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Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: **Kate the Great** *Revolutionary Road*

"Hopeless emptiness. Now you've said it. Plenty of people are onto the emptiness, but it takes real guts to see the hopelessness." - John Givings



Director:

Sam Mendes

Producers:

Bobby Cohen
Sam Mendes
Scott Rudin

Writer:

Justin Haythe
Richard Yates (novel)

Starring:

Leonardo DiCaprio
Kate Winslet
Kathy Bates
Michael Shannon

Music

Thomas Newman

Cinematography

Roger Deakins

Editing

Tariq Anwar

Distributors:

BBC Films
Paramount Vantage

Release date:

December 26, 2008

Running time:

119 minutes

Budget

\$35,000,000

Box Office gross

\$74,681,396

Revolutionary Road depicts the attempts of April and Frank Wheeler to break away from a stultifying life of conformity and compromise in 1950s suburbia. As they grapple with a creeping realization of the "hopeless emptiness" of the American Dream, they gamble on escaping to a new life in Paris. However, pursuing this romantic goal eventually exposes the fraught reality of their relationship, and how deeply they are trapped inside a world to which they had always thought themselves superior.

By reuniting the star-crossed lovers of *Titanic*, and then trapping them in a land of manicured lawns, flannel suits, cigarettes, martinis and quarrels, the film adds further irony to the bleak, incisive tone of Richard Yates' novel. Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio both aptly convey a couple whose interior thoughts do not match up with their actions and speech, and who remain essentially and unavoidably alone despite their best attempts to play at togetherness and fulfillment.

As their lofty plans are aborted and thwarted by self-delusion and compromise, the film is devastating in how it coolly skewers its character's pretensions. As much as the Wheelers try to blame the institutions and conventions that they feel are binding them in, at heart they know that they are responsible for failing to be true to each other and their selves, and that's why it hurts so much, both for them and the viewer.

Did you know?

- After Yates' novel was published in 1961, potential adaptations were proposed by John Frankenheimer (*The Manchurian Candidate*), Albert Ruddy (*The Godfather*) and even Yates himself. However, none ever got off the ground, and at the time of Yates' death his novel had only sold 12,000 copies.
- Kate Winslet became only the second actress ever to win a Golden Globe for her performance without also being nominated for an Oscar, as her nomination (and eventual win) for *The Reader* made this performance ineligible.
- Winslet was integral in encouraging her husband Sam Mendes and former *Titanic* co-star Leonardo DiCaprio to work on the film. Kathy Bates also starred in *Titanic* with the couple.



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"No one forgets the truth, Frank. They just better at lying." - April Wheeler

Things to Explore

- What is the significance of the title "Revolutionary Road" in the context of the film's investigation of America's values in the 1950s?
- What is the appeal of Paris for Frank and April Wheeler? Which of them will benefit most from moving there? Which has the most to lose?
- How realistic is the Wheelers' plan to move to Paris? How genuine is their relationship in the first place?
- How do April and Frank's perspectives of themselves differ from the reality of their actions?
- How does Frank's relationship with his father affect his actions at work and at home?
- Richard Yates said of Frank and April: "There's a great deal of dialogue between them, both when they're affectionate and when they're fighting, but there's almost no communication." How is this conveyed in the film?
- Why does John Givings have such an impact on April and Frank?
- Why don't April and Frank's children feature more prominently in the film?
- Why does April do what she does at the end of the film?

Themes

- Conformity
- Suburbia
- The American Dream
- Hope and Fulfillment
- Anxiety
- Marriage
- Responsibility
- Self-esteem
- Gender roles



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"Look at us. We're just like everyone else. We've bought into the same, ridiculous delusion." - April Wheeler

Library Resources

1) *Revolutionary Road*, Richard Yates. Yates' novel of suburban disillusionment has been heralded as an influential classic ever since publication. In 2005, *Time* magazine selected it as one of the 100 best English-language novels published since 1923.

Copy	Material	Location
PBK FICTION YATES,R.	Book	Paperback

2) *Eleven kinds of loneliness : short stories*, Richard Yates. A 1962 collection of stories by Yates that centre on his recurring themes of isolation and disillusion.

Copy	Material	Location
FICTION YATES, R	Book Fiction	

3) *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan. Kate Winslet read this inflammatory and influential 1963 study into the lack of fulfillment in the lives of American women as preparation for the role of April Wheeler.

Copy	Material	Location
305.42 FRI	Book	Nonfiction

4) *American Beauty [videorecording (DVD)]*

Revolutionary Road director Sam Mendes' first film is also an exposé of suburban stultification, but with a more sharp and sour satirical tone. A multiple Academy Award winner, it provides an interesting contemporary comparison.

Copy	Material	Location
DVD REV	DVD, Fiction	Audiovisual - Movies

5) *Revolutionary Road [videorecording (DVD)]*

The DVD contains a commentary by director Sam Mendes and writer Justin Haythe, an extra feature on the film's production, deleted scenes, and a documentary on the life on novelist Richard Yates.

Copy	Material	Location
DVD REV	DVD, Fiction	Audiovisual



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"I want to feel things, really feel them." - Frank Wheeler
"I think you're the most interesting person I've ever met." - April Wheeler

Online Resources

<http://www.revolutionaryroadmovie.com>

The official website for the film is a lush and slick experience, filled with clips, photos and sound excerpts from the film, and offers detailed biographies of the key cast and crew, as well as an affectionate tribute to Richard Yates.

<http://katewinsletfan.com/>

Probably the best - certainly the most devoted and regularly updated - Kate Winslet fansite. A comprehensive source for photos, interviews, video and audio clips, and even artwork by adoring fans.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0959337/>

The film's page at the Internet Movie Database, where it currently has a rating of 7.7 out of 10 from over 29,000 users.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11913039>

A valuable episode of NPR's *All Things Considered* discussing the novel, with analysis by Anthony Giardina and key excerpts from the novel.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oK57_DwWEjg

Video of *Entertainment Tonight* interviews with Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio, including discussion of their reunion as actors after *Titanic*.

<http://www.discoverkate.com/>

Another Winslet fansite, with many resources relating to press and TV interviews she gave in promotion of *Revolutionary Road*.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/09/books/essay-american-beauty-circa-1955.html>

A 2000 *New York Times* essay charting the rising influence of Yates' novel through the decades, and with some ambitious tackling of the novel's themes.

http://www.indiewire.com/article/plumbing_the_depths_of_revolutionary_road_sam_mendes_on_yates_kate_and_the/

An in-depth interview with director Sam Mendes on the pressures of adapting Yates' classic novel, from December 2008.

<http://www.tnr.com/booksarts/story.html?id=3f86ee5f-7896-4a52-af9b-e86b2387f3e4>

A perceptive essay on Yates' novel's roots in 1950s social structures and Victorian literary models from *The New Republic*