

TSSM™

Creating VCE Success

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES
All About Eve

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SAMPLE

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AUTHOR NOTES

Joseph Mankiewicz was born in Pennsylvania to Jewish migrants from Germany. At the age of four, he moved with his family to New York City where he graduated in 1924 from Stuyvesant High School. In 1928, he obtained a bachelor's degree from Columbia University. For a time, he worked in Berlin as a foreign correspondent for the Chicago Tribune newspaper before entering the motion picture business.

Able to work in a variety of genres and able to elicit career performances from actors, Joseph L. Mankiewicz combined ironic, sophisticated scripts with a precise, sometimes stylised, *mise-en-scène*. Mankiewicz worked for seventeen years as a screenwriter for Paramount, and as a producer for MGM, and then obtained an opportunity to direct at 20th Century-Fox. Over six years, he made eleven films, winning consecutive Academy Awards for both Screenplay and Direction for *A Letter to Three Wives* and *All About Eve* in 1950 and 1951.

Mankiewicz wrote forty-eight screenplays including, *All About Eve*, for which he won an Academy Award. He also produced more than twenty films, including *The Philadelphia Story*, which was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1941. However, he is best known for the films he directed, twice winning the Academy Award for Best Director. In 1944, he produced *The Keys of the Kingdom*.

In 1951 Mankiewicz went to New York, intending to write for the stages of Broadway. Although this dream never materialised, he continued to make films, for his own production company and as a director-for-hire, that explored his favourite themes: the clash of aristocrat with commoner, life as performance, and the clash between people's urges to control fate and the realities of life.

In 1953 he directed *Julius Caesar* for MGM, an adaptation of Shakespeare's play, which received widely favourable reviews. The film is the only record of Marlon Brando in a Shakespearean role, playing Mark Antony, and he received an Oscar nomination for his performance.

In 1958 Mankiewicz directed *The Quiet American*, an adaptation of Graham Greene's 1955 novel about the beginnings of the American military involvement in what evolved into the Vietnam War. However, the anti-Communist feeling was very high at the time in America and as Mankiewicz had been put on a blacklist of Hollywood actors and directors who were suspected of Communist sympathies, he changed the message of Greene's book to suit a more anti-Communist and Nationalistic audience. According to Greene, a cautionary story about America's support for anti-Communists was made into a propaganda film for America.

The film *Cleopatra* occupied three years of Mankiewicz's life and subsequently damaged his career and caused great financial losses for the studio, Twentieth Century-Fox, which did not recover until the very popular *The Sound of Music* was released two years later, becoming the highest grossing film of 1965 and eventually the third highest grossing film of all time behind *Star Wars Episode IV*. It later won five Academy Awards including Best Director (Robert Wise) and Best Picture. Mankiewicz made further films, where he was honoured with an Oscar nomination for Best Direction in 1972 for *Sleuth*. In 1983, he was a member of the jury at the 33rd Berlin International Film Festival.

Filmography

<i>5 Fingers</i>	<i>House of Strangers</i>	<i>Suddenly, Last Summer</i>
<i>A Letter to Three Wives</i>	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	<i>The Barefoot Contessa</i>
<i>All About Eve</i>	<i>King: a Filmed</i>	<i>The Ghost and Mrs. Muir</i>
<i>Backfire</i>	<i>Record...Montgomery To</i>	<i>The Honey Pot</i>
<i>Carol for Another Christmas</i>	<i>Memphis</i>	<i>The Late George Apley</i>
<i>Cleopatra</i>	<i>No Way Out</i>	<i>The Quiet American</i>
<i>Dragonwyck</i>	<i>People Will Talk</i>	<i>There Was a Crooked Man...</i>
<i>Escape</i>	<i>Sleuth</i>	
<i>Guys and Dolls</i>	<i>Somewhere in the Night</i>	

All About Eve

All About Eve is a 1950 American drama film, written and directed by Joseph Mankiewicz, based on a 1946 short story by Mary Orr called "The Wisdom of Eve".

The film stars Bette Davis as Margo Channing, a highly regarded, but aging, Broadway star. Anne Baxter plays Eve Harrington, a willingly helpful young fan, who inserts herself into Channing's life, ultimately threatening Channing's career and her personal relationships. The film is also notable for one of Marilyn Monroe's earliest roles.

The film was nominated for 14 Academy Awards (a feat unmatched until the 1997 film *Titanic*) and it won six, including Best Picture. As of 2013, *All About Eve* is still the only film in Oscar history to receive four female acting nominations (Davis and Baxter as Best Actress, Holm and Ritter as Best Supporting Actress). *All About Eve* was selected in 1990 for preservation in the United States National Film Registry and was among the first 50 films to be so registered.

Origins

The story of *All About Eve* originated in an anecdote related to Mary Orr by actress Elisabeth Bergner. While performing in *The Two Mrs. Carrolls* during 1943-44, Bergner allowed a young fan to become part of her household as an assistant, but later regretted her generosity when the woman attempted to undermine her. Referring to her only as 'the terrible girl,' Bergner related the events to Orr, who used it as the basis for a short story *The Wisdom of Eve*. In the story, Orr gives the girl a more ruthless character and allows her to succeed in stealing the career of the older actress. Bergner later confirmed the basis of the story in her autobiography.

In 1949, Mankiewicz was considering a story about an aging actress and, upon reading *The Wisdom of Eve*, felt that a conniving girl would be an interesting element. He changed the main character's name from Margola Cranston to Margo Channing and retained several of Orr's characters, Eve Harrington, Lloyd and Karen Richards, and Miss Casswell, while removing Margo Channing's husband completely and replacing him with Bill Sampson. The intention was to depict Channing in a new relationship and allow the character of Eve Harrington to threaten both Channing's professional and personal lives. Mankiewicz also added the characters Addison DeWitt, Birdie Coonan, Max Fabian, and Phoebe.

Zanuck offered numerous suggestions for improving the film. He felt Mankiewicz's writing lacked subtlety or provided excessive detail in some scenes. He suggested diluting Birdie Coonan's jealousy of Eve so the audience would not recognise Eve as a villain until much later. Zanuck chose the title *All About Eve* from the opening scenes in which Addison DeWitt says he will tell "all about Eve". Bette Davis was cast as Margo Channing after Claudette Colbert injured her back and had to withdraw.

Davis read the script in one sitting and accepted the role after realising it was one of the best she had ever read. Channing had originally been characterised as genteel and knowingly humorous, but Mankiewicz revised the character to be more abrasive to suit Davis' acting style. Mankiewicz praised Davis for her professionalism and the standard of her performance.