

# [Of peter weirs film witness](https://assignbuster.com/of-peter-weirs-film-witness/)

Witness The main character of Peter Weir's 1984 film Witness, John Book, is a Philadelphia police detective. His identity is enmeshed within the tightly structured bureaucratic culture of the police force. The stability of his world is shattered when he discovers that his trusted superiors are corrupt and have committed murder to cover up their corruption and intend also to murder him and a little boy, an Amish child named Samuel Lapp, who himself had witnessed a murder.
Book must flee with Lapp and his mother Rachel back into the Amish community where they can find safety because the Amish rejection of modernity makes them anonymous to most of the bureaucratic means of social control the police might ordinarily use to find a fugitive (voter rolls, phone listings, etc.). The tension of the film involves Book's integration into the Amish community as a substitute for the social structure of the police force from which he was expelled.
The Amish subculture stands in almost complete isolation from the American cultural system. It fact, it forms a counterculture based on it own values and institutions. It seems to be an interesting case-study in the social construction of technology, since the integrative forces of Amish society have for the most part rejected the technological advances that are embraced as the foundation of modern Western culture. Instead, the Amish rely on tradition as the governing factor of their society and enforce adherence to tradition by various means of social control such as shunning, exclusion from the community. While modernity and industrialization have tended to fragment society, Amish society is collectivist, both in its readiness to help Book and especially as symbolized in the community effort of the barn raising. In the climax of the film, the collectivist structure of Amish culture overwhelms the isolated recourse to violence by the corrupt police chief.