

Le Havre



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DIRECTED BY: Aki Kaurismäki

CERTIFICATE: PG

RUNNING TIME: 93 mins

COUNTRY: France

LANGUAGE: French (with subtitles in English)

RELEASE DATE: 21st December 2011 (France), 25th May 2012 (UK)

KEYWORDS: drama, immigration, France, refugees

SUITABLE FOR: GCSE / A Levels, French, media / film studies

SYNOPSIS

Marcel Marx, a former author and a well-known Bohemian, has retreated into a voluntary exile in the port city of Le Havre, where he feels he has reached a closer rapport with the people, serving them in the occupation of the honourable, but not too profitable, shoe-shiner. He has buried his dreams of a literary breakthrough and lives happily within the triangle of his favourite bar, his work, and his wife Arletty, when fate suddenly throws in his path an underage immigrant refugee from darkest Africa.

As Arletty at the same time gets seriously ill and is bedridden, Marcel once more has to rise against the cold wall of human indifference, his only weapon innate optimism and the unwavering solidarity of the people of his quartier. Against him stands the whole blind machinery of the Western constitutionally governed state, this time represented by the dragnet of the police, moment by moment drawing closer around the refugee boy.

BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM

THE FILM POSTERS

The posters below have been produced to advertise the film and the DVD in France and abroad. You will notice that they are quite similar.

- Carefully compare all four posters and note down the similarities and differences
- Mention the characters you see
- Look at their postures, positions, colours and body language. What do you learn about them?
- What do you believe the relationships and interactions are between the characters?
- Look at the backgrounds and the title. What can you assume about the locations and the places of the film?



TRAILER

Watch the trailer on www.imdb.com/title/tt1508675/

- Review your answers from the previous exercise and amend them if you wish.
- What genre do you think *Le Havre* belongs to? How can you tell?
- What audiences do you think the film will appeal to?

LOCATION

The film is mainly set in *Le Havre*. It is a well-known harbour town on the northern coast of France; there are also regular references to Normandy and Brittany in the film.

- Conduct online research to find more about this city and:
 - the origin of its name
 - its geographical location
 - its population (both French and foreign-born)
 - its port
 - its history
 - any other facts that you think might be relevant to the story
- Research the Sangatte refugee camp and 'la jungle' near Calais online.
- Having studied the film posters and watched the trailer, now explain the importance of the place in the story.

GENRE

There is not a specific genre to categorise *Le Havre*: it seems that the director has left it up to the audiences to decide what this film is about.

- Think about the story, the characters and the *mise en scène*. Suggest two moments from the film that would fit each genre, and justify your suggestions.

	Drama	Comedy
1.		
2.		
	Political Statement	Fairytale
1.		
2.		

ANACHRONISM

Due to the aesthetics chosen by Kaurismäki, it is impossible to be sure of the year or decade the film is set in. *Le Havre* is a modern city but the characters belong to a universe of the past. The film seems to sit between two different times. The director has purposefully used modern and vintage accessories to blur the lines between both worlds. Marcel's job is redundant these days and the name of his local bar 'La moderne' is a humorous wink from the director to the viewers.

- Fill in the table below, describing the objects and deciding which era they belong to. Explain the effects achieved.

Objects	60s/70s	present time	effects
Marcel's job			
hair styles			
clothes			
vehicles			
police cars			
hospital			
houses			
furniture			
phones			
musical accessories			
music			
local bar			
name of local bar			
police officers			
TV report			

- What impressions are created by this technique?
- How does the way the film is shot support this? Explain why you think this directorial choice was taken, and how effective you found it to be.
- Discuss this quote by Kaurismäki: "Fortunately yesterday is still here." As a group, what meanings can you find for this statement?

CHARACTERISATION

THE CHARACTERS

Most characters in *Le Havre* are not people you would normally expect to meet in your daily life.

- Concentrate on the characters in the bar. In what ways do they differ from everyday people?
- Do you feel they are stereotypes? How is this shown? What is the purpose of this choice?
- List down the first names of as many characters as you can. What is odd about their names? You may wish to ask your French teacher or a native speaker to go through the list with you to help you out.

The characters in the film are all too human, including the good ones, the indifferent ones and the bad ones. It could be argued that their actions refer to the troubled era of the Vichy regime in the early 1940s.

- Match a character to the following actions and explain your answers:
 - clandestine activity
 - resistance to police
 - police search
 - police informant
 - collaboration

MARCEL

Despite his low-paid job, we know that Marcel is educated and that he was a bohemian artist in Paris before he ended up in *Le Havre*. Now he is a shoe-shiner and, proud of his job, stating that “it’s not the best job in the world but you are close to people”.

- Conduct online research and explain what a bohemian is.
- Illustrate the following of Marcel’s personality traits with an extract from the film:
- Explain how his family name fits with his characteristics.

generous	selfless	humanistic	altruistic

Marcel is a kind-hearted man who will go to great lengths to save a young illegal immigrant. He also likes the smaller things in life that make it worth living. Some viewers will see him as reminiscent of a male version of Amélie Poulain.

- Watch *Amélie* and read the study guide on www.filmeducation.org/resources/film_library/getfilm.php?film=1034
- Do you agree with this comparison?
- How does Marcel's character mirror Amélie's one?
- What other similarities can you identify between both films?

MONET

Inspector Monet is possibly the most stereotyped and ambiguous character in the whole film. Watch again the scene in which he is introduced to us.

- How is this done?
- Do you agree this French proverb applies to him: "l'habit ne fait pas le moine"?
- What do we learn about him?

LITTLE BOB

In another twist to blur the limits between the genres, Kaurismäki has chosen a real-life person to play the singer. He is a secondary character in the plot but his presence resolves Idrissa's problem.

- Find out more about Little Bob (aka Roberto Piazza) online.
- How is Little Bob central to the resolution of the problem?
- Explain the director's choice of the actor to play this part.

ACTIVITES EN FRANCAIS

LIRE ET ECOUTER

Complétez les blancs de la bande annonce avec le vocabulaire proposé et écoutez pour vérifier sur www.imdb.com/title/tt1508675/

- Basta!
- Pauvre diable.
- Heureusement il _____ payé.

- Je suis rentré.
- Je vois ça.

- Tu _____ mérites pas une femme comme elle, tu ne la vaux pas.
- Personne ne la vaut alors pourquoi pas moi?

- Je vais chercher une ambulance.
- Il n'y a donc pas d'espoir?
- Il y a souvent _____ miracles.
- Pas dans mon quartier.

- Qu'est-ce qui se passe les gars?
- Il y a encore des morts vivants.

- On est _____ Londres?
- C'est là où tu veux aller? C'est de l'autre côté. Ici c'est Le Havre en Normandie.

- Ne sors _____ , n'ouvre à personne.
- Oui Monsieur.
- Ne m'appelle pas Monsieur.
- Oui mon Général.

- Nous _____ un petit garçon noir.
- J'ai vu personne.

- Le garçon que _____ recherchez est à _____ gare.

- J'ai besoin de noms. Qui _____ tes parents ? D'où tu viens?

- Son frère? Mais vous êtes là pour vous moquer de moi?
- Je _____ l'albinos de la famille.

- _____ as pleuré?
- Non.
- Bien ça n'aide en rien.

suis	cherchons	ne	sont
vous	des	tu	pas
là	la	à	a

PARLER

Choisissez un thème dans la liste et faites une présentation d'une minute. Utilisez internet pour faire quelques recherches.

- la ville de Le Havre
- la ville de Calais
- la région Normandie
- la région Bretagne
- la vie de bohémien
- le camp de Sangatte

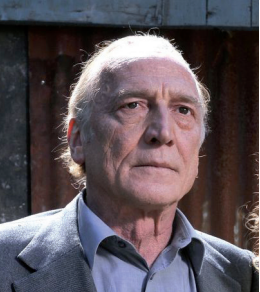
LIRE

Lisez le résumé et mettez les phrases dans le bon ordre. Les phrases 1 et 9 sont dans l'ordre correct. Puis comparez votre version avec le texte original sur www.enprimeur.ca/movies/french/le-havre/28339

1	Des ouvriers au port du Havre découvrent un conteneur rempli d'immigrants illégaux
	maison en l'absence de son épouse dévouée Arletty, hospitalisée pour une maladie
	Monet à la porte de Marcel, ce dernier obtient le secours des commerçants de sa rue.
	sur les lieux. Dans sa course, l'enfant croise la route de Marcel Marx, un ancien
	dont il ignore la gravité. Alors que la recherche du garçon conduit le commissaire
	bien que le vieil homme un peu porté sur l'alcool accepte de cacher Idrissa dans sa
	écrivain devenu cireur de chaussures. Un lien de confiance s'établit entre les deux, si
	venus d'Afrique. Parmi eux: le petit Idrissa, qui file à la barbe des autorités dépêchées
9	Bientôt, il forme le projet d'aider l'enfant à gagner l'Angleterre, où l'attend sa mère.

ECRIRE

Faites la description du physique et de la personnalité d'un des personnages dessous :



Marcel



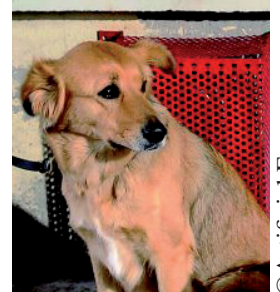
Arletty



Monet



Idrissa



Laika

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INTERESTING LINKS

English

<http://janusfilms.com/lehavre/>

www.festival-cannes.com/assets/Image/Direct/041879.pdf

www.the-match-factory.com/films/items/le-havre.html

www.imdb.com/title/tt1508675/

www.artificial-eye.com/film.php?dvd=ART605DVD&dir=aki_kaurismqADqki&plugs&qt=true&wm=false

French

www.festival-cannes.com/assets/Image/Direct/041959.pdf

www.telerama.fr/cinema/films/le-havre,428105,critique.php

www.commeaucinema.com/notes-de-prod/le-havre,183125-note-87648

www.allocine.fr/film/fichefilm-173542/secrets-tournage/

[www.premiere.fr/film/Le-Havre-2420052/\(affichage\)/press](http://www.premiere.fr/film/Le-Havre-2420052/(affichage)/press)

www.rfi.fr/france/20111220-le-havre-aki-kaurismaki-meilleur-film-francais-annee-Jean-Pierre-Darroussin-Andre-Wilms-Marx-Arletty-Damia

www.vodkaster.com/actu-cine/Le-Havre-film-anachronique-moderne-aki-kaurismaki-1735

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