

Sunset Boulevard Study Guide

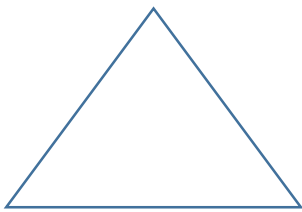
1. Who is the narrator? What does he inform the audience about what has happened?
2. The narrator says that he will present the facts. Do you trust him as a narrator or not? Why?

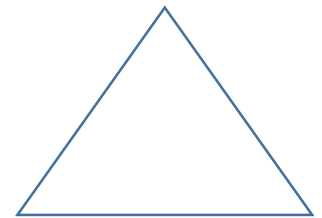
3. Director Billy Wilder went to great lengths to obtain the pool shot of Joe's body. He used a camera above water on the side of a pool filming a mirror at the bottom of the image to capture the image of the body. Because he went to such great lengths to obtain the film, what do you think it means?



4. What does Norma mean when she says, "I am big. It's the pictures that got smaller."?
5. How does Norma feel about Hollywood, sound in the cinema, and the "return" of her career?
6. What is Norma planning for her return? How does Joe plan to take advantage of this opportunity?
7. How does Norma exert her control and power over Joe? List a few of the methods she employs.
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8. Note the "Wax Works," the waked up actors at the bridge game. One is Buster Keaton from *The General*. Like Norma, what has happened to all of them?
9. What information does Max privately share with Joe about Norma and the fan mail she receives?
10. What does Joe learn about Norma?

11. Why does Joe leave Norma on New Year's Eve? Why does he return to her? Why does he stay?
12. When Norma returns to Paramount, she is treated as the royalty that she believes she deserves. When you watch this scene, do you relish the moment with Norma or do you laugh at her?
13. Why is Joe drawn towards Betty? Why does he like her?
14. What does Joe learn about Max? How long has Max known Norma? Why does he feel the need to protect her?
15. What two love triangles develop? Explain the complicated nature of each triangle.





16. Why does Joe close the possibility of a relationship with Betty in the way that he does?
17. If you had to pinpoint the specific moment when Norma loses her grip on reality, when would it be? Explain why.
18. What is the reason that Joe is murdered?
19. In the final scene when Norma descends the staircase, she finally gets to shoot what she thinks is a scene for her movie. The audience is directly referred to as "the people in the dark" as Norma makes eye contact with and approaches the camera. Are we, the audience, partly to blame for what happens to Norma? Why or why not?
20. Gloria Swanson was perfect for the role of Norma Desmond because she was a "has been" silent film star who had dropped out of the film. How does this level of authenticity enhance the film?