

The Truman Show

Curriculum Guide by Laurel Clark and Laura Cook

This film is the (fictitious) story of a thirty-year-old man whose entire life has been broadcast to a global audience as a TV show. As Truman catches on to the made-for-television nature of his entire world, the film addresses issues surrounding the production of “reality TV” and advertising, responsibility and ethics, and the construction and perception of reality itself.

***The Truman Show* (1998)**

Rated **PG** by the MPAA

Category: Drama

Contains some adult language but no sexual situations or violence.

Guide Objectives:

- ✓ **Getting students to critically think about media**
The Truman Show can be “read” for symbolism and social meanings not just as entertainment. Further, from the story of “The Truman Show,” the class should begin to grasp that even “real” broadcasts (including live shows, news programs, reality TV, etc) are produced and controlled for the viewers’ consumption.
- ✓ **Asking students to question the appeal of reality media**
This goal entails also highlighting the many different ways that reality is constructed (by media, institutions, individuals, ideals) and the various ways that various people approach their reality(-ies). The allure and recent success of reality television shows can then be debated. Is this something we watch for comfort (empathy/sympathy)? To feel like we as people have (more) control (over circumstances, outcomes)? As a way of having company (companionship, validation, “yeah, that’s the way it is!”) For its voyeuristic appeal? [NB: This is often the easiest and most popular critical response. How might the class tie this observation in with talk shows like Springer, etc? How, however, has this “voyeurism” always been part of human society from the Romans’ Coliseum to public hangings?]
- ✓ **Examining, as a class, various advertising methods/strategies**
Students should be able to recognize product placement advertising itself and, further, to identify the advertisements as self-consciously constructed appeals. Advertising *as a type of media* should be analyzed in order to reveal what strategies advertisers use to target consumers and to communicate their message(s) effectively. What is advertised: products or ways of life? (in *Truman*, advertisements appeal to: nostalgia, conformity, simplicity, predictability, community) Further, it might be interesting to ask students what they think of product placement: is it effective? Ethical?

✓ **Recognizing as a class that media producers are not the only responsible parties for media content**

Mass media (films, advertising and television, herein) are just one part of the overarching culture in which we live. Cultures provide environments ripe for certain types of media, which in turn reshape the ideas and interactions that comprise a culture. The complicated and emotional situation portrayed by *The Truman Show* will allow students to explore how various parties share responsibility for reality shows (and other mass media) similar to “The Truman Show.” This relates readily to many current political and cultural debates over the ethics of media reception and media production. The film also provides a way of suggesting that not all innovation in media is necessarily progress. In the end, students will recognize the ways in which they participate in advertising by turning on the TV, getting on-line, or listening to the radio. It will also become clear that they actively participate in shaping media as the audience, both in expressing their preferences and in interpreting what they see. What does it mean that two people can watch the same advertisement and “read” it differently?

Grade Level: 11 or 12

Viewing Time Required: 35 minutes of clips or 1:42 to screen the entire film

Curriculum Fits:

Media Literacy, Ethics, Advertising, Television Production, Cultural History, American Studies, Cultural Criticism

Resources Used and Recommended:

Plot Summary

Clark, Laurel. “‘How's It Going to End?': A Detailed Plot Summary of *The Truman Show*.” Appended to this guide

Reviews of The Truman Show:

Carr, Jay. “Carrey On: Dazzlingly ‘Truman’ targets numb and number TV culture.” *The Boston Globe*, 5 June 1998, city ed, sec. D (Arts and Film):1.

Maslin, Janet. “So, What’s Wrong With This Picture?” *The New York Times*, 5 June 1998, late edition-final, sec. E: 1, col. 1.

Articles on product placement advertising:

Elliot, Stuart. “The Media Business: Advertising: Reruns may become a testing ground for digital insertion of sponsor’s products and images.” *The New York Times* 23 May 2001, late ed.-final, sec. C: 6; col. 1

Flint, Joe. “Sponsors get a role in CBS reality show” *The Wall Street Journal* 13 January 2000, eastern ed., sec. B:16

Journal Articles on “reality TV”:

Thompson, Robert. “Reality and the Future of Television.” *Television Quarterly*, 31, no 4 (Winter 2001): 20-25.

Shales, Tom. “Reality breeds network desperation.” *Electronic Media*, 20, no 5 [i.e. no 6] (F 5 2001): 4.

Sardar, Ziauddin. “The rise of the voyeur.” *New Statesman* (London, England: 1996), 129, (N 6 2000): 25-27

Additional Web Resources:

The following list of websites include offerings such as movie stills, downloadable clips, other things that might be helpful to teachers interested in further enriching or illustrating the material in this guide:

<http://www.mlb.ilstu.edu/crsres/foitruman.htm>

<http://www10.pair.com/crazydv/weir/truman/>

<http://us.imdb.com/Title?0120382>

<http://www.trumanshow.com/index2.html>

http://mrshowbiz.go.com/movies/reviews/TheTrumanShow_1998/review.html

Authors’ Introduction

The following curriculum guide includes homework, in-class assignments, creative projects, group projects, discussion/debate topics and writing assignments. This is in the hopes of increased flexibility for teaching and learning styles. Use your discretion in incorporating more (video editing and commercial shooting) or less (magazine/print ads) additional technological or media resources, as they are available to you. Activities have been distributed throughout what follows: some under “Procedure” as ways to introduce content, some under “Evaluation” for their attention to students’ ability to demonstrate learning, others under “Extension” due to their focus on pursuing ideas more deeply or creatively.

Further, the authors have purposefully not defined the word “reality” anywhere in this guide. This is because we believe that one of the key tasks of the film is to raise the poignant question: What is real and to whom? We write this guide with that notion in mind as well as with the belief that media is both an active and an acted upon part of our culture. We do not think that media or media producers *alone* cause behaviors nor do we think that media simply reflect reality. The questions and activities we suggest illustrate the complex ways that we interact with media. Roughly speaking, media inform the way we interpret our lived experiences even as we draw on lived experiences to create and inspire media. We hope that what follows will allow you to explore this in your classroom.

[NB: Throughout this guide, “The Truman Show” (in quotation marks) refers to the fictional television broadcast rather than *The Truman Show*, the film.]

Suggested Teaching Procedure:

1. As a class, view (all or a portion as detailed below) *The Truman Show*.

Four Clip Breakdown (viewing time needed: 2.5+10+8+14=34.5 minutes)

If your time is limited or if you are using *The Truman Show* as an example in a larger lesson, showing the 1:08-1:16 section (listed below) on its own could initiate a single day's discussion on Reality TV or TV production in general. The suggested film breakdown that follows should allow students to recognize major themes addressed by this guide's goals and activities (highlighted as "clip emphases"), as well as to understand the main ideas of the plot, and to form impressions of the various characters.

0:00-0:02:30 *Content*: This is the film's introduction but includes the credits and characters of the TV show, "The Truman Show"; viewers meet main characters of the film as they present themselves to the public

Clip Emphasis: **perceiving reality** (How does each character think of their involvement in the show? How does each character think of him- or herself? Note that Truman accepts the show as his life and, thus, is not concerned with public image when he faces the mirror/camera—unlike the others.)

0:25-0:35 *Content*: Commercials (product placements) become identifiable. A montage explaining and contrasting Truman's relationships with Sylvia/Lauren and Meryl is included. Viewers learn of "The Truman Show" greatest hits video collection and theme bar.

Clip Emphasis: **control over reality** (What can be/is in Truman's world? How is that determined? By whom? Also is the power to buy and sell (or be sold) about control? About responsibility?)

1:08-1:16 *Content*: A television special recaps the history of "The Truman Show" and features an interview with producer Christof in which he says that we "accept the reality with which we are presented." Privacy is mentioned. Means of production are detailed including a catalog for purchasing everything featured on "The Truman Show."

Clip Emphasis: **aspects of production of reality TV** (Where/How does one locate reality? How is "The Truman Show" being produced? Whose privacy is valuable—to them? To others as a commodity/product?)

1:28-1:42 *Content:* Truman makes his escape from Sea Haven/"The Truman Show" via boat, proving that he no longer believes in the limitations of the reality staged for him. He has a discussion with Christof about the show and his (Truman's) choices now. Truman then exits the set.

*Clip Emphasis: **choosing** reality* (Unmediated experience (uncontrolled, unbroadcasted, unpredictable, etc) is Truman's chosen reality. This is in contrast to the "real" life that he has lived in a "real" but orchestrated environment. He and his decisions were unscripted—a thought provoking point: is it unpredictability that made him "real" amidst a fiction? OR, was his life "real" because he believed and accepted the "reality" he perceived?)

2. **In class after viewing the film (or clips), chart the plot of *The Truman Show*. As a class, list the main characters and significant events in the story.**
3. **Introduce to the students the major themes (identified below) that will be the focus of activities and discussion for the duration of the lesson plan.**

Major Themes, Discussion Questions and Initiating Activities:

A. The production of *reality TV shows* as a route to opening up the larger question of what makes something "real."

The Truman Show *along with this guide raises the question of identifying reality (or realities) as a space in which people take action, make decisions, and more complicatedly, make believe.*

Reality Recognition Exercise: Ask students to remember and list things from the movie that were "real" and "not real" as a class (on the board). This list might include things like: the ocean (not real), the water (real), the final boat driver and surgeon characters (not real), the actors (real people). Use this exercise to illustrate the difficulty of establishing these categories, "real" and "not real" because the experiences themselves happen but are contrived/controlled.

Potential Discussion Questions/Things to Think About:

What does the term "reality" signify to viewers? To makers? (in Truman's world) To Truman Burbank? In our world (as viewers and producers? Note that there is also the sort of ultimate irony about all of this: "reality" shows demonstrate the financial ability of producers to control an environment that is close to but not actually reality or unmediated, lived experience. What is televised really happens but is still a production.

B. Advertising and Product Placement

This marketing technique is now being implemented in TV shows as well as in movies. It is a phenomenon parodied by “The Truman Show.”

Advertising Recognition Exercise: Ask students to recall the specific products advertised within the show (these include Kaiser Chicken, macaroni, Mococoa, *Dog Fancy*, Marlon’s beer, the Chef’s Pal, Elk Rotary Mower, Carlton Homes). How were these things endorsed? By whom? In what surroundings?

Potential Discussion Questions/Things to Think About:

Why might product placement be effective for selling, enticing, and creating a product image (seeing fictional people use real products)? Is this incorporation of image and fiction into lived experience also connected to how we perceive TV, perceive reality, perceive ourselves? Can we identify some of the appeals and strategies used by advertisers in general (stereotypes, nostalgia, glamour)? Here it will be useful to remind students of how product placement is used in professional sports (for example Michael Jordan and Nike, Venus Williams and Reebok).

C. Responsibility and Ethics

Especially in regard to media, The Truman Show gives a complex look at who participates in media decision-making. The audience who fuels popularity, the advertisers who provide financial support, and the producers who orchestrate the lives being watched are all implicated as are the actors (or in Truman’s case, the unwitting star) themselves.

Responsibility Recognition Exercise: Pose the question, “Who besides the characters and producers of “The Truman Show” do people watching the movie get to see? (ANSWER: THE TV SHOW’S AUDIENCE). Point out that this is a conscious decision on the part of the filmmakers. Brainstorm a few ways that the storytellers (the filmmakers themselves) implicate the TV audience into “The Truman Show” phenomenon. (e.g., the news coverage, souvenirs (producing and buying), the existence of the bar, personal reactions (political movements, tears, cheering)

Potential Discussion Questions/Things to Think About:

What do students think about what happened to Truman? Who holds power over “The Truman Show”? How did they get that power? Who is responsible for the actions being filmed? In the end, who exercises the power to change or construct a different reality? (NB: These “who” questions can and should have multiple right answers stressing that culpability is spread widely and exists on multiple levels not just in *The Truman Show* but in everyday reality.)

- 4. Proceed to Evaluation Opportunities, using what projects are a best fit for your classroom style and resources.**
- 5. Involve students in one or more Extension Activities as a means to further reflect upon what they have learned from this unit and how they might continue to apply that knowledge.**

Evaluation Opportunities:

1. **Follow up in class or as a night's homework:** Allow each student to adopt the identity of one of the main characters in the film (Truman, Christof, Marlon, Meryl, Lauren/Sylvia, Truman's mother (Angela), Truman's Father). Students should then compose a short essay about reality (or what makes something real) from this perspective. Ask them to describe this character's role on "The Truman Show," and how that character shapes its "reality."
2. **Film reception/analysis activity:** Allow students to read a review(s) of *The Truman Show*. Ask them to write their own review—either of the film or of the fictional television show. They should include some summary as well as comments on film style and the message of the film. This should allow them to crystallize opinions of characters and to think through what the ideology or social meaning of the film might be.
3. **Film production/analysis activity:** Unpack the symbolism of various *Truman Show* characters. Have students analyze characters (names, placement) and other symbolic devices used by the filmmakers. (e.g. In Christof's perfect world, what are wives like? How many and where are minority characters in Sea Haven? What does Christof's name and position imply? (godlike control) What about Truman (True-Man)?)
4. **Film and advertising strategy analysis:** Divided into groups by character name, ask students to analyze how each character performs particular kinds of marketing strategies or appeals. (Note especially Meryl's domesticity and Marlon's masculinity here. The proverbial neighbor with a nicer lawn as a way to sell lawn equipment also comes to mind.) How do media personalities or characters (in general, not just in *Truman*) rely on stereotypes—partly because of their convenience as visual and cultural shorthand, partly because of ideology?
5. **Advertising analysis activity:** Examine a commercial as a class (on the web, on television, in print—any will do) or multiple commercials in groups. Compare and contrast strategies that are used in an explicit ad versus those in product placement (using *Truman Show* or real-life examples of the latter).
6. **Alternative creative advertising project:** Ask students to imagine a new product to be placed into "The Truman Show," or assign products to be placed (these might include shoes, hair products, perfume or cologne, medicines, or automobiles). Where would they place their product? How would they get viewers to notice their item? (One of Meryl's speeches? A large poster? A character using it?) What does their placement strategy say about whom they imagine as a consumer of the product?
7. **Television production/analysis homework:** Require that students watch various current "Reality TV" shows (one group for "The Mole," one for "Survivor," etc.). In groups the following day, ask them to identify what aspects of those televised "realities" are controlled? By whom (advertisers, producers, characters)? What products are featured and how? What ideas about society are present in the cast (explicitly or implicitly)?

8. Final project options for students:

- Compose a part research (using newspaper or web resources), part analysis paper on reality television—how it is produced and received, welcomed and criticized (students could include *The Truman Show* as an example of criticism through parody).
- Offer a detailed analysis of *The Truman Show*. Be sure to point out plot devices (things that move the narrative along and symbolism (in characters, names, objects). Further, offer your interpretation of what the film “means” (especially with regard to reality and media responsibility).
- Create an ad campaign. Describe your product in detail. To whom are you trying to sell the product? In what sort of media will you advertise? Explicitly or via product placement? How will you make the item appealing? What assumptions or even stereotypes become part of your strategy (even if just for convenience sake: e.g., rich white guys watch golf so I’ll advertise my mutual fund during a PGA tournament)? Justify your decisions and supply mock-up advertisements.

Extension Activities:

1. **Night before homework/warm-up activity** (before viewing film): Ask students to write a short essay or poem about their reality or what is *real* to them.
2. **Film analysis/creative activity**: Ask students to imagine and write alternative endings to the film. After completing their piece, ask them to think about and explain why they altered the ending as they did. Who did they punish, if anyone? Who, if anyone, “wins”? What do they think their choices say about their own sense of what is real or what is possible or what should be?
3. **Follow-up creative advertising project**: Students can write and design their own ads. (Teachers may assign specific products to groups or individuals if desired. Also, this is an opportunity to incorporate media equipment that your school may possess—shoot ads and show them, for example.) After showing ads to the class, students should answer the questions (in panels if done as group work, in a questionnaire or a group discussion if done individually): why did you choose the wording that you used? What images did you employ and why? What about the product were you trying to communicate? What about the product’s owner/user were you imagining? How do you think your ad communicates most effectively? To whom would it appeal? Why? Why did you imagine your consumer in this way?
4. **Television, advertising and web analysis**: Ask students to visit the website of various reality television shows and/or collect print materials promoting those broadcasts. How are these items like ones about “*The Truman Show*”? How are

they dissimilar? How is public reception of reality shows like or unlike the popularity of “The Truman Show” in the film?

5. Essay, journaling or deeper class discussion questions:

- What do we mean when we say “reality”? Emphasize/consider that people have both lived experiences and mediated or media experiences which contribute to our sense of reality or the real.
- Responsibility or control is also at issue in considering reality. Is something more or less real if it is controlled? Who gets to control? Who or what is controllable—in life and/versus in media?
- Who (else) is responsible for media? Media have a feedback loop including the audience and the advertisers as well as the producers. How do advertisers imagine audiences: How do audiences and producers imagine new and/or fictional “realities?”
- Who takes responsibility for (constructing) reality? Who in the film does? How is Christof’s way of doing this different than Truman’s? Who else is involved (viewers, actors, technicians)? How do you feel about that?

The Truman Show Curriculum Guide Appendix:

“How's It Going to End?": A Detailed Plot Summary of *The Truman Show*

By Laurel Clark

Truman Burbank is a mega-star, the main character in the longest running television show ever produced. “The Truman Show” is a nonstop live broadcast that generates revenues through product placement advertising, the semi-seamless appearance of products within the show itself. In fact, the show has become its own product, marketing Truman Bars, video collections of greatest hits, pillows, and, as the movie viewers later learn, everything on the show. It is all for sale in catalogues worldwide and yet Truman Burbank has not made a dime. Even more provocatively, he has no idea he is being filmed. His emotions are real, but his world is not.

Truman Burbank is NICE. He is kind and generous to a fault—and the creators of his life/show feel sure that this is because his world on Seahaven Island is how the world *should* be. This is a dark judgment on America offered from within the film and an even darker one on the excesses of “reality TV” from the perspective of one watching the film. The social commentary does not stop there, however; by the end of this movie, many questions are raised about the ethics and consequences of reality programming—both for its stars and for its audiences.

Over 5,000 hidden cameras have been placed throughout Truman's daily routine in the town of Seahaven, a charming seaside town on an island that is actually enclosed within a giant dome. All day and all night he is filmed and broadcasted live on a channel dedicated to his life, a fact that for the most part results in the film audience feeling as though they are watching “The Truman Show” itself, rather than a film about a TV show.

When scenes of “Truman Show” viewers appear the film audience feels both empathy and disgust for the adoring fans/voyeurs who watch enthralled from bars, bathtubs and living rooms. Everyone from parking garage attendants to single moms is fascinated by Truman's life. Many of them have watched Truman since before he was born, and some even while he sleeps. Christof, the show's omnipotent creator, believes that it comforts them.

The film opens on television broadcast day 10,909. Our affable hero Truman is almost thirty years old and starting to feel like life is little stale. He tells his best friend Marlon that he wants out, wants a change from his job, a trip off the island. Marlon immediately tells him that he should be thankful for the great life he has. Meanwhile, Marlon also plugs "his favorite" beer repeatedly. All his headshots are from the side, so that the beer logo is always clearly visible to the TV (and film) audience even as he and Truman hit golf balls off of a bridge to nowhere.

Truman is friendly to his neighbors (who stand out as nearly the only African Americans in the entire film): each morning he greets them, "Good Morning! And in case I don't see you, good afternoon, good evening and goodnight." He is kind to (though secretly irritated with) his wife and mother. At work as an insurance salesman he appears dedicated and trustworthy, although behind his desk he is "secretly" trying to create a picture of his lost love, Lauren, from models in magazine ads. While the Truman he presents to others is content, the audience (both on-screen and off!) sees him when he believes that he is alone. The inside view (into his psyche?) is part of the show's draw, and it becomes clear that he is unhappy and becoming more and more suspicious of those around him.

In a flashback sequence, we learn that Lauren tried to tell him that he was being filmed, but was quickly rounded up and removed before Truman grasped the full meaning of her explanation. Her "father" appeared and explained that she was schizophrenic and that their family was moving to Fiji. This incident explains Truman's "mid-life crisis" desire to travel there. The other woman in Truman's life, his wife Meryl, is a peculiar vehicle for product placement and seems to be a combination of fifties domesticity and girl next door although the film is clearly set in the present. In fact, everything associated with Meryl is like this. The college flashback is not set in the 1980s or 1990s, when we might assume the Burbanks were in college together. Instead, it appears that Truman and Meryl are dancing at an early 1960s sock hop. Meryl's nursing uniform is a throwback to earlier nurses with cute caps and pretty collars and her clothing at home is typically June Cleaver-esque unless she is wearing lingerie. Truman's "memories" as presented in such flashbacks are, of course, as manufactured as his present. And yet the private Truman keeps a box of mementos—pictures of his Dad, Lauren's sweater, and a map of Fiji—which seem to keep him grounded in an unexpected way.

As he continuously ruminates about Lauren and her message, several slips in production occur that add to Truman's growing paranoia. A set lighting device falls from the sky dramatically landing feet away almost hitting Truman on the head. This is immediately followed by a radio news broadcast warning that a plane has been dropping its parts on Seahaven Island—suspicious because Truman recognized the object as a light of some kind. Then Truman's dead “father” reappears as a homeless vagrant (an odd sight in Seahaven) and is violently captured and removed just as Truman recognizes him.

“Dad” supposedly fell overboard during a storm and drowned when Truman was young. His father's death created Truman's insurmountable fear of water, which also serves as a convenient way to keep Truman from ever trying to leave Seahaven. Truman also feels guilty for cajoling his Dad to stay out at sea despite the impending storm. As he sits on the beach remembering his Dad, a rainstorm starts and mysteriously only rains where Truman is standing. It follows him from spot to spot before finally breaking open and raining all over the Island. The next day the radio station in Truman's car becomes scrambled and he hears the TV producers' radio communications about his own movements. He begins to realize that he is being followed and that the town is centered on him, a theory he tests by stopping traffic. Next he enters a building that is not part of his usual routine, and behind the elevator doors he gets a very provocative peek backstage. He starts to misbehave in small ways, testing the town to see if they react appropriately to a crazy man, which they do not.

Truman talks with Marlon about the strange things happening to him. Marlon alludes to God, while mentioning how wonderful their hometown is. Then Truman tells Marlon that he is going away for a while. That conversation is nearly immediately followed by a session of reminiscing with Mom and Meryl about how great his/their life in Seahaven has been. An increasingly suspicious Truman notices a fake-looking Mount Rushmore as well as Meryl crossing her fingers in their wedding picture. Even his favorite old movie, "Show Me the Way to Go Home," suspiciously appears on TV with its sugary messages about home and friends. The next day he follows Meryl to work to see if she is really a nurse; at the hospital he is blocked at every turn from viewing the operating room.

Convinced that something is seriously wrong, Truman Burbank begins to investigate his conspiracy theory further and he becomes increasingly angry and sarcastic, especially with his wife and his best friend. He begins to notice the shameless and weird product placements that Meryl manages to fit into their conversations. Unable to escape by boat because of his fear of water, he visits the travel agency. Truman manages to ignore the posters warning of the dangers of terrorists, diseases, wild animals, street gangs, and plane crashes, but the travel agent informs him she cannot book him a flight until the next month.

Determined to get out of town that day, Truman next gets on a bus for Chicago but once he is aboard the driver breaks the transmission on purpose. As passengers parade off we see a soldier and 2 nuns among the slice of America on the bus. Sitting in his car in the driveway of his house, Truman notices that the people who pass his house are on a continuous loop that never changes. Finally he tries to drive his car away, threatening to take Meryl with him to Atlantic City or New Orleans. His path blocked by instant traffic jams at every turn, he gets a little crazed. He eludes these traps and gets on the road, only to stop at a bridge (over water). He shuts his eyes, puts his foot on the gas and makes Meryl drive them across, bravely conquering his fears. Next they run into fake forest fires and even a staged leak at Seahaven Nuclear Power station. At the road block a cop Truman has never met knows his name, the last bit of evidence he needs to be utterly convinced that something is very wrong. He makes a run for it, but is "rescued" by men in white suits.

Back at home, Truman starts to get really angry (and somewhat violent) with terrified Meryl, who breaks character and yells: "Do Something!!" Marlon shows up and

Meryl cries, "Oh Thank God! How can anyone expect me to carry on under these conditions? Its unprofessional!"

"The Truman Show" is beginning to fall apart. In an attempt to undo the damage, Christof writes the dead father back into the script, which is beginning to feel like a soap opera. In an oh-so touching scene, Marlon brings back Truman's Dad as Christof feeds him every line through an earpiece. The carefully produced reunion with his "father" is high drama with the perfect TV shot of Truman crying. The film then cuts to Japanese fans and misty-eyed little old ladies watching intently. The celebration in the production room is interrupted by the film's cut to Lauren, Truman's lost love, who calls in to harass Christof during a congratulatory TV interview.

This interview with Christof two-thirds of the way through the movie provides the film audience with the last few pieces of the puzzle. We learn that Truman was the very first baby ever adopted by a corporation, a twist of fate due only to the fact the he was the first one born of the possible six unwanted babies lined up for his "part". The enigmatic creator of the Truman Show, Christof (i.e. Trumania's god), believes that his creation is not false in any way, but is simply a "controlled reality" which he gazes upon from the "moon" in the dome. We also learn that several attempts have been made to blow the show's cover by infiltrators (this includes Lauren and the "How will it end?" button that she wore).

Truman begins "performing" when he suspects that he is looking into a camera, pulling a not atypical funny spoof in the bathroom mirror but this time ending it with: "That one's for free." Though acting as if all is back to normal, Truman is plotting. Finally, Truman fools the production crew by setting up an elaborate scene, in which he appears to fall asleep out of camera view. He disappears and, in desperation to locate him, Christof cues the sunrise hours before it is due. When the production team discovers him, Truman is sailing away. Ironically, they can't use the ferry to go after him because there is not actually anyone who knows how to drive it, only actors. Christof orders a slowly more violent storm at sea, a suspenseful sequence that makes for great TV and nearly kills Truman. But Christof realizes that he cannot murder Truman on live television. Truman triumphantly reaches the wall of the dome and—in a dramatic standoff with Christof about reality and living—walks out of his "life" saying: "And in case I don't see ya, good afternoon, good evening, and goodnight!" In the end, Truman was performing not just for TV audiences but for his neighbors and friends, too (a revelation about social expectations and living with which performance theorists would heartily agree).

Truman disappears from "The Truman Show" on broadcast day 10913—five television days or an hour and forty-two minutes of viewing time from *The Truman Show's* (the film's) start.