

Paint your wagon



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Paint Your Wagon (1969) is a musical movie adaptation of the stage play musical of the same title by Lerner and Lowe. The movie is set in California during the gold-rush era and stars Lee Marvin as Ben Rumson, Clint Eastwood as “Pardner” (Julio in the stage play) and Jean Seaberg as Elizabeth. The movie details how a small tent-city (No-Name-City) becomes suddenly populated when Ben (Marvin) discovers gold in the soil. The story is complicated by the arrival of other characters such as the Mormon with two wives – one of which he auctions off (Elizabeth) to Ben.

A love triangle forms when Ben leaves to kidnap seven “French tarts” from a neighboring town and leaves Elizabeth in the care of Pardner. The two eventually fall in love and comes up with a strange arrangement of sorts through Elizabeth’s convincing argument that if a man can have two wives, surely a woman can have two husbands. Everything bodes well until the gold starts to dwindle and in desperation, Ben and the other miners decide to mine under the buildings believing that gold is dropping through the floorboards.

This eventually leads to the destruction of the town, the abandonment of the settler’s and Ben’s renewed search for prospective land. The movie offers a (musical and colorful) window into the phenomenon known as the North-American western frontier that occurred as a result of North-America’s newly attained independence and the formation of the United States. The movie, through its comical portrayal of the gold-rush, demonstrated the Laissez-faire or free trade trend of modern American economics.

This is demonstrated by the free and unregulated movement of settlers of the town of No-Name-City who are all looking for gold. The economy during

this time was one of risk taking and speculation, which accounts for the migrant behavior of settlers and prospectors, risking resources traveling through the great plains of America in search of fortune and lands to reclaim (Effects of the American Frontier). Another aspect of the frontier era that the movie offers a window to is in the area of Politics and social tolerance.

The movie offers a glimpse on Frontier politics through the portrayal of how the settlers of No-Name-City keep order. The movie demonstrates how the political system can be individualized, with people and leaders dealing with situations as they are encountered and making the best of the situation (Effects of the American Frontier). Social tolerance in the movie is demonstrated in the way that cultures and races can freely mix in the settlements formed in the movie (e. g. the mixing of Mormons, Americans, French etc.).

This is highly representative how the frontier era was highly racially and culturally tolerant. Lastly the movie also offers a glimpse into the stature of women during the frontier era. This is demonstrated through the character of Elizabeth. Though in the beginning of the movie her character was marginalized, even reduced to mere property (through the auctioning) she establishes that women are somewhat equal in status with men when she manages to convince the two male protagonists that she too can also avail of “ privileges” reserved for men in the way that she too can have two husbands.

This is reflective of how, during the frontier era women were treated as practically equals since in the wild west, with nature offering constant challenges to the settling population, women were expected to perform roles

similar to those of men (Effects of the American Frontier). Work Cited “
Effects of the American Frontier.” Cyberessays. com. 11 December 2008