

THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION (1994)

written and directed by Frank Darabont

based on Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption by Stephen King

running time: 139 minutes

BASIC SCREENPLAY ANALYSIS

PROTAGONIST: Andy Dufresne, a banker wrongly imprisoned for the murder of his wife.

CHARACTERIZATION/MAIN MISBEHAVIOR: Guilt-ridden; unable to let go of the past

EXTERNAL GOAL: To adapt to prison life / To break free of prison life

INTERNAL GOAL: To find hope within himself and free himself from the guilt of his wife's death

MAIN DRAMATIC CONFLICT: The Warden

THEME: You can find self-worth in your most hopeless hours.

CENTRAL DRAMATIC QUESTION: Will Andy break free of Shawshank?

ENDING: Andy escapes Shawshank to Mexico with the Warden's dirty money.

ARC: Andy goes from a Shawshank inmate, guilt-ridden over his wife's death, to a free man able to start anew.

STORY ENGINES

ACT I

Andy is found guilty for the murder of his wife and her lover, and is thrown into Shawshank for life. He attempts to adapt to prison life by picking up a hobby with chiseling rocks.

ACT II-A

Andy finds friends and enemies within the prison walls. He begins to adapt to the life inside.

ACT II-B

Andy discovers hope through literature and music, sharing with his fellow inmates. When the Warden discovers his talents as a banker, he uses Andy to launder dirty money. Andy mentors a young inmate who could prove his innocence, but the Warden silences it.

ACT III

Andy decides to break out of Shawshank -- "get busy living or get busy dying." He escapes and brings down all the corruption at Shawshank.

ACT IV

Red is paroled after 40 years at Shawshank. He gets a job at a grocery store, but struggles. Remembering Andy's proposal, he breaks his parole and reunites with Andy in Mexico.

FULL SCREENPLAY ANALYSIS

ACT I

1 - "[If I Didn't Care](#)" by [The Ink Spots](#) plays over a car radio. **ANDY DUFRESNE**, boozed-up, pulls a pistol from the glove compartment.

5-7 - Andy stands trial for the murder of his wife and her lover. Andy pleads his innocence. The court finds Andy guilty and sentences him to life in prison.

8 - **RED**, the narrator, sits in front of a parole board and they deny his parole.

11 - INCITING INCIDENT: Andy enters Shawshank. Red tells us he was a banker.

12 - Red and crew gamble on which new inmate will break down first. Red bets on Andy.

RED (V.O.)

I must admit I didn't think much of Andy the first time I laid eyes on him. It looked like a stiff breeze would blow him over.

15 - **WARDEN NORTON** lectures the new inmates...

WARDEN

I believe in two things: discipline and the bible. Here you'll receive both. Put your trust in the Lord; your ass belongs to me. Welcome to Shawshank.

20 - One of the new inmate, the fat man, breaks down. **CAPTAIN HADLEY** opens his cell and beats him senseless in front of the entire cell block.

21 - STRONG MOVEMENT FORWARD: Andy doesn't break down.

RED (V.O.)

His first night in the joint, Andy Dufresne cost me two packs of cigarettes. He never made a sound.

22 - Andy finds a maggot in his food; befriends Brooks. Brooks feeds the maggot to the bird in his coat pocket, Jake.

24 - Andy discovers the fat man died from Hadley's beating.

29 - END OF ACT ONE TURN: Andy asks Red for a rock hammer.

Andy chooses to pick up a hobby chiseling rocks and adapt to life in prison.

ACT II-A

31 - Andy receives the rock hammer.

33 - Andy is beaten and raped by "the Sisters."

RED (V.O.)

I wish I could tell you that Andy fought the good fight, and the Sisters let him be. I wish I could tell you that, but prison is no fairy-tale world.

38 - FIRST TRIAL: While on a work detail tarring a roof, Andy overhears Hadley complaining about taxes he'll pay on an inheritance he received. Andy breaks the rules and approaches, angering Hadley, and is nearly thrown off the roof. At the last second, Andy informs Hadley he can keep the money without paying taxes and offers to setup the tax free gift (he was a banker after all). In return, he requests beer for the workers.

RED

You could argue he'd done it to curry favor with the guards. Or, maybe make a few friends among us cons. Me, I think he did it just to feel normal again, if only for a short while.

40 - The inmates drink beer without Andy. Heywood, once hostile to Andy, offers him a beer.

HEYWOOD

You want a cold one, Andy?

ANDY

No thanks. I gave up drinking.

Andy grows: alcohol played a large role in his incarceration.

42 - Late at night, Andy writes his name on the wall of his cell with the rock hammer.

43 - Andy approaches Red while watching *Gilda* and asks Red for Rita Hayworth.

45 - FIRST CASUALTY: Andy is beaten within inches of his life by Bogs and the Sisters. The beating is so bad he spends a month in the infirmary.

47 - Bogs is beaten by Hadley for sending Andy to the infirmary.

RED (V.O.)
Two things never happened again after that.
The Sisters never laid a finger on Andy again...
and Bogs never walked again.

49 - Back from the infirmary, Andy finds a [Rita Hayworth poster](#) in his cell from Red.

52 - Andy's cell is tossed by the Warden and Hadley. The Warden knows Andy's good with numbers. Andy impresses the Warden with his knowledge of the Bible.

52 - WARDEN'S AGENDA SETUP: The Warden notices the Rita Hayworth poster, disapproves, but lets it slide.

53 - The Warden gives Andy a new job working with Brooks in the library.

57 - With the Warden's permission, Andy writes to the state for funds to expand the library.

58 - Year after year, Andy does taxes for all the prison guards, even the Warden.

59 - Brooks attempts to kill Heywood, but Andy and Red talk him out of it. Brooks's parole came through. After spending the majority of his life in prison, the real world terrifies him.

61 - MIDPOINT (internal): Around Andy and friends, Red empathizes with Brooks.

RED
They send you here for life and that's what
they take.

Andy realizes the longer he stays at Shawshank, the more frightening freedom becomes.

The following sequence is a setup for Act IV and Red's Story:

61 - Brooks releases his bird, Jake, and leaves Shawshank.

63 - Brooks finds the outside world too fast-paced. He gets a job bagging groceries, but thinks about robbing the store...anything to get back to what he knows.

66 - Brooks chisels "Brooks was here" in his apartment and hangs himself.

67 - Andy receives funds, books, and music for the Shawshank library from the state.

69 - MIDPOINT (external): Andy puts on a record, "[Canzonetta sull'aria](#)" from Mozart's "[Marriage of Figaro](#)," locks the door to the office he's in, and broadcasts the song over the PA for the entire prison to hear.

RED (V.O.)

I have no idea to this day what those two Italian ladies were singing about. Truth is, I don't want to know. Some things are best left unsaid. I'd like to think they were singing about something so beautiful, it can't be expressed in words, and it makes your heart ache because of it. I tell you, those voices soared higher and farther than anybody in a great place dares to dream. It was like some beautiful bird flapped into our drab little cage and made those walls dissolve away, and for the briefest of moments, every last man in Shawshank felt free.

72 - The Warden has Hadley break down the door. Andy receives two weeks in the hole as punishment.

ACT II-B

74 - ASSUMPTION OF POWER (internal): During chow, Andy talks with Red and crew about hope....

ANDY

That's the beauty of music. They can't get that from you... you need it so you don't forget.

RED

Forget?

ANDY

Forget there are places in the world that aren't made out of stone. That there's something inside they can't get to; that they can't touch... that's yours.

RED

What are you talking about?

ANDY

Hope.

RED

Let me tell you something, my friend. Hope is a dangerous thing. Hope can drive a man insane. It's no use on the inside. Better get use to that idea.

ANDY

Like Brooks did?

75 - Red sits in front of the parole board, and after serving 30 years of a life sentence, they deny his parole.

76 - Andy gives Red a harmonica.

76 - Red gives Andy a [Marilyn Monroe poster](#) for Andy's tenth anniversary at Shawshank.

78 - ASSUMPTION OF POWER (external): Andy receives funds from the state and grows Shawshank's library into the best prison library in New England. The inmates now have freedom to read and listen to music.

81 - The Warden uses inmates to work as contract labor outside the prison for huge kickbacks.

84 - Andy works the Warden's books, cleaning the dirty money. Andy claims he'll make the Warden a millionaire by the time he retires. Money is cleaned through a fictitious person.

ANDY

The funny thing is - on the outside, I was an honest man, straight as an arrow. I had to come to prison to be a crook.

85 - Tommy Williams, a young criminal who's been imprisoned all over New England, arrives.

88 - Andy teaches Tommy to read so Tommy can earn his high school diploma.

89 - The 60's: [Raquel Welch is now the poster](#) on Andy's wall.

91 - Red tells Tommy why Andy is in prison. Tommy is shocked.

92 - TURN / PLOT POINT #2: Tommy informs Andy and Red about Elmo Blatch, a former cell-mate who told him explicit details about murdering a golf pro and his mistress.

ELMO

I got me this job one time bussing tables at a country club, so I could case all this big rich pricks that come in. So I pick out this guy, go in one night and do his place. He wakes up. He gives me shit. So I killed him. Him and his tasty bitch he was with. That's the best part. She's fucking this prick, see, this golf pro, but she's married to some other guy. Some hotshot banker. And he's the one they pinned it on!

94 - DECISION: Desperate to clear his name, Andy informs the Warden about Tommy's Elmo Blatch story. Andy begs the Warden to help, but the Warden refuses, as he needs Andy to launder his dirty money. Andy insists that the money laundering will be kept secret and the Warden explodes with rage, putting Andy in the hole for an entire month.

ACT III

96 - In the hole, Andy receives word that Tommy earned his high school diploma.

99 - The Warden has Tommy killed.

100 - The Warden lectures Andy in the hole.

WARDEN

I'm sure by now you've heard. Terrible thing. Man that young, less than a year to go, trying to escape... Broke Captain Hadley's heart to shoot him, truly it did. We just have to put it behind us... move on.

ANDY

I'm done. Everything stops. Get someone else to run your scams.

WARDEN

Nothing stops. Nothing... or you will do the hardest time there is. No more protection from the guards. I'll pull you out of that one-bunk Hilton and cast you down with the Sodomites. You'll think you've been fucked by a train! And the library? Gone...sealed off, brick-by-brick. We'll have us a little book barbecue in the yard. They'll see the flames for miles. We'll dance around it like wild Injuns! You understand me? Catching my drift?... Or am I being obtuse?

[to Hadley]

Give him another month to think about it.

104 - After sixty days in the hole, Andy tells Red he'd go to Zihuatanejo, Mexico if he ever got out of Shawshank.

RED

Mexico's way the hell down there, and you're in here, and that's the way it is!

ANDY

You're right. It's down there, and I'm in here. I guess it comes down to a simple choice, really. Get busy living or get busy dying.

Andy decides to break out of Shawshank.

107 - Andy describes a hayfield with a long rock wall near a town called Buxton. Further, under a black volcanic rock, there will be something waiting for Red if and when he gets out. Andy leaves Red perplexed, worried.

109 - Red tells the crew of his concern for Andy. Heywood mentions, at Andy's request, he delivered him a six foot rope. Powerless to help, they believe Andy will hang himself.

110 - Andy finishes the Warden's books for the night and polishes the Warden's shoes.

111 - Lights out. Andy grabs a rope from under his pillow. A storm closes in...

RED (V.O.)

I have had some long nights in stir. Alone in the dark with nothing but your thoughts, time can draw out like a blade...

112 - POINT OF NO RETURN: The cells open for morning roll call. Andy does not come out.

113 - The Warden finds Andy's shoes in his shoebox.

115 - The Warden, furious Andy has disappeared without a trace, throws Andy's chess pieces at the Raquel Welch poster and discovers a gigantic hole in the wall. Andy has tunneled out and escaped from Shawshank.

RED (V.O.)

In 1966, Andy Dufresne escaped from Shawshank prison. All they found of him was a muddy set of prison clothes, a bar of soap, and an old rock hammer, damn near worn down to the nub. I remember thinking it would take a man six hundred years to tunnel through the wall with it. Old Andy did it in less than twenty.

116 - FLASHBACK: Andy, with his new rock hammer, attempts to chisel his name in the cell wall and discovers the wall breaks away easily.

118 - FLASHBACK: On his final night, Andy walks to his cell wearing both the Warden's shoes and the Warden's suit under his prison clothes.

120 - FLASHBACK: To hide the noise, Andy waits for thunder crashes and breaks open a sewage pipe with a large rock.

RED (V.O.)

Andy crawled to freedom through five hundred yards of shit smelling foulness I can't even imagine, or maybe I just don't want to. Five hundred yards... that's the length of five football fields, just shy of half a mile.

120 - CLIMAX - FLASHBACK: Andy crawls out of the sewage pipe a free man. Rain washes the filth off him. He's finally free.

EPILOGUE

122 - Andy, wearing the Warden's suit, visits a bank. Assuming the fictitious person's identity he used to launder the money, he cleans out the bank account.

RED

All told, he blew town with over three hundred thousand dollars of Warden Norton's money.

123 - Andy mails the Warden's ledger and a note to a newspaper regarding the corruption at Shawshank.

124 - With the police outside his door, the Warden kills himself.

125 - Red receives an unsigned postcard from Fort Hancock, Texas. He knows Andy made it.

126 - A free man, Andy drives along Mexico's Pacific coast toward Zihuatanejo.

ACT IV (RED'S STORY)

128 - RED'S ASSUMPTION OF POWER: Yet again, Red sits in front of the parole board. They ask if he feels rehabilitated.

RED

There's not a day goes by I don't feel regret. Not because I'm in here, or because you think I should. I look back on the way I was then: a young, stupid kid who committed that terrible crime. I want to talk to him. I want to try and talk some sense to him, tell him the way things are. But I can't. That kid's long gone and this old man is all that's left. I got to live with that. Rehabilitated? It's just a bullshit word. So, you go on and stamp your form, sonny, and stop wasting my time. Because to tell you the truth, I don't give a shit.

129 - RED'S TURN: Red's parole is approved and he leaves prison after 40 years of incarceration.

130 - RED'S DECISION: Red rents Brook's old room, working the same job Brooks had at the grocery store.

RED (V.O.)

There's a harsh truth to face. No way I'm gonna make it on the outside. All I do anymore is think of ways to break my parole, so maybe they'd send me back. Terrible thing, to live in fear. Brooks Hatlen knew it. Knew it all too well. All I want is to be back where things make sense. Where I won't have to be afraid all the time. Only one thing stops me. A promise I made to Andy.

136 - RED'S POINT OF NO RETURN: Along the rock wall, Red finds a box under black volcanic rock. Inside he finds money and a letter from Andy, asking Red to join him in Mexico.

ANDY (V.O.)

Remember Red, hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies.

137 - Red chisels into the same wall Brooks did. It now says, "Brooks was here...and so was Red."

RED

Get busy living or get busy dying. That's God damn right.

138 - RED'S CLIMAX: Red breaks his parole and buys a bus ticket.

139 - In Zihuatanejo, Mexico, Red reunites with Andy.

139 - THE END.

A note from the author:

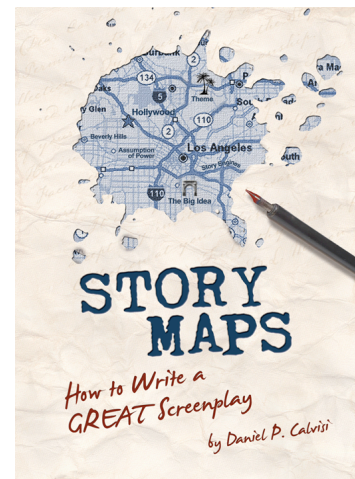
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