

Man is born free but
everywhere he is in
chains essay sample



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Casablanca is a 1942 American romantic drama film directed by Michael Curtiz, starring Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman and Paul Henreid, and featuring Claude Rains, Conrad Veidt, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre and Dooley Wilson. Set during World War II, it focuses on a man torn between, in the words of one character, love and virtue. He must choose between his love for a woman and helping her and her Czech Resistance leader husband escape from the Vichy-controlled Moroccan city of Casablanca to continue his fight against the Nazis. Although it was an A-list film, with established stars and first-rate writers—Julius J. Epstein, Philip G. Epstein and Howard Koch received credit for the screenplay—no one involved with its production expected Casablanca to be anything out of the ordinary;^[1] it was just one of hundreds of pictures produced by Hollywood every year.

The film was a solid, if unspectacular, success in its initial run, rushed into release to take advantage of the publicity from the Allied invasion of North Africa a few weeks earlier.^[2] Despite a changing assortment of screenwriters frantically adapting an unstaged play and barely keeping ahead of production, and Bogart attempting his first romantic lead role, Casablanca won three Academy Awards, including Best Picture. Its characters, dialogue, and music have become iconic, and the film has grown in popularity to the point that it now consistently ranks near the top of lists of the greatest films of all time. Plot

Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart) is a cynical American expatriate living in Casablanca in early December 1941. His upscale nightclub and gambling den, “ Rick’s Café Américain”, attracts a mixed clientele: Vichy French, Italian, and Nazi officials; refugees desperately seeking to reach the United

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States, as yet uninvolved in the war; and those who prey on them. Although Rick professes to be neutral in all matters, it is later revealed he ran guns to Ethiopia to combat the 1935 Italian invasion and fought on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War. Petty crook Signor Ugarte (Peter Lorre) shows up and boasts to Rick of “ letters of transit” he obtained through the murder of two German couriers. The papers allow the bearer to travel freely around German-controlled Europe and to neutral Portugal. The letters are almost priceless to the continual stream of refugees who end up stranded in Casablanca. Ugarte plans to sell them to the highest bidder at the club later that night. Before the exchange can take place, however, Ugarte is arrested by the local police under the command of Vichy Captain Louis Renault (Claude Rains), a self-confessed corrupt official.

Ugarte dies in custody without revealing that he had entrusted the letters to Rick. At this point, the reason for Rick’s bitterness re-enters his life. His ex-lover, Norwegian Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman), walks into his establishment. Upon spotting Rick’s friend and house pianist, Sam (Dooley Wilson), Ilsa asks him to play “ As Time Goes By”. When Rick storms over, furious that Sam has disobeyed his order never to perform that song, he is shocked to see Ilsa. She is accompanied by her husband, Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid), a renowned fugitive Czech Resistance leader who has escaped from a Nazi concentration camp. They need the letters to leave for America, where he can continue his work. German Major Strasser (Conrad Veidt) arrives in Casablanca to see to it that Laszlo does not succeed. When Laszlo makes inquiries, Signor Ferrari (Sydney Greenstreet), a major underworld figure and Rick’s friendly business rival, divulges his suspicion that Rick has the letters.

In a private meeting, Rick refuses to sell at any price, telling Laszlo to ask his wife for the reason. They are interrupted when Strasser leads a group of officers in singing “ Die Wacht am Rhein”.

Laszlo orders the house band to play “ La Marseillaise”. When the band looks to Rick for guidance, he nods his head. Laszlo starts singing, alone at first, then patriotic fervor grips the crowd and everyone joins in, drowning out the Germans. In retaliation, Strasser has Renault close the club. That night, Ilsa confronts Rick in the deserted café. When he refuses to give her the letters, she threatens him with a gun, but then confesses that she still loves him. She explains that when they first met and fell in love in Paris, she believed that her husband had been killed attempting to escape from the concentration camp. Later, while preparing to flee with Rick from the imminent fall of the city to the German army, she learned that Laszlo was in fact alive and in hiding. She left Rick without explanation to tend to her ill husband. With the revelation, the lovers are reconciled.

Rick agrees to help, leading her to believe that she will stay behind with him when Laszlo leaves. When Laszlo unexpectedly shows up, having narrowly escaped a police raid on a Resistance meeting, Rick has waiter Carl (S. K. Sakall) spirit Ilsa away. Laszlo reveals he is aware of Rick’s love for Ilsa and tries to persuade him to use the letters to take her to safety. When the police arrest Laszlo on a minor, trumped-up charge, Rick convinces Renault to release him by promising to set him up for a much more serious crime:

possession of the letters of transit. To allay Renault’s suspicions, Rick

explains he and Ilsa will be leaving for America. When Renault tries to arrest

Laszlo as arranged, Rick forces him at gunpoint to assist in their escape. At <https://assignbuster.com/man-is-born-free-but-everywhere-he-is-in-chains-essay-sample/>

the last moment, Rick makes Ilsa board the plane to Lisbon with her husband, telling her she would regret it if she stayed, “ Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon and for the rest of your life.” Major Strasser, tipped off by Renault, drives up alone. Rick shoots Strasser when he tries to intervene. When his men arrive, Renault pauses, then tells them to “ round up the usual suspects.” Once they are alone, Renault suggests to Rick that they join the Free French at Brazzaville as they walk away into the fog.