

Shane

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Based on the novel by Jack Schaefer

1) Shane rides out of the mountains into a valley where Starrett, his wife and small son have a farm. The family is at first friendly when Shane asks for water, but is later hostile. Starrett tells Shane to leave, threatening him with a gun. Shane rides off.

2) The Rikers arrive and tell Starrett that his land is needed for their cattle. They order him to leave. Starrett is intimidated but holds his ground. Abruptly, Shane reappears, announcing that he is a friend of the Starretts. The Rikers are undecided, but after another warning from Shane, they retreat. Shane is invited to stay and, after eating with the family, is offered a job on the farm.

3) Next day, Shane rides into the small town for supplies. In the local saloon, he is challenged by one of the Rikers cowboys. Avoiding a fight, he backs down.

4) That evening, a group of the farmers in the valley meet at Starrett's ranch to decide how to deal with Riker. Shane is introduced. One of the farmers accuses him of cowardice and Shane leaves.

5) On Sunday, a group of farmers go into town and enter the saloon to confront the Rikers. Uninvited, Shane joins them. He is again insulted, but this time defeats one of the cowboys, Chris. Riker, impressed, offers Shane a job. He refuses. Shane is attacked by the rest of the Rikers cowboys, but Starrett now comes to his help and together they defeat the cowboys. Angered, Riker decides that he will send for a professional gunfighter to deal with Shane and Starrett.

6) Jack Wilson arrives in town. Shane recognizes him and knows of his reputation as a fast draw. Riker once again offers to buy Starrett's farm, but Starrett refuses.

7) Next day, Wilson forces one of the farmers into a gunfight and easily kills him.

8) Next day, Riker burns the buildings of another of the farmers. The rest of the farmers are ready to leave the valley, but Starrett begs them to stay one more day. Starrett decides that he must kill Riker, with or without the support of the other farmers.

9) Riker, however, has again invited Starrett to meet him for further talk. Starrett's wife, Marion, pleads with him not to go. She asks Shane to support her in telling Starrett not to risk confrontation with the Rikers. Shane refuses to intervene and retires.

10) In the Starrett barn, Shane meets the cowboy, Chris, who has had a change of heart. Chris tells Shane that Riker has laid a trap for Starrett.

11) Shane puts on his gun. He intercepts Starrett and tells him to stay home because he, Shane, means to go into town to confront the Rikers and Wilson. Starrett refuses. Shane fights with him and knocks him out. Before he leaves for town, Shane bids goodbye to Marion. It's clear that she is attracted to him and he to her.

12) In the saloon, Shane beats Wilson to the draw and kills him. He then kills two Riker brothers, but is wounded in the process.

13) Shane rides off in the direction of the mountains again while Starrett's son shouts after him, begging him to come back.

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One of Mackendrick's favourite books on the subject of narrative cinema was Will Wright's Six Guns and Society, which describes itself as "A Structural Study of the Western." Wright's own plot summary of Shane (which he describes as "the classic of the classic Westerns") was clearly an influence on Mackendrick, who would hand out to students both his and Wright's version at the same time.

The story begins with Shane riding out of the mountains into a beautiful valley. He asks for water at the farm of Joe and Marion Starret, who are friendly at first but then hostile, telling Shane to leave at gunpoint, as the Rikers ride up. Shane leaves and the Rikers arrive to tell Starret to get off the land or be driven off. They have a ranch, and they need all the land for cattle. Starret is indignant but unnerved, when Shane suddenly reappears and announces to the Rikers that he is a friend of Joe Starret's. He is wearing a gun, and now the Riker brothers and their men are confused. After a final warning, they leave. Shane is invited for dinner, and after becoming friendly with the family, he is given a job on the farm.

The next day, Shane rides into the small town for supplies, is insulted in the saloon by one of Riker's cowboys, and backs down, avoiding a fight. That night, the seven or eight farmers in the valley gather at Starret's to plan strategy against Riker. Shane is introduced, but one of the farmers accuses him of cowardice and Shane leaves the meeting. Sunday, all the farmers go to town together for strength, and Shane intentionally enters the saloon. He is insulted again, but this time he fights and defeats a cowboy named Chris. Riker offers him a job, he refuses, and all the cowboys in the saloon attack him. Starret comes to his aid, and together they defeat the cowboys. Riker, in anger, sends for a gunfighter.

The gunfighter Wilson arrives in town, and Shane recognizes him as a fast draw. Riker once more tries to buy out Starret, but the farmer refuses. The next day, Wilson forces one of the farmers into a gunfight and kills him. The following day, Riker burns one of the farms. At this point, the farmers are ready to leave the valley in defeat, but Starret convinces them to stay one more day. He decides to go to town

and kill Riker, and Riker sends for him to talk. Marion, Starret's wife, pleads with him not to go and asks Shane to persuade him not to, but Shane refuses to interfere and goes to the barn. In the barn Chris, who has had a change of sympathy, tells Shane that Starret is heading into a trap. Shane puts on his gun, tells Starret he is going to town, and advises the farmer to stay home. When Starret refuses, they fight and Shane knocks him out. After saying goodbye to Marion, for whom he has a romantic attraction, which she shares, Shane rides to town. There, in the saloon, he beats Wilson to the draw and kills him. Then he kills the two Riker brothers. Wounded, he rides out of the valley forever, into the dark mountains, while little Joey Starret shouts after him to "come back."

For Wright, Shane is a good example of what he calls the "classical formula" of the Western, which contains a number of narrative beats.

1. The hero enters a social group.
2. The hero is unknown to the society.
3. The hero is revealed to have an exceptional ability.
4. The society recognizes a difference between themselves and the hero; the hero is given a special status.
5. The society does not completely accept the hero.
6. There is conflict of interests between the villains and the society.
7. The villains are stronger than the society; the society is weak.
8. There is a strong friendship or respect between the hero and a villain.
9. The villains threaten the society.
10. The hero avoids involvement in the conflict.
11. The villains endanger a friend of the hero.
12. The hero fights the villains.
13. The hero defeats the villains.
14. The society is safe.
15. The society accepts the hero.
16. The hero loses or gives up his special status.