

TSSMTM
Creating VCE Success

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES
“Citizen Kane”

Text guide by: Peter Cram

SAMPLE

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TSSM

ACN 099 422 670

ABN 54 099 422 670

A: Level 14, 474 Flinders Street Melbourne VIC 3000

T: 1300 134 518

CONTENTS

Area of Study	Chapter	Topics
Area of Study 1 - Reading and Responding	Chapter 1 – Genre	1.1 Title 1.2 Audience 1.3 Purpose
	Chapter 2 – Structure	2.1 Chronology 2.1.1 Continuity 2.2 Setting 2.3 Plot, Compilation, Rising Action, Climax and Resolution 2.3.1 Plot 2.3.2 Compilation 2.3.3 Rising Action 2.3.4 Climax 2.3.5 Resolution 2.4 Another Way of Looking at Plot, Compilation, Rising Action, Climax and Resolution
	Chapter 3 – Historical Issues	3.1 William Randolph Hearst 3.2 Howard Robard Huges 3.3 Samuel Insull 3.4 Marion Davies 3.5 Spanish American War 3.6 The Panama Canal 3.7 Xanadu 3.8 The Florida Everglades 3.9 The Chicago Civic Opera House 3.10 Teapot Dome Scandal 3.11 Yellow Journalism
	Chapter 4 – Style	4.1 Orientation 4.1.1 Detached Autobiography 4.1.2 Impartiality
	Chapter 5 – Background Notes	-
	Chapter 6 – Scene Summaries	-

Area of Study 1 - Reading and Responding	Chapter 7 – Character Profiles	7.1 Charles Foster Kane 7.2 Susan Alexander Kane 7.3 Walter Parks Thatcher 7.4 Jedediah Leland 7.5 Mr Berstein 7.6 Emily Monro Norton Kane 7.7 Character Trait Thesaurus 7.8 Character Emotional States 7.9 Character Relationships
	Chapter 8 – Themes and Issues	8.1 Power 8.2 The American Dream 8.3 Materialism 8.4 Biopic 8.5 Readings and Interpretations
	Chapter 9 – <i>Citizen Kane</i> as a Film	9.1 Deep Focus 9.2 Black and White 9.3 Lighting 9.4 Make up 9.5 Sound
	Chapter 10 – Important Quotes	-
	Chapter 11 – Sample Essay Topics	-
	Chapter 12 – Final Examination Tips	-

AREA 1: READING & RESPONDING: CITIZEN KANE

Chapter 1 GENRE

A text can usually be categorized into the general kind or type of text that it is. There are many different genres to appeal to the various personal preferences of film-goers. While the central character of the film is the media tycoon Charles Foster Kane, the story is actually told from the point of view of an investigative journalist who is seeking to discover the meaning of Kane's last word, 'Rosebud.' Citizen Kane therefore seems to be presented as a mystery. However, the film is also regarded by many as a thinly-disguised narration of the life of the media magnate Randolph Hearst.

Genre:

A. Mystery.

Citizen Kane follows the work of an investigative journalist seeking to discover the meaning of Charles Foster Kane's dying word: 'Rosebud.'

B. Biopic.

A film version of the life of the media magnate Randolph Hearst.

C. Film Noir.

Some have even suggested that Citizen Kane, with its dark and moody atmosphere, is a fore-runner of the Film Noir genre – films that emphasize moral ambiguity, although they are generally crime films.

1.1 Title

The film's title can often be revealing. It may give direct or indirect indications of genre, and also indications of aspects of plot, characters and themes. The title is ironic, as Charles Kane, being wealthy and powerful, is not a citizen of the nation in any ordinary sense. He often attempts to manipulate the attitudes and values of ordinary citizens through his newspapers.

Title:

Charles Foster Kane is a person who wishes to exercise absolute power over others.

1.2 Audience

At a simple level, it could be said that the audience of this film was intended to be people who like to view mystery films or biopics. Citizen Kane is loosely based on a real person, media magnate Randolph Hearst. The film-going audience would have understood the connection as Hearst was still alive when the film was released. Randolph Hearst certainly understood it, as he attempted to suppress the film. Hearst was unsuccessful in his attempt and resultantly caused considerable trouble to Orson Welles' career in acting and directing. Some hold the opinion that Orson Welles never achieved his full potential in film because of this.

Audience:

Those who enjoy mystery films or biopics.

1.3 Purpose

A writer will write a film for a particular reason. Often, the purpose can be recognized, especially in relation to the major themes, as the writer may wish to address a particular issue. Citizen Kane is largely about how one man gained and maintained economic, social and political power and influence through the expansion of his business empire.

Purpose:

To explore notions of power.