

# Film review: on the waterfront by elia kazan

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Film Review: On the Waterfront by Elia Kazan The 1954 film On the Waterfront, directed by Elia Kazan, is one which has great significance and influence, not only in regards to film history, but to the world in general. The movies and genres of film are rooted in and influenced largely by that of the historical moment in which they emerge, and this film in particular is no difference. In order to be able to better understand this film, and as well to better understand the purpose of Elia Kazan in this film, we will be reviewing the actual film itself, and result in making researched and purposeful conclusions in the end of this. This is what will be dissertated in the following.

The basic plot of On the Waterfront is that it is the story of an ex-prize fighter who has turned into a longshoreman, and it goes on to tell the tale of how he is struggling to stand up to his corrupt union bosses. " Terry Malloy dreams about being a prize fighter, while tending his pigeons and running errands at the docks for Johnny Friendly, the corrupt boss of the dockers union. Terry witnesses a murder by two of Johnny's thugs, and later meets the dead man's sister and feels responsible for his death" (Tinto, 2007). There are many other issues that are included in this film as well, and overall it can be categorized as being in several different film genres, namely that of crime, drama and romance. The film takes place in New York City, and there is a lot of violence throughout the film, although this violence is necessarily in regards to the film's overall plot.

The fact that this film came out in the 1950s has a great deal to do with the way that it was made, the characters that were used, and the way that the film drew out, and one of the most ingenious parts of all about this film is the

fact that although it was created over a half a century ago, it is still compared to movies of today of the same genre, and not only that but it is considered as being just as good or even better than most of those of the present day. Kazan does an extraordinary job of directing this film, as he is able to retain freshness throughout the movie and as well he was able to openly discuss and explore the difficulties and corruptions that are present when put in this type of situation, and he displays the somewhat troublesome issue of political corruption incredibly overtly throughout the entire film. *On the Waterfront* was photographed in black and white, and was semi-documentary, and this worked well as it "suited its realistic subject matter and commonplace characters" (Levy, 2007).

From this review, we can conclude several different things, namely that this film is without a doubt one of the best of all Kazan's works, and not only that, but as well, one of the most advantageous points about this film is that it was really one of the first films ever that was able to openly discuss issues that were at that point considered as being somewhat of a faux pas in regards to overt discussion. Kazan is an incredible director, and he more than proves the fantastic skill that he has in this film, *On the Waterfront*.

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