

# Development essay example

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



## **Compare and contrast essay**

- The day the Earth Stood Still

Producer decided to produce a film that demonstrated the suspicion and fears that penetrated the early Atomic Age and the Cold war. He decided that Science fiction was suitable for metaphorically discussing these grave issues. He reviewed various novels and short stories to get a storyline that he could use. Darryl F. Zanuck gave a green light to this project. The producer hired the service of screenplay writer Edmund North. The ideas were picked from Farewell to the Master, a short story written Harry Bate. Edmund completed the revised version of the screenplay on the 21st of February, 1951 (Hendershot, 24).

### **Story line**

The film starts with the approaching of a flying saucer in Washington, D. C.. It flies past most of the important monuments of the capital and finally lands in the middle of a baseball diamond symbol of America. Armed soldiers immediately surround it as the sleek hull of the spacecraft opens. The ambassador of the United Nations interstellar version, Klaatu emerges from it. He is a handsome humanoid ambassador played by Michael Rennie. Klaatu states that he has come in peace. However, when he is about to take out a gift for the U. S President from his silver tunic, a nervous soldier shoots him because he thinks that he is reaching for a weapon. Gort, a large robot, comes and renders all weapons useless by use of a ray that emanates from its now- open head visor. Klaatu orders Gort to halt.

The bullet only wounded Klaatu and after being in Walter Reed hospital, he

asks that all the earth's leaders convene for him to deliver an important message to them. As expected, it was not possible for the leaders to agree on anything, including a place to meet the visitor. Most of The Earth leaders were, as they are now, political enemies of each other. Klaatu is frustrated and suggests mingling with ordinary people so that he can grasp their attitudes and suspicions about his purpose on Earth. Harley (Frank Conroy), the President's secretary turns down his suggestion and leaves him under heavy guard.

Klaatu escapes the hospital finds a room in a boarding house. He assumes the name Mr. Carpenter and becomes a friend of Helen Benson (Patricia Neal), a World War II widow. She has an elementary-aged son, Billy (Bobby Benson). Klaatu, through blending in these ordinary people, later finds out that common people have the potential that their political leaders fail to exhibit. The political leaders seem bogged down in ideological turmoil and self-centeredness (Hendershot, 30).

Klaatu babysits Bobby while Helen and Tom go on a day trip. Bobby takes Klaatu on a tour around the city. They visit his father's grave where Klaatu is saddened by the fact that the wars were the causes of the deaths of most people buried there. They visit Barnhardt's home. Barnhardt is a scientist professor who Bobby said was the greatest person living. Since the professor is absent, Klaatu leaves his contact information after adding a mathematical equation to a problem on the professor's blackboard.

The government agents take Klaatu to Barnhardt. He warns the Professor that occupants of other planets are worried that human developed atomic power is posing a threat to their safety. Klaatu states that planet Earth will

be wiped out if the humankind does not take his message seriously. The professor agrees to convene a meeting of scientists at Klaatu's spacecraft and ask him to demonstrate his power. When the humanoid asked the scientist if he has faith, the scientist respond by saying that curiosity is what makes good science. Bobby secretly follows Klaatu as he returns to his ship the following evening.

The boy tells her mother and Tom about what he has seen, but they do not believe him until Tom come across a diamond in Klaatu's room. A jeweler confirms that the diamond cannot be compared to anyone on Earth.

Klaatu visits Helen at her workplace, where, they head to an unoccupied elevator. The elevator stops at noon and traps them. Klaatu reveals his true identity and says that he is the one that caused the elevator to stop. He asks Helen to offer a helping hand. Klaatu has halted all electric power on the planet except in hospitals, aircraft in flight and other situations that would put human safety at risk.

The blackout takes about thirty minutes and thereafter, Klaatu is hunted everywhere. After Tom tells authorities of his suspicions, Helen breaks up with him. Helen and Klaatu go to Barnhardt's home, but He is killed by the military on the way. Helen goes to his space shift and tells Gort what has conspired. The all-mysterious police proceed to where Klaatu's body is and revives him.

**Given the short period left before he finally leaves the earth, Klaatu addresses scientists and deliver his message (Hendershot, 40).**

- Fail-Safe film

**Development:**

The film is a cold war piece set in the 1964 under the direction of Sidney Lumet. It is based on a novel of the same name that was written by Harvey Wheeler and Eugene Burdick in 1962. It displays a fictional nuclear crisis of a Cold War (Seed, 23).

**Storyline:**

It is in the early 1960s, where the Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union are at their height. Accidentally, a group of United States Vindicator bombers (Convair B-58 Hustler aircraft) launches a thermonuclear first-strike attack against Moscow, the capital city of the then Soviet Union.

In the middle of the ordinary tour for VIPs at the Strategic Air Command (SAC) headquarters at Offutt AFB, Nebraska, SAC radar indicates an unidentified flying object intruding the American airspace. An alert is consequently initiated. SAC has a standard procedure of keeping some groups of bombers flying constantly 24/7 to ensure immediate retaliation to any potential nuclear attack on the nation. Therefore, the initial alert triggers these groups who go ahead to specified aerial fail-safe points around the globe to wait for an actual “ go code” prior to approaching Russian targets. However, after arriving at those points, the flying object is found out to be an airliner that has gone off-course. The SAC, therefore, cancels the alert. Unfortunately, one group of bombers receives a ‘ go code’ due to a technical error. They respond by proceeding to launch an attack to their target. At the same time and coincidentally, a new Russian jamming device creates jamming signals between the bomber group and the SAC headquarters. As a

result, Colonel Jack Grady (Edward Binns) commands the group to attack Moscow (Seed, 25).

There is anxiety and tension as the United States President (Henry Fonda) and advisers try to recall the group or shoot it down. Communications are set off with the chairman of the Soviet Union. The two sides acknowledge their mistakes and the jamming is reversed. However, the crew turns down the counter-orders to abort the mission, given their training and protocols.

Before the accidental attack on Moscow comes to completion, the president realizes how severe the situation is. He tries to look for other solutions that will prevent reprisal from Russia and, more important, a nuclear holocaust.

He orders General Black (Dan O'Herlihy) towards New York to launch the same nuclear payload that hit Moscow hoping to appease the Soviet Union.

Otherwise, any counter-attack by the Russian would have destroyed not only New York but also many other American cities. Black commits suicide shortly after carrying out the orders and the film ends (Seed, 60).

(C) Differences between the two films

The Day the Earth Stood Still uses Science Fiction to portray and address political issues. Thus, it portrays an extraordinary character, Klaatu, to explore the political issues of the 1950s (Hendershot, 43).

On the other hand, the Fail-Safe film uses ordinary characters and what can happen if nations continue to fight each other (Seed, 30).

The Day the Earth Stood Still's political message can be taken in a contradictory perspective. It seems to agree that to solve violence of humankind, a greater violence need to be used. Furthermore, Klaatu describes what his own society will do to solve violence- destruction. Gort is

demonstrated as one of the members of a great police force that have the potential of bringing the planet to nothing to preserve the peace of the rest of the universe. The message has been viewed in mixed perceptions and interpreted in different ways. The most intriguing interpretation is that the message portrays the might-makes-right approach of the United States to the world's policy. At the same time, however, the message can be viewed as thought-provoking contradiction, which hints that the solution of violence lies in the threat of even greater violence (Hendershot, 46).

Fail-Safe, on the other hand seems to say that guiding against invasion from an enemy country, a nation needs to be ready to attack at any retaliation. Otherwise, the nations should not attack each other (Seed, 35).

The Day the Earth Stood Still brings out clearer picture about how humanity differs in mixed ways. Helen and her all-American inquisitive son represent the best of what humankind offer- they are decent and unassuming can. On the other hand, there are those people who are less admirable, as clearly brought out by Tom Stevens (Hugh Marlowe), Helen's scheming fiancé who works as an insurance salesman. If Tom finds out the true personality of Klaatu; he will alert the authority and enjoy the benefits. All politicians and military representatives also have a questionable character (Hendershot, 47).

(D) Similarities between the two films

The two films were both casted during the era when nuclear and atomic power is the greatest concern globally. They agree that the issue has raised many fears among people since any accidental or retaliatory nuclear attack could lead to the loss of many lives and result to extinction of the planet

earth.

The Day the Earth Stood Still is a piece of Cold-War era. Klaatu's message is a warning about nuclear weapons and how dangerous they are. The message was probably a deliberately unsubtle evocation of the most heated hot-button issue of the era.

The Fail-Safe also expresses great concern of the ultimate effect of nuclear holocaust if the Soviet Union retaliated. The US and the Soviet Union are at a heightened standoff. The political leaders were ready to do anything to avoid the greater effect (Seed, 36-37).

Their productions were fueled by what had occurred in the World War II, and both seek to minimize the possibility of another humankind world war.

The two pieces carry a political message. Thus, the political message portrayed in both films is that people the world over should stop the building and use of nuclear and atomic weapons.

The films agree that there is much political enmity among prominent leaders around the world. Differences among nations need to be solved amicably without resorting to use of heavy weapons to save humankind and other creatures of the earth and the universe at large. Nations should embrace peace and foster harmony in international relations.

Both films agree that political and prominent leaders, especially in the powerful nations, have a great role to play- that of preventing wars. Any of their decision can greatly affect the human kind. Klaatu commanded his bodyguard not to retaliate when he was shot. Otherwise, all the soldiers and maybe the whole world could have been wiped off there and then to repay the evils done to the messenger (Seed, 46).



In Fail-Safe, the leaders of the Soviet Union could have decided to wipe off most if not all of the US cities as retaliation to what the US had done.

However, the final resolution by the US president saved the day, although they had to sacrifice New York.

In both films, advancement in science and technology is seen to be crucial for any nation to wage a war against its neighbors and to resolve political matters. In *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, scientists is portrayed as the saviors of Earth as personified in the physicist Prof. Jacob Barnhardt (Sam Jaffe).

In the Fail-Safe film, technology is embraced to protect the country and save its people when diplomacy fails (Seed, 35).

## **Works Cited**

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Seed, David. *Under the Shadow: The Atomic Bomb and Cold War Narratives*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2013. Print.