

SUNSET BLVD.

SUMMARY

Haunted by her past, fallen idol Norma Desmond is hungry for a comeback. A struggling screenwriter may be the only way she can reclaim her fame, but none of it ends well.

CHARACTER GUIDE

Norma Desmond: A former silent-film leading lady who longs for a career comeback.

Joe Gillis: A struggling Hollywood screenwriter and Norma's chance to return to the big screen.

Max Von Mayerling: Norma's butler and ex-husband, who feeds her delusions. He directed some of her movies.

Artie: Joe's best friend, a successful Hollywood screenwriter. He's engaged to Betty Schaefer.

Betty Schaefer: Fresh-faced script reader and studio assistant who is engaged to Artie. She collaborates on screenplays with Joe and eventually falls in love with him.

Cecil B. DeMille: A famous real-life director, who in the musical works with Norma.

Sheldrake: A studio executive.



EXERCISES & ACTIVATIONS

Writing

Create a two-minute presentation for a studio executive about an idea for a new movie. Share what the story is about, its relevance, and genre. Also include how much money it could earn at the box office and how it could surpass competing movie studios.

Embodying

Work in groups of three. Select a famous film scene that you enjoy as a group, or if you prefer, one will be provided for you. Now decide who plays which character. Read it through naturally first. Now block the scene, saying the lines. Finally, turn it into a silent movie: the same scene, but instead of saying the lines, act out the intention of the lines with your face, body, and gestures. Then block the scene and do the same scene in three different genres:

- comedy
- drama
- horror

How does your behavior, your pace, or your voice change?

Contextual

Present your idea in a collage on a cardboard to studio executives (other students). Come to a consensus of which movie star you would like to create a biopic about. How do you think people will like it? What themes will this film deal with? How inspiring is the star's story?