

Theater art



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A SERIOUS MAN This is a well-made and thought provoking film by the Coen brothers. The frame I have chosen occurs at 29: 14 of the film. Larry, the protagonist of the film, is climbing onto the roof of his suburban home to fix the TV antenna. He has put a ladder against the house and is now walking to the apex of the roof where he will survey the suburban streets and people around him. This frame is important for a number of reasons, which will be explained in the course of this brief analysis. The frame shows Larry climbing his roof. The lines are very important to the overall success of the image as they lead directly to Larry, but also continue on into the sky. This is a film that is very much about faith, in particular Larry's faith. He is beset by a series of very difficult and painful personal problems. His wife has left him, his children have problems, at work there are a number of issues. Everything he does goes wrong. He is very much like the character of Job from the Old Testament. He seems to be being made to suffer for the amusement of some supernatural force. Climbing to the roof of his home (albeit for another purpose), he is getting closer to heaven and the gods which control his fate. He is also taking the opportunity to survey his situation and his place in the world from on high. The camera angle is below Larry in this shot. His back is to the camera and he looks awkward and ungainly; indeed, his shirt is tucked in and he is wearing nice shoes, not the kind of outfit one wears to climb on the roof. The sky is a bright, clear blue, but much else in the shot is sterile. The only other object, besides the shingles on the roof, is the antenna, to Larry's left. Larry is in the centre of the frame and all the lines of the roof lead up to him. He is clearly the heart and soul of this picture. Climbing onto the roof is an important chance for Larry to survey his life. After this frame he looks out on the streets and his neighbours. Again, everything appears

wholesome and sterile in his neighbourhood. Everything is perfectly clean and rectangular. And then he spots a naked woman sunbathing next door. He stares at her for a long time, an unreachable object of desire. The roof offers the perfect spot for Larry to take stock of things. He is close to a blank and incomprehensible sky, in which he has put some of his faith. There is a little quiet music playing in the background. The sound is not intended to distract from the images. This static shot is in contrast to the hand-held shots that come right afterwards which are meant to indicate Larry's point of view. Overall, this frame shows Larry's loneliness and essential goodness. It shows him striving to do good and understand his life. Source A Serious Man. Directed by Joel and Ethan Coen. 2009.