

CASABLANCA

1. Why would American audiences be drawn to the setting in Casablanca, Morocco? How much of Casablanca do we actually see?
2. How is the film's "atmosphere" created? (Atmosphere = sets, lighting, music, costumes, accents, character types)
3. In some ways this film can be considered another example of the "stranger comes to town" plot pattern. Here, however, the stranger is a woman (or, one might argue, a couple), who comes "out of the past" (a sub-pattern) to haunt the hero and disrupt the status quo. Discuss the plot in these terms.
4. Like most studio films, particularly those set on foreign shores, *Casablanca* relies a great deal on national/ethnic stereotypes for its characters. Discuss some of these stereotypes.
5. As happens in any story involving a love triangle, we are meant to compare and contrast the two men vying for the heroine (the same thing happens no matter what the gender configurations). What does the comparison/contrast of Rick and Viktor tell us, about Ilsa and about them?
6. In many ways Rick Blaine is a classic Warner Brothers tough guy, particularly at the beginning of the film, a guy who reveals his real self to nobody and sticks his neck out for nobody. This changes. How does Bogart allow us to see the emotions inside his character? Try to be as specific as possible.

7. *Casablanca* is in many ways a study in American heroism, and one could argue that Bogart serves as a model for what a man should be in our society. Discuss this.

8. Now do the same for Ilsa as a model for how a woman should be.

9. One of the film's most memorable aspects is the relationship between Rick and Renault. What does Renault bring to the film?

10. Like many films of Hollywood's golden years (not to mention today!), *Casablanca* has its share of elements that are frankly hard to believe--we are required to suspend our critical faculties temporarily in order to believe in the story. What would be some examples of this?

11. Most Hollywood love stories included a number of close-ups of the heroine (and perhaps of the hero) in soft focus and lovely lighting that audiences love. When do such shots occur in this film, and why?

12. Why is this film such a classic? Why are audiences drawn to it again and again?

13. In what ways does it capture central myths about America, about ourselves as we like to see ourselves and our place in the world? How do you feel about those myths?