



JET FUEL REVIEW BLOG

Hateful Fates, A Mysterious Analysis

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In more contemporary forms of mystery, other genres such as drama or horror are brought into the narrative to differ from sole mystery creations such as shows like, *Elementary* and *Monk*. This was completely evident during my viewing of *The Hateful Eight*, a 2015 film written and directed by Quentin Tarantino. The film blends genre elements of westerns, dramas, and horror with mystery, establishing a unique aesthetic and atmosphere for the film. If my grandfather was still alive today, I'd love to know what his take on this film would be since it takes some influence from western films. I remember visiting my grandparents in their Chicago home and seeing my grandfather sitting on the blue living room couch, glass of gin and lime in hand as he watched Westerns in black and white or grainy film; watched westerns where men wore cowboy hats and serious expressions and were never separated from their galloping horses. He'd love to see how the genre has been transformed today and furthermore has been combined with mystery, drama, and horror elements in Tarantino's *The Hateful Eight*.

Spoilers Ahead

The film's time period is set closely after the American Civil War and tells the story of bounty hunter John Ruth and his prisoner Daisy Domergue—whom is being transported to Red Rock to be convicted and hanged—fleeing to a cabin in the middle of a raging Wyoming winter and blizzard (not before picking up other visitors along the way such as, former Civil War soldier and bounty hunter Major Marquis Warren and soon to be Sheriff of Red Rock Chris Mannix). Within that cabin, the four are greeted with even more characters as crimes, bounties, lies and secret intentions place every character in disarray.

Everything begins quite ominously, this ominous mood cemented with the film's opening image of a wooden statue of Christ's crucifixion standing in the Wyoming tundra, snow stifling areas of the statue. Beginning with this imagery, the viewer knows grim times are ahead. At the start, however, those grim times are held back as John Ruth and his prisoner Daisy Domergue meet Major Marquis Warren and Chris Mannix while riding through the Wyoming tundra. We are met with small mysteries at the start such as wondering who the tag-along characters, Major Warren and Chris Mannix, are and how they ended up stuck in the blizzard, if they are whom they claim to be. There's also mystery surrounding Daisy Domergue as we wonder what her past entails that would pile a 10,000 dollar bounty on her head. These mysteries in backstories and intentions only grow when more characters (Bob—a man who states Minnie has put the cabin in his care; Oswaldo Mobray—a hangman; Joe Gage—a cowboy on his way home to visit his mother; Sanford Smithers—a former Confederate general on his way to put his son at rest) are introduced upon the troupe's arrival to the cabin also known as Minnie's Haberdashery.



The film opens with a striking image of a wooden statue of Christ's Crucifixion.

The essential setting and format of this story, a bunch of characters unfamiliar with one another converging and sequestered in an isolated place, mirrors the formats of other mysteries. There are similar plot formulas found in the graphic novel series *Cased Closed* (also known as *Detective Conan*) written and illustrated by Gosho Aoyama and Agatha Christie's *Three Blind Mice* where a snowstorm traps small group of friends in an isolated estate. In these settings, characters become pressured, crazed; they become confronted with issues, thoughts, and conversations they normally aren't otherwise. In *The Hateful Eight*, these characters are constantly arguing with one another, throwing around allegations, insults, punches, and bullets, the earlier image of the Christ on the cross reminding us that Minnie's cabin serves as a space of judgement and confrontation for everyone involved.

Judgement arrives in the form of small mysteries such as Major Warren's reveal that his letter from President Lincoln regarding Warren's involvement in the Civil War, a letter which assisted in him manipulating and hitching a ride with John Ruth, was forged by Warren himself. There was also the conflict of a poisoning midway through the film which introduced a small portion of solving and investigation. Major Warren and Chris Mannix turn into sleuths upon John Ruth and another character falling dead, after drinking poisoned coffee (the scene was intensely gory, blood being spat everywhere by the poisoned parties—creating elements of horror through gore). The two in turn question the only possible culprits, those being Bob, Oswaldo, and Joe Gage. In their investigation, not only do they find out who poisoned the coffee but uncover the fact that Minnie did not put her cabin in someone else's care but was in fact murdered by the men who had arrived at the cabin before John Ruth, Daisy Domergue, Major Warren, and Chris Mannix.

During this time Major Warren points to clues such as blood stains on an armchair, where a regular to the cabin always resides and a sign in Minnie's cabin stating Mexicans are not allowed as his reasoning for Bob, Oswaldo, and Joe Gage being more than they seem (as Bob, who happens to be Mexican, stated Minnie left the place in his care, an action Major Warren believes Minnie would never take).



After pulling away blankets and fur throws, Major Warren finds a blood stain on an armchair pointing to a character, Sweet Dave, known for sitting in the chair as having been recently murdered as no one else is ever allowed to sit in Sweet Dave's chair.

Hidden identities are also a huge trend in mysteries. Often the trend will occur at the end of the mystery where the culprit of the murder or crime is found to have been in disguise the entire time, their real identity revealed in the story's end. In *The Hateful Eight* there is a literal hidden identity as we find out Daisy's brother has been hiding in the cabin for a huge portion of the film, waiting for an opportunity to shoot and injure someone through a trapdoor in an effort to free his sister from bounty hunter John Ruth. As a viewer, we are unaware of his existence or how he got there. The movie then moves into a flashback to display Jody Domergue's travel to the cabin with fellow gang members Bob, Oswaldo, and Joe with a plan to free Daisy upon her and John Ruth's arrival to Minnie's cabin.

One very interesting element to *The Hateful Eight* was its structure. Mystery usually has very structured chapters whether that's ending or beginning a chapter with new answers or discoveries or questions. We see similar structure in *The Hateful Eight* as the film has its own chapters, 5 to be exact (similar in structure to Freytag's pyramid). This might be due to the film having been conceived by Tarantino as a novel and sequel to 2012 movie, *D'Angelo Unchained*. At the start of the chapters we are met with a shot of the outdoors, the raging blizzard before being taken inside a carriage or inside the cabin where the characters are congregating and conversing. We are constantly met with new characters at the start of the chapter and by the end of the chapter, we gain extensive information about the newly introduced character.

There were also times where the fourth wall (the imaginary barrier or wall separating the movie characters and the audience) was broken. In the beginning of Chapter 3, an outside narrator tells the audience and the tinybit unaware to the rest of the characters—someone poisoned the coffee and the only characters aware are the culprit themselves and Daisy Domergue. Suddenly the audience is a step ahead just like Daisy Domergue and the poison-happy culprit. These moments also remind us that we are being told a story, a story of the past, a story of hate-filled characters living in the aftermath of the American Civil War, reminding us that our history is a story with unlimited grimness.

And in truth, there aren't many redeemable characters in the main eight, everyone cheats, lies, manipulates, kills, discriminates. These characters are only unified by their hate and angst and through their converges at Minnie's cabin—their life's final stop. Each hate-filled characters' end or fate arrives through violence, showing the audience the paths where a life of hate leads in Tarantino's mysterious, dramatic, and crime-heavy narrative. You're left with the impression that hate cannot be allowed to take you to dark, isolated places because there's a good and definite chance you may never return.

— Kayla Chambers, Art & Design Editor; Layout Editor

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