

CLINT EASTWOOD

PALE RIDER.



'Pale Rider' is Clint Eastwood's first Western film since he starred in and directed "The Outlaw Josey Wales" in 1976. Eastwood plays a nameless stranger who rides into the gold rush town of LaHood, California and comes to the aid of a group of independent gold prospectors who are being threatened by the LaHood mining corporation. The independent miners hold claims to a region called Carbon Canyon, the last of the potentially ore-laden areas in the county. Coy LaHood wants to dredge Carbon Canyon and needs the independent miners out

LaHood hires the county marshal, a gunman named Stockburn with six deputies, to get the job done. What neither LaHood nor Stockburn could possibly have taken into consideration is the appearance of the enigmatic horseman and the fate awaiting them.

This study guide attempts to place 'Pale Rider' within the Western genre and also within the canon of Eastwood's films.

We would suggest that the work on Film genre and advertising are completed before students see 'Pale Rider'.

FILM GENRE

The word "genre" might well be unfamiliar to you. It is a French word which means "type" and so when we talk of film genre we mean type of film. The western is one particular genre which we will be looking at in detail in this study guide. What other types of genre are there in film? Horror is one.

Task One

Write a list of all the different film genres that you can think of. When you have done this, try to write a list of genres that you might find in literature. Are there any similarities?

Genre is important to us as an audience because it is one way that we classify films. We often say "I saw a Western last night" and the person that we are talking to will have some idea about what we have seen. It is a shorthand term which not only allows audiences to classify films but also film companies to classify films for the audiences that they hope to attract to see the films. But what do we mean by the titles that we give to the different genres?

Task Two

Take five of the film genres that you have listed above. Imagine that someone has said to you that they had seen one of each of these types of film. Write down what you think a they would have seen, the things that you might expect to find in each of these types of film.

What you will have listed in task two are what are called CONVENTIONS. By conventions

we mean aspects of films that tend to appear again and again in a particular type of film so that we as an audience come to expect to see at least some of them in any genre film that we see. Look at the conventions that you have listed in task two. Do they fall into any particular type?

To take this idea further turn to chart one. Listed along the top are a variety of conventions that one would expect to see in genre films. Complete the chart for the genres that are listed down the side. One has been left blank so that you can put in a genre of your choice.

From what you have listed in the chart you will see that you have ideas and opinions about the genres listed. If you compare your chart with the person's sitting next to you then you will probably find some similarities. As a class you could now draw up a master checklist of the conventions of one particular genre and then compare this to what you have written.

Why do you think that so many people in the class have come up with the same ideas?

CHART ONE

Characters Settings Clothing Situations Equipment Plots

Western

Gangster

Horror

We have so far looked at genre from the point of view of the audience - what we recognise within a genre. We may decide that we like certain types of film and not others and so this genre idea that film gives helps us decide whether we want to see it or not. Obviously this happens before we actually go into the cinema. Press criticism, advertisements, posters, the title will all give us an idea of what type of film is showing at the cinema.

Below are listed seven film titles. From these alone, try to predict what type of film each is.

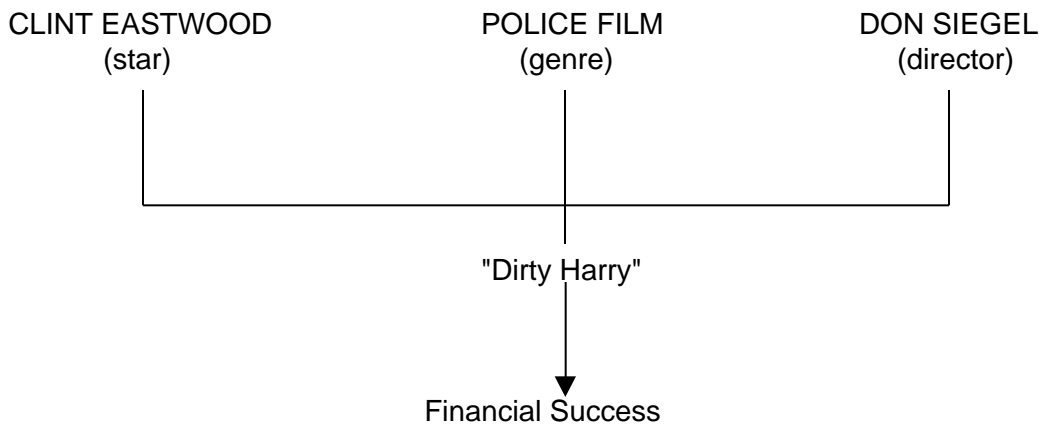
1. The Devil Rides Out
2. Revenge of the Creature
3. Hang 'Em High
4. The Concrete Jungle
5. Paint Your Wagon
6. A Star is Born
7. The Getaway

Genres and titles are two ways of giving us ideas about a film and raising our expectations about what we are going to see. What else can do this? Try and think of other ways in which we classify films. One way of doing this is trying to fill in the gap in the sentence below:

"I went to see a film . . last night."

Genre is also very important to the people who make and finance films. If a film maker has had a success with one type of film then the people who invest their money in films will think that this particular type of film might well make money again and so is a good investment. Let us take as an example a Clint Eastwood film - 'Dirty Harry'. By the time that this was made, Clint Eastwood was a star. The director was Don Siegel who had made several financially successful films in the past. We can show this idea in chart form.

FILM "DIRTY HARRY"



Future investors have the following choices:

1. Another film with the same combination of elements.
2. Another film starring Clint Eastwood.
3. Another film of the same genre.
4. Another film by the same director.

If a genre has been successful then, until something new comes along or until a variation of the original genre appears, similar types of film will continue to be made.

Genres often go out of style. As a class, try to remember what films have been showing at your local cinema over the past few months. Are there any similarities between these films? What genres do they belong to? If they are not obvious genre films, then what is it about them that is being sold? (You may want to look back at the categories that you found in completing the sentences.)

THE WESTERN

In 1903 Edwin S. Porter made the first western, "The Great Train Robbery". Only two years before, Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch had carried out their last raid in the United States. The birth of the Western film therefore, occurs at the time of the death of the Wild West. Stories about the West and the wild frontiers of the USA had already been in print for many years in what were called 'dime novels', and the names of many of the cowboys of the past had been turned into heroes - Buffalo Bill, Wyatt Earp, Jesse James. These dime novels were not written for the inhabitants of the West, however, but for the inhabitants of the new towns and the industrial cities. The authors romanticised about the exploits of their heroes and the glories of life on the frontier where a man was not held down by the rules of society.

By the time of the first western film, a series of myths had grown up about America's past which were readily taken up by the film makers. When we see a modern western, we should not be saying "is this like it was in the real Wild West?". The stories and characters on which many of the films have been based had already been turned into epics, romances and heroes by writers. What we are seeing are the legends and myths that America has produced about its own past.

Hollywood took its own series of story types and characters from the sources to create stars who became associated with westerns, and developed them into a genre which, along with the gangster film, came to symbolise Hollywood around the world. Say Hollywood and people think of Westerns.

How then does 'Pale Rider' fit into this pattern of plot/character/star? What image does it give of the western myth and what of the reality? You have already listed what you would expect to see in a Western. The other aspect of the film that is important is that it stars Clint Eastwood. Have you seen any other Clint Eastwood films? What sort of characters does he play? Can you name any other westerns that Clint Eastwood has starred in? What type of role did he play? Was there any difference between the westerns that Eastwood starred in and other westerns that you have seen?

'Pale Rider' is about a man who rides into a town and helps a group of gold prospectors to fight off LaHood, the owner of a large company who want to chase the prospectors off their land. From this bare outline of the story can you predict any events that might happen in the film? In order to do this you should look at your genre chart and also at what you have said about the westerns that Eastwood has starred in.

ADVERTISING

It is very rare that people just go into a cinema, pay their money and then sit in front of a screen not knowing what will appear. We pay our money for the promise of a certain type of film. Before we even go to the cinema we have ideas about the type of film that we will see, given to us by press advertisements, radio or T.V. commercials, articles in magazines.

On the next two pages are two different posters for 'Pale Rider'. For each of the posters, answer the following questions.

1. What written information is given?
2. What written information is made important in the poster?
3. What picture clues are given as to the type of film that 'Pale Rider' is?
4. Which parts of the picture are given most importance?

When you have answered these questions, compare the two sets of answers. Are they the same? What expectations does each give and how far do they play on what we already know about westerns and Clint Eastwood.

What other aspects of the film could have been included in the poster? Try to think of four other aspects and then think how, if they had been included, they would have changed the meaning of the poster.

Which of the two posters do you think best fits the film? Try to give some reasons for your choice.

...and hell
followed with him.

**CLINT
EASTWOOD**
PALE RIDER

CLINT EASTWOOD "PALE RIDER" also featuring MICHAEL HORSBURY CARRIE SMODGESS
CHRISTOPHER FENN RICHARD DYBART SYDNEY FENNY RICHARD KIEL DOUG McGRATH
JOHN RUSSELL associate producer TITZ MUNTZ music by LONNIE ROBERTS associate producer DAVID VALDECI
written by MICHAEL BUTLER & DONNIS SHIFFACE produced and directed by CLINT EASTWOOD

DELUXE
www.pale-riding.com

... and hell followed with him.



**CLINT
EASTWOOD**

PALE RIDER



CLINT EASTWOOD "PALE RIDER" MICHAEL MORIARTY CARRIE SNODGRESS
CHRISTOPHER PENN RICHARD DYSART SYDNEY PENNY RICHARD KIEL DOUG McGRATH
JOHN RUSSELL EDWIN PALMER EDWIN PALMER EDWIN PALMER EDWIN PALMER

MPAA Rating: R



"PALE RIDER AND THE WESTERN

Before you saw 'Pale Rider', you completed a conventions chart, where you listed various ideas that you associated with westerns, as well as other genres. Most of the headings that were listed asked you to list visual elements that you would expect to see on the screen, things that would reassure you that you were watching a western.

These are very important when an advertiser wishes to give us ideas about a film, as you will have seen from the previous exercise, but in the film itself they are merely part of the overall form of the film. The main importance of this film is that it tells us a story (NARRATIVE). The visual conventions are there as direction for the audience as to how

they should understand the different parts of a story.

GENRE AND NARRATIVE

When we go to see a film we can predict some of the things that we are going to see. We understand narratives as a series of events that follow on from each other, have a beginning and an end, show a world that is completely contained within the film.

Knowing what type of film we will see helps us in our predictions. As an example of this type of prediction, take the word RED. If we say that "red" is the beginning of a sequence, what comes next? Difficult to say! If however, you are given the title "Rainbow" can you now predict what colours follow?

Task Three

Here is the opening of 'Pale Rider' in basic form.

"A group of miners are searching for gold. Suddenly a gang come along and smash up their houses."

Having seen what happens in 'Pale Rider', now try to continue this opening either as a gangster film or as a disaster movie. Look back at the "plots" section of your chart to see what you could include.

In 'Pale Rider' we see the clash of the miners and LaHood's men. When the stranger (Clint Eastwood) arrives in town and helps Barret we can predict the ending of the film - the final showdown. In this, 'Pale Rider' is similar to other westerns. But this is not everything that is in the film. It may be the basic story but what are the other stories that are going on within the film?

Try to write a list of these other elements in the film. How do these other elements relate to the central story?

Task Four

In groups, try to remember what happens in the opening five minutes of the film. Look at the different parts to the story and see if, in any way, they have been introduced in these opening sequences. Write up your findings under the title - "Ways in which aspects of 'Pale Rider' are introduced to an audience."



When is Clint Eastwood's character first introduced to us? Can you remember what is said when he rides into the mining village? What has already happened in the town?

How important to the story is it that Clint Eastwood plays the main role? How does the way that he first appears in the film set up ideas about what will happen?

This brings us back to what we actually expect from westerns and from Clint Eastwood films. Turn back to your conventions chart. In the chart below, try to list, under each heading, how 'Pale Rider' fits into these two ideas.

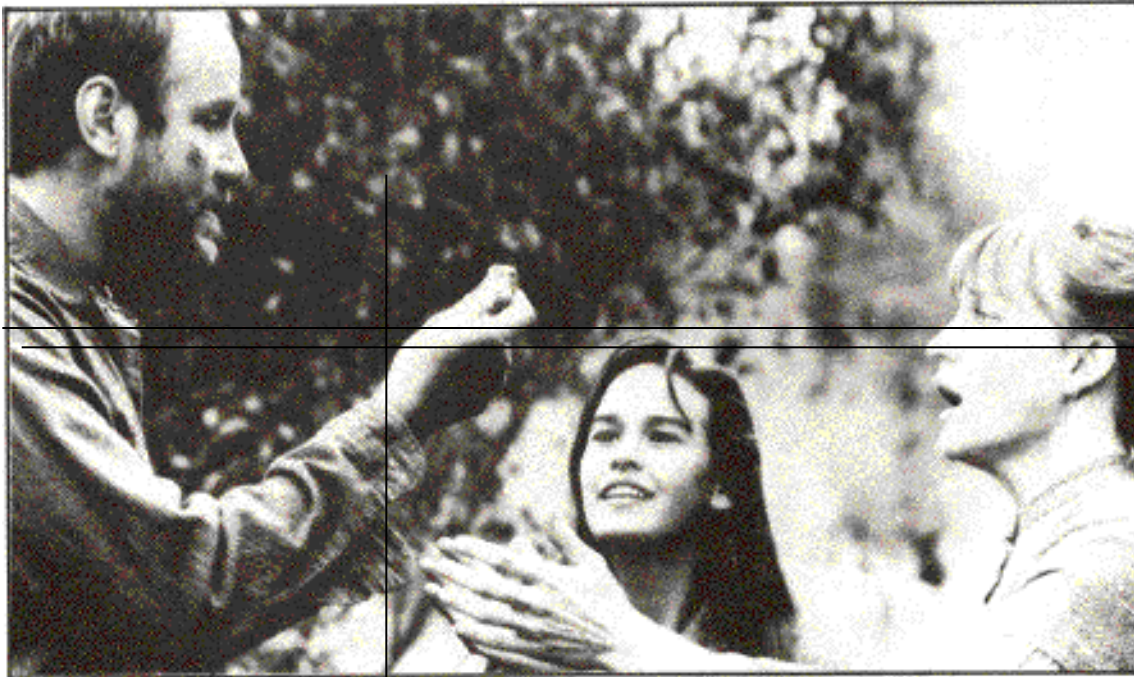
Chart Two

Typical aspects of Westerns in 'Pale Rider'	Untypical aspects of 'Pale Rider' as a Western	Typical aspects of Clint Eastwood in 'Pale Rider'.

Task Five

Write up your findings from chart two into an essay entitled 'Pale Rider' as a Western film.' Always try to give examples from the film to back up what you say.

Hull Barret, Sarah and Megan play an important part in the narrative of 'Pale Rider', both in their relationships with each other and in their relationships with the stranger.



Write down what these relationships are and then give examples from the film as to how each of these relationships develops. How do each of these relate to the ending of the film? How do they fit in with the basic story of the film?

DISCUSSION

Below are some statements made by Clint Eastwood about the film 'Pale Rider'. In groups, discuss each one. Do you agree with everything that he says? How do the comments on the western fit in with other westerns that you have seen?

On the Western "in a western you can make any statement because it's a ritualised form."

"Somebody out there wants to see westerns. Look at the so called space movies. Aren't they really just spin-offs of the Western? In "Star Wars", they talk about the Force, but westerns all use those elements."

"Pale Rider" follows a classic pattern that has been played out hundreds of times, whether it's cattlemen against sheep men or land barons against settlers. Hopefully it's different enough for people who have seen a lot of westerns and nostalgic enough to bring back some of the things they liked."

"On 'Pale Rider'

"The people in 'Pale Rider' are brought together by the preacher, they are willing to defend themselves and fight for their rights."

"Pale rider contains elements of the classic western in it, a mythological character who drifts in and has an effect on the people."

"On 'Pale Rider' I tried to get the mood of how it would be to live with two or three little lamps lighting the house."

"In 'Pale Rider' you really want someone to wipe out the villains, you build up steam. It gets you in the classic vein."

"Maybe 'Pale Rider' is a dream, maybe it isn't. She says a prayer and the preacher is sent down from the mountain."

SHOWDOWN

From the outset of the film we know that there will be a showdown between LaHood and his men and the stranger. An added twist is given with the arrival of Stockburn and his deputies. In the final shoot out, therefore, the stranger is up against twelve men! The showdown lasts a long time. How does the film director keep up suspense during this final part of the film? If we know that Eastwood will survive the fight, how is our interest kept going?



There are really two enemies here. LaHood and Stockburn. The stranger kills Stockburn but Barret kills LaHood. Why does it have to be like this? What, from the story that we have followed, makes this inevitable?

The Pale Rider rides off into the distance at the end of the film. "Hell has followed with him".

Further Work

1. During the study guide, westerns have often been referred to as myths. In mythology we are usually shown good fighting evil. In 'Pale Rider' what would you say are the values that are held up as being "good"? What triumphs at the end of the film? How, in the narrative, are these values shown? How are we told or shown what is good or bad?
2. Imagine that you are directing a western. You have to film a gunfight. On blank paper, draw 12 boxes, each of which will represent part of the gunfight sequence. Now draw in each box the way that you would film the sequence. Try and use close-ups, long shots and medium shots, within the various frames. There are only two men fighting. How do you make the sequence interesting?
3. What part did the women (Megan and Sarah) play in the film? Did their roles fit in with normal female

4. Look at your conventions chart under the heading "settings". For each of the settings try to write a list of events that you might expect to see happening in each one. How does your list of events compare to what happened in 'Pale Rider'?
5. "The stranger" is no better a person than Stockburn. In fact he is worse as he is a preacher. Do you agree?

Suggested further reading

Genre & Westerns

"Film/Genre" by Rick Altman (BFI)

"Horizons West" by Jim Kitses (Studio One - Seekers Warburg)

"Spaghetti Westerns" by Christopher Frayling (RKP)

Film

"Film Art an Introduction" by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (Addison Wesley)

"Narrative and Genre" by Nick Lacey

Resources

The number of westerns that have been made runs into thousands. As a suggestion, the following would link in well with 'Pale Rider'.

"Stagecoach" (1939) director John Ford - a good example of a classic western

"Shane" (1952) director George Stevens - similar style plot to 'Pale Rider'

"High Plains Drifter" (1972) director Clint Eastwood These two are useful in order to

"Outlaw Josey Wales" (1976) director Clint Eastwood link in with Eastwood's Western 'persona'