

High Noon (1952)

TOMATOMETER

All Critics

96

Average Rating: 8.8/10 Reviews Counted: 47 Fresh: 45
| Rotten: 2

Top Critics

100

Average Rating: 8.3/10 Critic Reviews: 8 Fresh: 8
| Rotten: 0

A classic of the Western genre that broke with many of the traditions at the time, *High Noon* endures -- in no small part thanks to Gary Cooper's defiant, Oscar-winning performance.

AUDIENCE

87

liked it Average Rating: 4/5 User Ratings: 23,901

Movie Info

This Western classic stars Gary Cooper as Hadleyville marshal Will Kane, about to retire from office and go on his honeymoon with his new Quaker bride, Amy (Grace Kelly). But his happiness is short-lived when he is informed that the Miller gang, whose leader (Ian McDonald) Will had arrested, is due on the 12:00 train. Pacifist Amy urges Will to leave town and forget about the Millers, but this isn't his style; protecting Hadleyburg has always been his duty, and it remains so now. But when he asks for deputies to fend off the Millers, virtually nobody will stand by him. Chief Deputy Harvey Pell (Lloyd Bridges) covets Will's job and ex-mistress (Katy Jurado); his mentor, former lawman Martin Howe (Lon Chaney Jr.) is now arthritic and unable to wield a gun. Even Amy, who doesn't want to be around for her husband's apparently certain demise, deserts him. Meanwhile, the clocks tick off the minutes to High Noon -- the film is shot in "real time," so that its 85-minute

length corresponds to the story's actual timeframe. Utterly alone, Kane walks into the center of town, steeling himself for his showdown with the murderous Millers. Considered a landmark of the "adult western," *High Noon* won four Academy Awards (including Best Actor for Cooper) and Best Song for the hit, "Do Not Forsake Me, O My Darling" sung by Tex Ritter. The screenplay was written by Carl Foreman, whose blacklisting was temporarily prevented by star Cooper, one of Hollywood's most virulent anti-Communists. John Wayne, another notable showbiz right-winger and Western hero, was so appalled at the notion that a Western marshal would beg for help in a showdown that he and director Howard Hawks "answered" *High Noon* with *Rio Bravo* (1959). ~ Hal Erickson, Rovi

PG, 1 hr. 25 min.

Western, Mystery & Suspense

Directed By: Fred Zinnemann

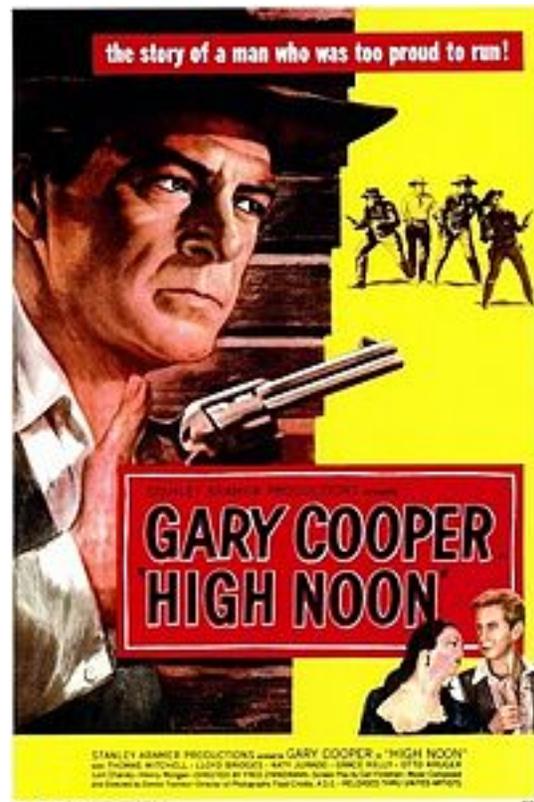
Written By: Carl Foreman

In Theaters: Jul 24, 1952 Wide

On DVD: Oct 23, 2001

United Artists

[www.rottentomatoes.com]



1952 theatrical poster (Wikipedia)

High Noon

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

High Noon is a 1952 American Western film directed by Fred Zinnemann and starring Gary Cooper and Grace Kelly. In nearly real time, the film tells the story of a town marshal forced to face a gang of killers by himself. The screenplay was written by Carl Foreman. The film won four Academy Awards and two Golden Globe Awards.

History

In 1989, *High Noon* was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant", entering the registry during the NFR's first year of existence. The film is #27 on the American Film Institute's 2007 list of great films.

Plot

The plot examines the tension that develops between the citizens of a Western town and its faithful but retired marshal, who seeks their assistance when a paroled convict returns to kill him.

Will Kane (Gary Cooper), the longtime marshal of Hadleyville, New Mexico Territory, has just married pacifist Quaker Amy Fowler (Grace Kelly) and turned in his badge. He intends to become a storekeeper elsewhere. Suddenly, the town learns that Frank Miller (Ian MacDonald), a criminal whom Kane brought to justice, is due to arrive on the noon train.

Miller had been sentenced to hang, but was pardoned on an unspecified legal technicality. In court, he had vowed to get revenge on Will and anyone else who got in the way. The members of Miller's gang are his younger brother Ben (Sheb Wooley), Jack Colby (Lee Van Cleef), and Jim Pierce (Robert J. Wilke), and they wait for him at the station.

Will and Amy leave town, but fearing that the gang will hunt him down and be a danger to the townspeople, Will turns back. He reclaims his badge and scours the town for help, even interrupting Sunday church services, with little success. His deputy, Harvey Pell (Lloyd Bridges), resigns because Will did not recommend him as the new marshal. Harvey agrees to

stay if Will will support him, but Will refuses to buy his assistance.

Will goes to warn Helen Ramírez (Katy Jurado), first Miller's lover, then Will's, and now Harvey's. Helen is already aware of what Miller will do to her if he finds her and has sold her business. She prepares to leave town to avoid Miller but also to avoid seeing Kane killed.

Amy gives Will an ultimatum: she is leaving on the noon train, with or without him.

The judge who sentenced Miller is leaving and encourages Will to do the same. The marshal who preceded Will supports him, but is too old to help and tells Will to get out of town. Will tries eliciting help from the locals at a bar and then tries the church. Nobody at either place responds, and few support him. Some even desire to see Kane's probable demise.

Many of the townspeople encourage Will to leave, hoping that would defuse the situation. Even Will's good friends the Fullers are at odds about how to deal with the situation. Mildred Fuller (Eve McVeagh) wants her husband, Sam (Harry Morgan), to speak with Will when he comes to their home, but he makes her claim he is not home while he hides in another room.

In the end, Will faces Miller and his gang alone. Kane guns down Ben Miller and Colby, but is wounded in the process. Helen and Amy both board the train, but Amy gets off when she hears the sound of gunfire. Amy chooses her husband's life over her religious beliefs, shooting Pierce from behind. Miller then takes her hostage to force Will into the open. However, Amy suddenly attacks Miller, giving Will a clear shot, and Will shoots Miller dead. As the townspeople emerge, Will stares at the crowd, contemptuously throws his marshal's star in the dirt, and leaves town with Amy.

The plot's sequence of events occurs in real time.

Cast



Grace Kelly as Amy Fowler Kane.

- Gary Cooper as Marshal Will Kane

There was some controversy over the casting of Cooper as the lead: at 50, nearly 30 years older than co-star Kelly, he was considered by some as too old for the role.

- Thomas Mitchell as Mayor Jonas Henderson
- Lloyd Bridges as Deputy Marshal Harvey Pell
- Katy Jurado as Helen Ramírez
- Grace Kelly as Amy Fowler Kane
- Otto Kruger as Judge Percy Mettrick
- Lon Chaney as Martin Howe
- Henry Morgan as Sam Fuller
- Ian MacDonald as Frank Miller
- Eve McVeagh as Mildred Fuller
- Morgan Farley as Dr. Mahin, minister
- Harry Shannon as Cooper
- Lee Van Cleef as Jack Colby
- Robert Wilke as Jim Pierce
- Sheb Wooley as Ben Miller

Production

According to the 2002 documentary *Darkness at High Noon: The Carl Foreman Documents*, written, produced, and directed by Lionel Chetwynd, Foreman's role in the creation and production of *High Noon* has over the years been unfairly downplayed in favor of Foreman's former partner and producer, Stanley Kramer. The documentary was prompted by and based in part on a single-spaced 11-page letter that Foreman wrote to film critic Bosley Crowther in April 1952. In the letter, Foreman asserts that the film began as a four-page plot outline about "aggression in a western background" and "telling a motion picture story in the

exact time required for the events of the story itself" (a device used in *High Noon*). An associate of Foreman pointed out similarities between Foreman's outline and the short story "The Tin Star" by John W. Cunningham, which led Foreman to purchase the rights to Cunningham's story and proceed with the original outline. By the time the documentary aired, most of those immediately involved were dead, including Kramer, Foreman, Fred Zinnemann, and Gary Cooper. Kramer's widow rebuts Foreman's contentions; Victor Navasky, author of *Naming Names* and familiar with some of the circumstances surrounding *High Noon* because of interviews with Kramer's widow, among others, said the documentary seemed "one-sided, and the problem is it makes a villain out of Stanley Kramer, when it was more complicated than that".

The film's production and release also intersected with the second Red Scare and the Korean War. Writer, producer, and partner Carl Foreman was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) while he was writing the film. Foreman had not been in the Communist Party for almost ten years, but he declined to name names and was considered an "uncooperative witness" by the HUAC. When Stanley Kramer learned this, he forced Foreman to sell his part of their company, and tried to have the studio remove Foreman from the production. Fred Zinnemann, Gary Cooper, and Bruce Church intervened. There was also a problem with the Bank of America production loan because Foreman had not yet signed the papers. Thus, Foreman remained on the production but moved to Britain before it was released nationally, as he knew he would never be allowed to work in America.

Kramer claimed he had not stood up for Foreman partly because Foreman was threatening, dishonestly, to name Kramer as a Communist. Foreman said that Kramer was afraid of what would happen to him and his career if Kramer did not cooperate with the Committee. Kramer wanted Foreman to name names and not exercise his Fifth Amendment rights. Foreman was eventually blacklisted by the Hollywood studios. There had also been pressure against Foreman by, among others, Harry Cohn of Columbia Pictures (Kramer's brand new boss at the time), John Wayne of the MPA, and Hedda Hopper of the *Los Angeles Times*. Cast and crew members were also affected. Howland Chamberlin was blacklisted while Floyd Crosby and Lloyd Bridges were "graylisted".

Production locations

High Noon was filmed in the late summer/early fall of 1951 in several locations in California. Opening scenes

were shot at Iverson Movie Ranch. A rural road east of Oakdale, CA was the setting for the Hadleyville train depot. Columbia Ranch and Columbia State Historic Park were both used for the town of Hadleyville itself. St. Joseph's Church, in Tuolumne City, California, was used for exterior shots of the church where Kane solicits help from the townspeople. Sierra No. 3, the "movie star locomotive", brought villain Frank Miller into Hadleyville after his release from prison.

Reception

The film earned an estimated \$3.4 million at the North American box office in 1952.

Upon its release, the film was criticized by audiences, as it did not contain such expected Western archetypes as chases, violence, action, and picture-postcard scenery. Rather, it presented emotional and moralistic dialogue throughout most of the film. Only in the last few minutes are there action scenes. Some critics scoffed at the conclusion of the film in which Cooper's character has to be saved by Kelly. David Bishop argues that her pacifist character, killing a man who is about to shoot her husband was cold and abstract, saying that it "pulls pacifism toward apollonian decadence." Alfred Hitchcock described Kelly's performance as "rather mousy" and stated that it lacked animation, and said that it was only in the later films that she "really blossomed" and showed her true star quality.

In the Soviet Union the film was criticized as "a glorification of the individual." The American Left appreciated the film for what they believed was an allegory of people (Hollywood people, in particular) who were afraid to stand up to HUAC. However, the film eventually gained the respect of people with conservative/anti-communist views. Ronald Reagan, a conservative and fervent anti-Communist, said he appreciated the film because the main character had a strong dedication to duty, law, and the well-being of the town despite the refusal of the townspeople to help. Dwight Eisenhower loved the film and frequently screened it in the White House, as did many other American presidents. Bill Clinton cited *High Noon* as his favorite film and screened it a record 17 times at the White House.

Actor John Wayne disliked the film because he felt it was an allegory for blacklisting, which he actively supported. In his *Playboy* interview from May 1971, Wayne stated he considered *High Noon* "the most un-American thing I've ever seen in my whole life" and

went on to say he would never regret having helped blacklist liberal screenwriter Carl Foreman from Hollywood. Ironically, Gary Cooper himself had conservative political views and was a "friendly witness" before HUAC several years earlier, although he did not name names and later strongly opposed blacklisting. Wayne accepted Cooper's Academy Award for the role as Cooper was unable to attend the presentation.

In 1959, Wayne teamed up with director Howard Hawks to make *Rio Bravo* as a conservative response. Hawks explained: "I made *Rio Bravo* because I didn't like *High Noon*. Neither did Duke. I didn't think a good town marshal was going to run around town like a chicken with his head cut off asking everyone to help. And who saves him? His Quaker wife. That isn't my idea of a good Western."

Irritated by Hawks's criticisms, director Fred Zinnemann responded: "I admire Hawks very much. I only wish he'd leave my films alone!" Zinnemann later said in a 1973 interview: "I'm told that Howard Hawks has said on various occasions that he made *Rio Bravo* as a kind of answer to *High Noon*, because he didn't believe that a good sheriff would go running around town asking for other people's help to do his job. I'm rather surprised at this kind of thinking. Sheriffs are people and no two people are alike. The story of *High Noon* takes place in the Old West but it is really a story about a man's conflict of conscience. In this sense it is a cousin to *A Man for All Seasons*. In any event, respect for the Western Hero has not been diminished by *High Noon*."

Accolades

The movie won Academy Awards for:

- Best Actor in a Leading Role – Gary Cooper
- Best Film Editing – Elmo Williams and Harry W. Gerstad
- Best Music, Scoring of a Dramatic or Comedy Picture – Dimitri Tiomkin
- Best Music, Song – Dimitri Tiomkin and Ned Washington for "Do Not Forsake Me, Oh My Darlin'", sung by Tex Ritter.

The film was nominated for Best Director, Best Picture, and Best Writing, Screenplay. It lost Best Picture to Cecil B. DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth*.

Entertainment Weekly ranked Will Kane on their list of *The 20 All Time Coolest Heroes in Pop Culture*.

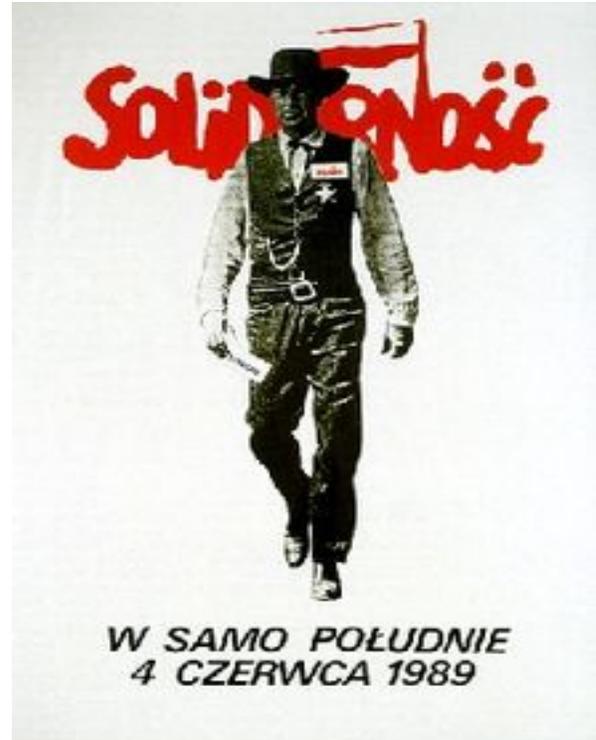
Mexican actress Katy Jurado won the Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role of Helen Ramírez, becoming the first Mexican actress to receive the award.

American Film Institute recognition

- 1998 AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies #33
- 2001 AFI's 100 Years...100 Thrills #20
- 2003 AFI's 100 Years...100 Heroes and Villains:
 - Will Kane, hero #5
- 2004 AFI's 100 Years...100 Songs:
 - "High Noon (Do Not Forsake Me, Oh My Darlin')" #25
- 2005 AFI's 100 Years of Film Scores #10
- 2006 AFI's 100 Years...100 Cheers #27
- 2007 AFI's 100 Years...100 Movies (10th Anniversary Edition) #27
- 2008 AFI's 10 Top 10 #2 Western film

Cultural influence

In 1989, 22-year-old Polish graphic designer Tomasz Sarnecki transformed Marian Stachurski's 1959 Polish variant of the *High Noon* poster into a Solidarity election poster for the first partially free elections in communist Poland. The poster, which was displayed all over Poland, shows Cooper armed with a folded ballot saying "Wybory" (i.e. elections) in his right hand while the Solidarity logo is pinned to his vest above the sheriff's badge. The message at the bottom of the poster reads: "W samo południe: 4 czerwca 1989," which translates to "High Noon: 4 June 1989."



"At High Noon, June 4, 1989". Polish political poster featuring Gary Cooper to encourage votes for the Solidarity party in the 1989 elections.

In 2004 former Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa wrote:

Under the headline "At High Noon" runs the red Solidarity banner and the date—June 4, 1989—of the poll. It was a simple but effective gimmick that, at the time, was misunderstood by the Communists. They, in fact, tried to ridicule the freedom movement in Poland as an invention of the "Wild" West, especially the U.S. But the poster had the opposite impact: Cowboys in Western clothes had become a powerful symbol for Poles. Cowboys fight for justice, fight against evil, and fight for freedom, both physical and spiritual. Solidarity trounced the Communists in that election, paving the way for a democratic government in Poland. It is always so touching when people bring this poster up to me to autograph it. They have cherished it for so many years and it has become the emblem of the battle that we all fought together.

According to an English professor at Yeshiva University, *High Noon* is the film most requested for viewing by U.S. presidents. It has been cited as the favorite film of Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and Bill Clinton.

The conflict of the role of the Western hero is ironically portrayed in the film *Die Hard*. The German-born antagonist, Hans Gruber (Alan Rickman) confuses John Wayne as the hero walking off into the sunset with Grace Kelly, only to be corrected by the protagonist, John McClane (Bruce Willis).

High Noon is the favourite film of DCI Gene Hunt of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*. Hunt makes periodic references to the film throughout the two series' five seasons.

High Noon is referenced several times on the award-winning HBO drama series *The Sopranos*. The main character Tony Soprano believes that Gary Cooper's character is the best archetype for what a man should be, mentally tough and stoic. He frequently laments, "Whatever happened to Gary Cooper?" and refers to his character in the film as the "strong, silent type". The famous ending of the film is actually shown on a television during an extended dream sequence in the fifth season episode, "The Test Dream".

Remakes and sequel

- In 1966, Four Star Television produced a *High Noon* television pilot. The 30-minute pilot was called "The Clock Strikes Noon Again" and was set 20 years after the original movie. Peter Fonda played Will Kane Jr., who goes to Hadleyville after Frank Miller's son kills his father (the Gary Cooper character). His mother (the Grace Kelly character) dies shortly after from grief. In Hadleyville, Will Kane Jr. meets Helen Ramirez, played by Katy Jurado (who had played the same character in the original movie). Helen returned to town and was now running a hotel/restaurant. The script was written by James Warner Bellah. No series came from this unsold TV pilot.
- A made-for-TV sequel, *High Noon, Part II: The Return of Will Kane* (produced in 1980, 28 years after the original movie was released), featured Lee Majors in the Cooper role. CBS ran this in a two-hour time slot on November 15, 1980.

- The 1981 science fiction film *Outland* borrowed from the story of *High Noon* for its plot. The movie starred Sean Connery.
- In 2000, *High Noon* was entirely reworked for the cable channel TBS with Tom Skerritt in the lead role. This remake is available on DVD.

Other appearances

- In 2002, *The Simpsons* 13th season finale "Poppa's Got a Brand New Badge" draws inspiration from both *High Noon* and *The Sopranos* when Homer, in charge of Springfield Security, has to face by himself the revenge of Fat Tony, whose operations Homer had disrupted.
- Gary Cooper has a cameo as his *High Noon* character Will Kane in the 1959 Bob Hope film *Alias Jesse James*. After shooting a bad guy, Will, wearing his *High Noon* tin star, said his only line in the film -- "Yup."