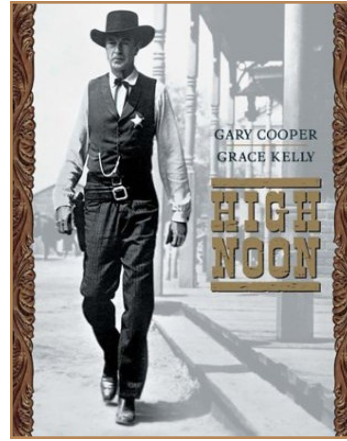
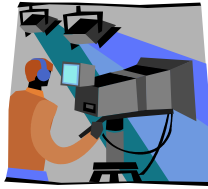


Discussion Questions
HIGH NOON
March 2, 2007



- The film has been discussed as a film that revises the Western and is sometimes called the first “adult Western,” while it also has been described as an “anti-Western” that upends central concerns of the genre. What are some elements of the film that might account for these opposing views?
- Law and order has been a central convention of the Western from early cinema into the present. Many examples of “town-tamer” Westerns include the arrival of law and order (or at least order) through the actions of a law enforcer who is able to banish criminality and immorality (e.g., My Darling Clementine, John Ford, 1946). One implication of such a narrative is that once a town is tamed, it will stay tamed. How does High Noon address this logic, as well as basic notions of law and order?
- How does the film complicate notions of personal responsibility and of public duty, or even more broad, the personal and the public? How does the film depict the “right thing” in relation to the personal and the public?
- The representation of gender roles in this film seems quite different from previous Westerns. If this is the case, what are some of the elements of the film that contribute to this, and why might a film like High Noon include such depictions?
- Unlike many classical Westerns, High Noon makes very little use of wide landscape shots of “wild” spaces and instead includes a large amount of close ups, along with most of the action taking place within the town. What are some of the effects of these choices within the cinematography?
- Two major elements of the film are worth considering in relation to any genre. The character Frank Miller is the major villain in the film and is the motivating factor for the narrative, yet he has very little screen time and is instead shown as an absent character (the empty chair; the railroad tracks into the background). The clocks might, in another film, be considered to be “just” a prop, yet in this film, with the near-real time development of the narrative, they become central, perhaps as locations or even characters. Again, what are the effects of these cinematographic/narrative techniques?

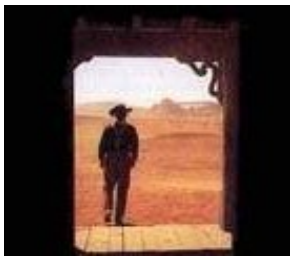


Film Extras

Trivia from the film —

- The picture takes place between 10:35 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. slightly longer than the 84 minute running time.
- "Do Not Forsake Me, Oh, My Darlin'" was the first Oscar-winning song from a non-musical film.
- Director Fred Zinnemann said that the black smoke billowing from the train is a sign that the brakes were failing. He and the cameraman didn't know it at the time, and barely got out of the way. The camera tripod snagged itself on the track and fell over, smashing the camera, but the film survived and is in the movie.
- This film was intended as an allegory in Hollywood for the failure of Hollywood people to stand up to the House Un-American Activities Committee during the McCarthy era. Writer Carl Foreman was blacklisted by the House Un-American Activities Committee shortly after the film came out. Foreman had fled to England by the time the film was finished. Producer Stanley Kramer removed Carl Foreman's credit as producer. It is rumored they never spoke to each other again.
- This was Lee Van Cleef's first film — he does not have a word of dialogue.
- The pained expression on Kane's (Gary Cooper's) face throughout the film was partially not acting; Cooper had a bleeding ulcer at the time.
- Although John Wayne often complained that the film was "un-American", when he collected Cooper's Best Actor Oscar on Cooper's behalf he complained he wasn't offered the part himself so he could have made it more like one of his own westerns. He later teamed up with director Howard Hawks to make *Rio Bravo* as a right-wing response.
- Until his death, director Fred Zinnemann fought not to have this film colorized, saying that he designed the film in black and white and that it should be shown that way. He was unsuccessful, however. A colorized version was made by Ted Turner's television production company and was broadcast several times over his several cable outlets.
- Several actors were offered the leading role of Will Kane and turned it down: Gregory Peck, Charlton Heston, Marlon Brando, and Montgomery Clift.
- For the fight scene involving Gary Cooper and Lloyd Bridges, Lloyd's young son Beau Bridges was in the hayloft watching the filming. When water was thrown on his father after the fight, Beau could not help laughing, requiring the scene to be shot a second time. Cooper, who was ill and in physical pain (and did not use a stunt double for the fight), was gracious and understanding, according to Lloyd.
- Fred Zinnemann wanted a hot, stark look to the film. Cinematographer Floyd Crosby achieved this by not filtering the sky and having the prints made a few points lighter than normal.
- The film took 28 days to shoot. They only took one to three takes per scene.
- The film is set in Hadleyville, population 650, in the New Mexico Territory, on a hot summer Sunday. The 37-star flag the judge removes as he prepares to flee shows that the time frame is sometime between Nebraska's admission as the 37th state on March 1, 1867 and Colorado's admission as the 38th state on August 1, 1876.

(Above trivia taken from www.imdb.com.)



For Further Research:

Books

- *Code of Honor: The Making of Three Great American Westerns—High Noon, Shane, and The Searchers*, by Michael Blake
- *The Encyclopedia of Westerns*, by Herb Fagen
- *How Hollywood Invented the Wild West*, by Holly George-Warren
- *Last of the Cowboy Heroes: The Westerns of Randolph Scott, Joel McCrea, and Audie Murphy*, by Robert Nott
- *Once Upon a Time in Italy: The Films of Sergio Leone*, by Christopher Frayling
- *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*, by Jane Tompkins

Films

- *My Darling Clementine*
- *The Ox-Bow Incident*
- *Rio Bravo*
- *The Searchers*
- *Shane*
- *Unforgiven*



Audio

- *Old-Time Radio Famous Westerns* (10 CDs with a booklet detailing each show and its history). Shows include: The Cisco Kid, The Lone Ranger, Gunsmoke, Hopalong Cassidy, and more!

Fun Websites

<http://www.filmsite.org/westernfilms.html>
<http://www.imdb.com/Sections/Genres/Western/>
<http://www.wildeast.net/spaghettiwestern.htm>

