

Bonnie & Clyde Film Critique

The 1967 film *Bonnie & Clyde*, based on the real-life Depression Era robbery team, is considered a milestone in American film history. It broke down barriers in depicting violence & sexuality and paved the way for a new, more liberal film ratings system. The film's final scene is considered one of the bloodiest in cinema history. It also inspired other filmmakers to be more open about sex & violence in their films.

1. Match the 1930s slang to its meaning:

___ Getting the "low down"	A. Policeman
___ Make tracks	B. Leave quickly
___ All wet	C. Prison
___ Big house	D. Get excited
___ Copper	E. Being told all the information
___ Blow your wig	G. Not very good

2. During the height of the Great Depression, gangsters emerged as unlikely heroes. While millions of Americans suffered economic poverty, gangsters were glorified for their crimes.
- Where is there evidence in the film of actions that would be celebrated by Americans?
 - Why do you think Bonnie & Clyde specifically were celebrated by many as heroes?
3. This was filmed in the era of the Hays Code. Under the Code, law enforcement was supposed to be shown in a positive light, while criminals were never supposed to win. Scenes of gore (blood/guts/violence) were off limits, as were any scenes of passion or sex. *Scarface* was one of the many films made under the Code that found ways around some of these restrictions.
- Choose one of the topics (relationships/sex, police, crime) and explain how the film manages to push the boundaries of the Code.
4. Bonnie wrote poems while she was on the run from the law. She even submitted a few of them to local newspapers for publication. While she was imprisoned in 1932 after a failed hardware store burglary, she wrote a collection of 10 odes that she entitled "Poetry from Life's Other Side," which included "The Story of Suicide Sal," a poem about an innocent country girl lured by her boyfriend into a life a crime. The poem tells the story of a pair of doomed lovers, Sal and Jack, who are desperadoes driven to criminality by circumstances outside of their control. It's assumed that Sal is Bonnie while Jack is Clyde.

In this poem, Sal says:

"I left my old home for the city
To play in its mad dizzy whirl,
Not knowing how little of pity
It holds for a country girl.

...

One year we were desperately happy
Our "ill gotten gains" we spent free,
I was taught the ways of the "underworld"
Jack was just like a "god" to me."

– "The Story of Suicide Sal," 1932

- a. In what ways might Bonnie be describing the living situation she experienced on her own and her situation with Clyde?

5. Thoughts on the film:

- a. **Give the movie a star rating.** Now that you've done some active viewing and thinking about the movie, how many stars would you give it (on a 5-star scale)? **Explain your answer** in 2-3 sentences. (Your response could explain whether you thought the movie was good, what was memorable about it, etc.)

