



Camden Council Library Services – Movie Club

Pulp Fiction (1994)

Discussion Questions

1. *Pulp Fiction* has three notable characteristics: non-linear structure, pop-culture/cultural references, and violence/brutality. Is there a link between these three elements of the film?
2. What is the purpose of the non-linear structure of the film? How would the scenes fit together in a linear fashion? Were you able to follow the story/ies despite the non-linear structure? Can you compare it with other films with non-linear structures? (Some examples are [Citizen Kane](#) (1941), [Annie Hall](#) (1977), [Memento](#) (2000), [Irréversible](#) (2002), [Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind](#) (2004), [Scott Pilgrim vs. the World](#) (2010).
3. One of the most memorable moments from the film is the Biblical passage quoted by Jules:

*The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the iniquities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men.
Blessed is he who, in the name of charity and good will, shepherds the weak through the valley of darkness, for he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children.
And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who attempt to poison and destroy my brothers. And you will know my name is the Lord when I lay my vengeance upon thee.*

We are told this is [Ezekiel 25:17](#), which actually reads, in its entirety: “And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.” The first two sections are actually references to [Ezekiel 34](#), [Psalms 23](#), and [Genesis 4](#). ([Hollywood Bible #1: Pulp Fiction and Ezekiel 25:17](#), 2012). Why use a manufactured quote? Does the refashioned quote have a bearing, or help makes sense of the rest of the film?

4. On the one hand, the names of things are important in the film (What is a Big Mac or Quarter Pounder called in France? “‘Garçon’ means ‘boy’”, “It’s not a motorcycle, it’s a chopper”). But then Butch tells the cab driver “this is America, honey; our names don’t mean shit” (Conrad, 1997, [Symbolism, Meaning and Nihilism in Quentin Tarantino’s Pulp Fiction](#)). What’s in a name? Why is the use of language so consciously important in the film, when it seems that objective meaning does not exist or “don’t mean shit”?

5. One legend is that the briefcase contains Marcellus Wallace's soul ([What's in the Briefcase?](#), 2013). The main evidence for this theory is that he has a scar on the back of his neck (the Band-Aid), which, according to myth, is where the devil extracts your soul. Two things should be noted: i) Tarantino has nulled this theory by saying that the actor Ving Rhames had a scar on his head and Tarantino liked the look of the Band-Aid; ii) There is little reference to the 'back of the neck' in any mythology, and seems to have been invented by those that spread this theory. Do we believe Tarantino's purely aesthetic use of the image? Does the 'soul hypothesis' inform your viewing of the film? What is in the briefcase?
6. Why is Butch's watch so significant? Is it simply because it is a family heirloom with a colourful history? Can a comparison be made between Butch's watch and Marcellus' briefcase? The briefcase is ultimately valuable because we don't know what's in it, only that Marcellus wants it. We cannot objectively judge the value of the object (because we don't know what it is), but determine its value by its importance to others (Marcellus) (Conrad, 1997, [Symbolism, Meaning and Nihilism in Quentin Tarantino's Pulp Fiction](#)). With Butch we know what the object is (the watch) and its significance to him, yet he is the only one who places any value on the watch. What does this contrast of value reveal?
7. "Each of the main stories ends with some form of redemption" (Ebert, 1995, [The Secrets of Pulp Fiction](#)). People are literally saved (Mia, Marcellus, Honey Bunny, Pumpkin and the people in the coffee shop) but two also gain redemption (Butch by saving Marcellus, and Jules by retiring from crime—In the latter case we are given a stark contrast in Vincent, who shrugs off the 'miracle' and gets killed later on). How is this contrasted with the use of violence in the film? Is the violence 'redemptive'?