't do it when they got out on the lake. George explains that as Alice stumbled, he tried to help her, but the boat turned over. He was hit as he fell into the water, and he couldn't see Alice in the darkness. He heard Alice's screams, but by the time he got to the other side of the boat, he couldn't find Alice. He promises that he did not want any of this to happen.

Marlowe cross-examines George and accuses him of leaving his heart behind with the girl he loved when he went to meet Alice at the bus station. George also admits that the car was not out of gas and that everything he said was a lie. Marlowe asserts that George could not be telling the truth now since he has been lying all along. Marlowe brings in a replica of the boat and asks George to act out what happened that night. As George gets out of the boat, he trips on the rope at his feet. Marlowe then accuses George of not trying hard enough to save Alice. George does not admit to hitting Alice and watching her drown; of this, he says he is innocent.

The jury finally comes to a conclusion and pronounces George, guilty of murder in the first degree. George sends a telegram to his mother so that she will know his fate. We see her shake as she reads the note, and then she arrives at the jail to visit George. She has been to see the Governor, who refuses to pardon George. His mother tells him that "Death is a little thing, George. You mustn't be afraid of it." George tells her that he doesn't know whether or not he's guilty of the crime. The priest tells George that in this case, perhaps only God knows the truth.

The priest explains that there is one point of his story that holds the truth: the moment when he could have saved Alice. George says that he just couldn't save her, and the priest asks whether he was thinking of Alice or Angela in that moment. George looks at him with shock and fear in his eyes, and the priest says, "Your heart was murder, George." His mother asks forgiveness if she failed him. As he sits there, he remembers Angela - his one great love.

In the next scene, Angela comes to see George in the prison and tells him that she thought about him all the time, even when she was away at school. She tells him that she loves him and wanted him to know. He tells her that he is guilty of a lot of things, and she replies, "All the same, I'll go on loving you for as long as I live." George tells her that he loves her too and will for all the life he has left. They kiss a final time before she says, "Goodbye, George." And as she walks out, she says, "It seems like we always spend the best part of our time, just saying goodbye."

As Angela leaves, a clock comes into the forefront counting down to 5:00. We hear the priest read the last rites to George, and the guards wait outside to walk George to the chair. The men in the prison say goodbye to George as he walks the hall. As he walks, he once again remembers his moments with Angela, and with his remembrances of their embrace, the film ends.



Characters

George Eastman, played by Montgomery Clift

Description

George Eastman is a stunningly handsome man who grew up in a shelter with his mother, who was a very religious woman. By chance he runs into his wealthy uncle in Chicago, and the uncle promises him that he will give him a job in his company. George hitchhikes his way to his uncle's company to take him up on the offer.

Although George is very down-to-earth when he first meets his uncle, he becomes entranced by the allure of the privileged life of the wealthy. Although George seems happy with Alice, Angela becomes his one true love, and he realizes that he cannot live without her.

Analysis

George Eastman is a complicated character. When we first meet him, he seems to be a quiet but smart young man who is willing to work hard for his place in the world. However, the production reports he writes for his uncle are never read, and when he finally is promoted, it has less to do with his virtue and more to do with his family connections.

George's relationship with Alice seems simple, pure, and sweet. We are given no reason to think that George would be dishonest or cruel at any time. However, he becomes caught up in Angela and has no sympathy for Alice when she becomes pregnant. Because of his love for Angela, George is willing to completely drop Alice, until she makes it clear that she will not leave.

George's personality seems to change after Alice threatens him: however, the viewer wonders whether this was actually his personality all along, but he is good at masking his true intentions. Although the movie leads us to believe that George killed Alice on purpose, critics and movie lovers alike debate the truth behind George Eastman's character and intentions to this day.

Angela Vickers, played by Elizabeth Taylor

Description

Angela Vickers is the daughter of a wealthy family, and she has led a privileged life. However, Angela does not come across as spoiled but rather naive to the true difficulties in life. Angela attends scores of parties with men always by her side.



Angela is a young, impulsive girl who is willing to push the limit if she can. She drives her car too fast, is very opinionated, and falls in love with the wrong man. Angela only sees the good in people, including George. She loves George without realizing that her parents will disapprove, and she stays beside him until the end.

Analysis

Angela, however innocent, is a loyal and loving girl. She loves George although he is not of the same social standing as she. When George is arrested, Angela is obviously heartbroken, but she is not allowed to see George because her family is trying to keep their name out of the scandal.

Angela remains faithful to George, and before he is executed, she goes to him and professes her undying love. Rather than forget about him because he lied and possibly killed someone, Angela loves him just the same.

Alice Tripp, played by Shelley Winters

Description

Alice Tripp is a kind worker in the packing department. She has a few friends in the department, and she ends up falling in love with George. Although they are not supposed to have a relationship, she is willing to risk both their jobs to be with him.

Alice lives in a small house with her landlady, but she is willing to let George come in if they keep their relationship a secret. Alice becomes pregnant and begins to panic about the situation. At the same time, she begins to feel that George is becoming less interested in her, and she fears that she is losing him. When she finds out about Angela, Alice confronts George and threatens to tell his family and everyone else about the situation. Alice drowns when the boat topples over on the lake.

Analysis

Alice is the true victim in this film. Her only crime is that she falls in love with a man who stops loving her for another. Although Alice knew that her relationship with George was against the rules, she loved him and decided to take a risk. From what we can tell of her character, she probably had never made such a rash decision before, and her first one ended up causing her death.

When Alice calls the house to confront George, we see that she is willing to stand up for herself. Until that time, she believed George and tried to reassure herself, but she finally decided to take things into her own hands. However Alice unwittingly pushed George to the edge, and she paid for it with her life. Her great move to be strong and to assert herself backfired.



Themes

Many Facets of People

People have many different facets and can be understood in many ways. Stevens' film has kept audiences guessing and talking for years. Although most of the characters are fairly easy to understand, George is extremely complex. The viewer finds it difficult to determine whether George was actually guilty of the murder or whether he considered it, changed his mind, and then suffered from a terrible accident.

In the film, we learn that no one should be taken at face value. George seems very kind and innocent for the most part, and he ends up being executed for murder. Angela seems flippant and flighty, but she remains faithful to George until his death. Alice seems very kind and sweet, but when George wants to leave her, she is willing to do anything to stop him. People and their motives are not easily understood in life or in this film.

Unconditional Love

In one of the final scenes, Angela visits George in prison before his execution. She tells him that she will always love him. The viewer finds this to be a shocking turn of events as the trial has been highly publicized, and Angela obviously knows that George has been found guilty.

Viewers come out of the movie knowing that Angela loved George unconditionally. Even though George was convicted of doing the unthinkable - killing another person - Angela loves him just the same. Although her family will not let her stay by his side because of the publicity, she comes to say a final goodbye and to profess her love.

Liars Always Lose

Throughout the movie, George lies several times. The viewer could consider George's failure to tell his family about Alice in the first place as a lie to them. Rather than coming out into the open about their relationship, George chooses to hide it so he and Alice can keep their jobs. Additionally, George lies by not telling Angela or Alice about one another and by keeping the pregnancy a secret. Finally, George lies when he tries to pretend that Alice's death did not happen.

In the end, George is caught in his tangle of lies. Alice catches him and tries to trap him into marrying her. Then, George finds that by keeping Alice's death a secret, he has hurt his case even more. The lies catch up with him, and eventually George dies for his mistakes and his lies.



Style and Cinematography

George Stevens' *A Place in the Sun* is reminiscent of film noir. Shot in black and white at a time when the most films were going to color, *A Place in the Sun* is a dark movie in both color and subject. The darkness of the film enhances the subject of the movie: a man leading a double life and committing murder in order to keep it secret.

During the darkest times in the plot, such as before George goes in with Alice for the first time and when George and Alice go out on the lake, the scenes become even darker. The weather and the light, or lack thereof, help cue the viewer that something bad is going to happen. Additionally, there are a few times when the lighting is extremely bright. When Alice and George first become friends, when Angela and George are on the lake, and at the beginning of Alice and George's day on the lake, the light is very bright, and the viewer becomes optimistic that everything will be okay. However, in the end, the brightest lighting simply serves to contrast the final event in the film: George's death as punishment for his crime.

The film also uses music very effectively. After George finds out that Alice is pregnant but then sees Angela, the music becomes very deep, with many minor notes that cause the viewer to feel a sense of suspense, suspicion, and apprehension. This same music is also used when George and Alice are on the lake, before the boat capsizes. However, at times the music is a bit brighter, such as when George and Angela dance at the party. Life is optimistic and everyone is happy, but their happiness is only temporary.



Motifs

Desperation

George is a desperate man. At the beginning of the film, he is desperate to get a job, so he hitchhikes across part of America to reach his uncle. Later, George is willing to risk that same job for a relationship with Alice. Finally, George kills or tries to kill Alice out of his desperation to stay with Angela, his true love.

A desperate man is willing to do anything to get what he wants, and George seems to fit this description. His desperation drives him to avoid Alice and then to murder her. Trying to cover up his crimes, George does not tell anyone of the incident, and he desperately tries to hide away amid the wealth of his family and the protection of Angela's love. Although he does not succeed, George's desperation makes him willing to do whatever it takes to keep his perfect world with Angela in place.

Isolation

Isolation allows people a certain sense of freedom to act in ways they might not act when a lot of people are around. In the film, many of the characters feel free to act differently when they are away from people who would likely judge them.

Many of the major events in the film happen when the characters are isolated from other people. George isolates himself from his mother and his past at the shelter when he goes to his uncle for a job. When George and Alice first spend the night together, they are isolated at the house, and the storm helps them to isolate themselves from the landlady. Also, when George and Angela first begin their flirtation and relationship, they are in the isolated pool room. Finally, George kills Alice on the isolated Loon Lake.

The Allure of Wealth

Wealth has a certain allure for all people but especially for those without wealth. George is impressed and envious of his uncle's wealth and power, and eventually he becomes attracted to the way the wealthy live their lives. By spending more time with Angela, he becomes accustomed to the ease with which they can see each other and do anything they want.

Although George seems to want to get rid of Alice because he loves Angela, the viewer still wonders whether he might not be interested at least partially in Angela's money. George proves to be a magnetic and attractive man, so those qualities alone would help him to win Angela's heart. Whether love or the love of money brought about George's downfall, we will never be quite certain, but we can see that he was attracted to the wealth and high social status of those around him.



Symbols

Weather

Throughout the film, the weather helps the viewer to know what to expect. In the beginning of the film, George is traveling on a bright, sunny day, and when he reaches his uncle's company, he quickly finds a job.

When George and Alice finally get together, there is a storm that makes them run under her porch for cover. The rain lets us know that waves of emotion are growing, and eventually, George spends the night.

Also, when George and Alice go out to Lake Loon, the day is rather sunny, and Alice is hopeful. However, as the sky darkens and night approaches, the time of her death comes ever closer.

Finally, as Angela sits by her window after George's arrest, we can see the wind blowing very hard outside. The wind can be seen to represent George's difficult trial and the storms within her own heart as she tries to decipher the truth and her own feelings.

Rope

When George steps out of the boat during the trial, his foot catches on a piece of rope. This rope serves to remind us that a person's actions and motives are difficult to decipher. Since George tripped on the rope here, there remains the possibility that a similar thing could have happened when he tried to help Alice. We are left with an air of uncertainty after the event caused by a single piece of rope.

Convertible

When George first spends the night with Alice, he leaves the top down on his convertible overnight. Although we know that he likes Alice, we see for the first time how impetuous he can be. Perhaps this scene helps to foreshadow his impetuous act of taking her out on Loon Lake. Had he actually backed out of killing her anywhere else, she might not have drowned, and then he would not be on trial.



Essay Questions

Why does George hitchhike across the country?

How does George's family treat him throughout the film? Do their actions ever really change?

How do George and Alice finally get together?

Describe the scene when Angela and George finally get to know each other.

What is Angela's parents' reaction to George and his relationship with Angela?

How does George's mom feel about his success and his relationship with Angela?

Does George's attitude and/or personality change throughout the film? How?

Does George kill Alice on purpose or is it an accident?

Should the jury have judged George guilty?

What is the meaning of Angela showing up to see George at the end of the movie?

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