

The Truman Show

Story Structure

(OPENING) Truman lives a surreal life. The sun always shines and his neighbours are always happy. But when a piece of lighting falls from the sky, he thinks something isn't right.

(CATALYST) Truman's paranoia deepens when he bumps into his father who he thought was dead.

(NEW SITUATION) After a series of events Truman decides it's time to leave Sea Haven island and pursue his high school sweetheart Sylvia, who left to live in Fiji.

But his fear of water is keeping him on the island. The buses don't work and the planes are full.

(POINT OF NO RETURN) Frustrated, he kidnaps his wife Meryl in their car, forcing her to leave New Haven with him. But they are forced to return. Truman is reunited with his father and he seems resolved to live his humdrum life.

(MAJOR SETBACK) His life as the star of a 24 hour TV show. The producer, Christof, begins to relax once again, but Truman escapes from his cameras in the middle of the night. Christof tracks him down on the sea. He creates a storm strong enough to capsize Truman's boat and kill him.

(CLIMAX) But Truman doesn't care and he even addresses Christof in his cry, "Is that the best you can do?"

He reaches the end of the ocean and he finds the exit out of the studio.

(AFTERMATH) In light of the truth, Truman makes his final farewell and steps from the stage, we presume, into a new life with Sylvia.

Finding the theme: Fake Gods

There are two ideas that span this film, but I think one relates to the other. The theme of Fake gods is evident in several ways:

My favourite is Christof when he cuts himself down in size with the line, "I am the creator . . . of a television show" He has an illusion of greatness, his voice booming from the sky, but he is nothing without the show.

Christof has created a fake everything; the perfect blue sky, perfect smiles, perfect neighbourhood even perfect viewing figures!

The show's crew have an exercise bike in the studio, working out every night to attain the perfect figure. But it's not real.

Truman has worshipped his father all his life, but he was a fake father.

His best friend and wife and mother . . . all fake.

And with fakeness comes the inevitable prison. All the characters are prisoners. And they are all slaves to each other. We may see Truman as the slave, and he is, but not in the obvious way. He is not a slave to Christof. Christof is more a slave to Truman. Without Truman, Christof would have nothing. Christof is a slave to the show and TV network. He may think he's controlling things, but they are controlling him. Some of us are like this in our work.

Truman is a prisoner in his own comfort and security. It is a dull life, but fear is keeping him there, his fear of water. Like most of us, we go about our everyday lives afraid to step out of our comfort zones. But like most things, we cannot just skim over the problem (as Truman tries to do when he closes his eyes and drives over the bridge!) We have to face our problems head on. When Truman almost drowns, he is facing and overcoming his fear. (There are also a lot of Biblical allegories of the resurrection throughout the film)

It is a story about finding what is real and what the heart truly desires. Truman decides not to be a prisoner to his fears any longer. (Note that he doesn't wonder about aimlessly in search of something vague. He has something tangible as his goal. And that is Sylvia. She represents what is honest and true about his life.)

By Tracey Flynn - NewVision