**The Truman Show Summary and Analysis of Chapter 1: A Day in the Life - Chapter 6: Memories of Dad**

**Summary**

A close-up on a TV screen where [Christof](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show/study-guide/character-list#christof), facing the camera, informs the viewer that audiences are tired of actors portraying artificial emotions. He then goes on to say that Truman's world might be somewhat fake, but his life and experiences are genuine. On another screen, [Truman Burbank](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show/study-guide/character-list#truman-burbank) speaks into his bathroom mirror, as the credit sequence (for "[The Truman Show](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show)" - the television series within the film) begins. Meryl Burbank, Truman's wife, is played by actress Hannah Gill (who is in turn played by Laura Linney). She and co-star Louis Coltrane (Noah Emmerich) who plays "Marlon," speak candidly in a documentary style interview, supporting Christof's assertion that "The Truman Show" is real. From these opening moments, it is clear that everyone is in on the secret - except for Truman himself.

Truman, meanwhile, continues to speak into his bathroom mirror, beneath which there is a hidden camera connected to a live feed. A title on the screen reads "Day 10,909." After getting dressed, Truman leaves his house and cheerfully greets his neighbours. He is about to get into to his car, when suddenly, something comes careening out of the sky and lands on the ground. It is a theatre light, and Truman examines it quizzically. Moments later, as he drives to work, he hears on the news that a plane flying over Seahaven has been shedding parts - which explains the light. The radio announcer uses this example as an opportunity to emphasize the inherent risks of flying.

Truman buys a newspaper and a fashion magazine ("for the wife!") from his usual newsstand. As he moves through town, he appears in various awkward camera angles, creating a "hidden camera" effect. In addition, some of the frames have a vignette effect around the edges, making these images feel like surveillance footage. However, the easy, happy "Rondo alla Turca" plays as Truman, polite and friendly, makes his way into his office. Once inside, he huddles in a corner and tries to make a call to the Fiji Islands. His co-worker stops by and shows Truman a newspaper headline reading "Seahaven Voted Best Town on Earth!" Truman lies about whom he is speaking to and then, right after his co-worker leaves, he asks the operator about a listing for "Lauren Garland." This is clearly a secret phone call.

Truman rips out a pair of eyes from an ad in the fashion magazine, coughing loudly to conceal the sound. [Laurence](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show/study-guide/character-list#laurence) comes over to his desk and hands him a file for a prospect in Wells Park that Truman needs to close. Truman tries to get out of it, but Laurence tells him that he needs to go to meet his quota or he'll risk losing his job. Truman arrives at the Ferry to take him to Harbor Island, where Wells Park is located. He is clearly terrified of getting in the water, and as he walks down the dock, his fear paralyzes him - he turns around.

Back at home, Truman is gardening in a bright-colored outfit when his wife, "Meryl", comes home on her white bike wearing a pristine nurse's uniform. She shows her husband a "Chef's Pal" - a kitchen tool she bought for him while checking out at the grocery store. At night, Truman and Marlon drink beer and hit golf balls. Truman confesses that he wants to get out of his job and off the island of Seahaven. He wants to go to Fiji - the furthest possible place from Seahaven. He is hoping to use his annual bonus to take the trip. Marlon tries to dissuade him, saying that Truman's job and life are both enviable.

Late at night, Truman sits alone on the beach. Cut to a montage of a boat trip Truman took with his father Kirk when he was a child. Young Truman urged his father to keep sailing even though the sky looked menacing. There was a terrible storm and Truman's father was thrown overboard. Despite Truman's attempts to save him, the older man drowned. Truman breaks out of his reverie when the rain starts to fall. Truman stands, and suddenly realizes that the tiny shower is falling only on him, and it follows him as he moves, like a wet spotlight. Moments later, the whole sky opens up.

Back at home, Truman, soaked, tries to convince Meryl that they can save enough money to "bum around the world for a year." Meryl brings up the reality of their financial obligations and her desire to have a child. She belittles Truman's ambition and tells him to come to bed. Cut to two security guards watching the live "Truman Show" feed while on the job. One of them comments that when Truman and Meryl get intimate, the producers turn the camera away or play music.

The next day, Truman buys a paper and a fashion magazine at the newsstand, as is his routine. As he walks to work, he notices a homeless man staring at him. Walking closer he recognizes the man's face... it's his Dad. Suddenly, two plainclothes people briskly carry the homeless man away. Truman tries to run after them but various obstacles keep blocking his path, and the homeless man disappears into a bus. Truman watches it go, stunned and frozen.

Truman goes to see his mother, Angela, who tells him that she, too, sees his dad everywhere, claiming these visions to be a symptom of loss. Truman, though, is convinced that the man he saw is his father, and his certainty is compounded by the fact that his father's body was never recovered. Truman's mother muses that Truman still feels some internal guilt about his father's death. She comforts him by saying she doesn't blame him. Truman, filled with emotion, doesn't respond.

**Analysis**

Although it came out over 10 years ago, *The Truman Show* remains relevant and prescient today - perhaps even more so than when it was released. Director [Peter Weir](http://www.gradesaver.com/author/peter-weir) and screenwriter Andrew Niccol wanted to examine how the growing popularity of reality television blurred the lines between fiction and fact. Andrew Marantz writes, "Reviewing [*The Truman Show*] in 1998, Jonathan Rosenbaum expressed scepticism about its conceit.’Given the number of undramatic moments that fill Truman's daily life... are we supposed to believe that millions of spectators... are taking all this in?'" Less than ten years after Rosenbaum wrote that review, *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* debuted on the E! Network, chronicling the real-life exploits of a fame-hungry family in Los Angeles. The show is wildly popular, with fans calling the Kardashians "relatable" - meaning that something about them feels authentic.

Televised authenticity is the same reason Christof gives for the success of "The Truman Show." However, from the opening moments of *The Truman Show*, director Weir draws the audience's attention to the artificiality of cinema and television, despite Christof's insistence of the opposite. The credit sequence for the *The Truman Show* (the film) is replaced by the opening credits of "The Truman Show," (the artificial television show). Instead of crediting *Truman Show* actors Laura Linney and Noah Emmerich, the credits name the characters that these actors play - Hannah Gill and Louis Coltrane - who in turn play characters Meryl and Marlon on the fictional "The Truman Show."

Both these actors, along with creator Christof, appear first out of character, and claim that "The Truman Show" is absolutely real. The careful construction of these opening sequences - actors playing actors playing characters - introduces the satirical tone that defines *The Truman Show*. Weir draws back the curtains to reveal the artificial constructions the media attempts to frame as "authentic." However, Louis and Hannah have been playing Marlon and Meryl, respectively, for years - and it is quite possible that their own identities have become tangled up in those of their "Truman Show" characters. Therefore, when Louis and Hannah claim that "The Truman Show" is real, they likely believe it, to some extent.

Meanwhile, even Truman Burbank's name is a cheeky nod to show business. His first name - "True Man" - indicates the fact that Truman is the only person in Seahaven whose reactions are "true," because he has no idea that his entire life is a performance for 5,000 hidden television cameras. He easily accepts the artificial behaviour that viewers of *The Truman Show* might find strange - simply because he does not know anything else. Burbank is the name of the rather functional city northeast of Hollywood where many major film studios and media companies are headquartered. While Truman shares this last name with the characters of his parents and wife, Truman himself is the only real "Burbank" in the universe of the film.

Weir uses different visual techniques and styles to create subtle shifts in the viewer's relationship with Truman's life. In her detailed analysis of the film, scholar Simone Knox creates a detailed layout of the placement of cameras throughout the Seahaven Island set. She points out Weir's calculated use of stylistic devices ranging from the wide angle lens with vignetted edges... the noticeable zoom-in... the jerky quality of the camera movement and slight lack of focus... to the noticeably low camera angle, the camera here does not represent the "objective" camera of the traditionally invisible film apparatus. Instead, it needs to be understood as representing (or more appropriately, simulating) the 'television' cameras employed by the program 'The Truman Show'.

When Truman is sitting on the beach remembering his father, the film cuts to a "memory" of Truman's father's death. However, this is only what Christof wants the viewers of the television show (and therefore, the film) to believe that Truman is thinking about. As viewers, we accept the visual language of this flashback, believing it to be a visual indication of his thoughts. However, there is no way to verify whether or not this is "true" - as Truman tells Christof at the end of the film, "you never had cameras in my head."

Later, there is a rain shower that falls only on Truman. He realizes this and moves around, watching the shower follow him. Moments later, the sky opens up. It is likely that the producers would have cut from a close-up of Truman in the rain to the wide shot, thus preventing the fictional television viewers from seeing the glitch of the isolated shower. However, Weir presents the full scene to the MOVIE viewers, making it a "rare moment of authenticity" (Knox) - a behind-the-scenes glimpse into Truman-land.

In his basement, Truman unlocks a trunk that contains various toys and souvenirs from his childhood. He looks through old photographs of his father. Meryl comes downstairs and Truman claims to be fixing the lawnmower. Truman tells Meryl that he saw his father on the street, but Meryl isn't surprised, because, she claims, Truman's mother called with the news. She brushes off the incident, keeping up her 'happy housewife' veneer. After Meryl is gone, Truman goes back to his trunk, his paranoia growing increasingly apparent. He removes a red sweater from a plastic bag and holds it tenderly. Cut to two diner waitresses who are watching this scene on a television screen surrounded by Truman memorabilia. These women are clearly invested in Truman's life, and one of them comments that "they got rid of *her*, but they couldn't erase the memory."

To explain, the TV show dissolves into a flashback of young Truman in a high school band uniform, watching a pretty girl, Lauren. He clearly has a crush on her, and they exchange smiles. Suddenly, Meryl appears, wearing a cheerleading uniform, and falls on Truman. She introduces herself and flirts, but Truman, distracted by the pretty girl, is ambivalent to Meryl's advances. The montage continues with a clip of Truman and Meryl dancing together at a school event next to Marlon and his date. They are all having a great time until Truman spots Lauren and starts watching her instead of Meryl. A few men in suits surround Lauren and hustle her away.

In the school library, Meryl and Marlon try to convince Truman to hang out with them, but he has to study. After they leave, Truman notices Lauren's hand resting on the opposite study carrel. He approaches her and they finally meet. Lauren says she is not allowed to talk to him, but assures him that this is not her decision. He admires her pin, which reads "How is it Going to End?" Truman asks her to go out for pizza later in the week and she tells him that they have to go now or it won't happen. The vignetted frame tries to keep up with Truman and Lauren as they run to the beach, laughing. While they are standing near the waves, Lauren tells him that they don't have much time, and Truman kisses her.

Suddenly a sedan barrels onto the beach. Lauren, suddenly panicked, tells Truman that everyone knows everything he does and they are all pretending. He doesn't understand. She tells him that her real name is Sylvia. A man gets out of the car and tells Truman that he is Lauren's father, while Lauren keeps insisting that everything is fake. The older man tells Truman that Lauren has schizophrenia and that she "brings all her boyfriends" to the beach while shoving her into his car. As they drive away, "Lauren's Dad" tells Truman that they are moving to Fiji, while Lauren/Sylvia screams protests out the window, telling Truman to come find her. Truman watches them leave, dumbstruck and heartbroken. He notices that Lauren has left her red sweater behind and keeps it.

Back in the diner, which we now see is called "Truman Bar," one waitress explains to the other that Truman did not follow Lauren to Fiji because his mother got sick and he's so kind that he could not leave her behind. Cut back to Truman, present day, as he buries his face in Lauren's sweater. He flips up the lapel, which still bears the "How's it going to End" button. He picks up a framed photo of Meryl and opens it up - on the back of Meryl's photo is a collage of different facial features ripped out of women's magazines - Truman's attempt to recreate an image of Lauren. He hasn't been able to get the eyes right, but now, he finally has a match. Cut to the real Lauren/Sylvia, deeply touched while watching this private moment on television.

The next day, Truman is driving his car to work, shot from the same camera angle as always - indicating a hidden camera behind the car stereo. The radio suddenly gives way to voices on a walkie-talkie, instructing the extras to stand by, and indicating Truman's exact position. As soon as Truman realizes this, he swerves, and the voice panics and demands a change of frequency. Truman realizes that he has just heard something he shouldn't have heard, even as the radio announcer attributes the interference to a police scanner.

Truman is about to enter his office, but suddenly decides not to go inside. He takes in his surroundings through a new lens of paranoia, slowly retreating from his morning routine. Later, Truman sits on a bench and observes the people of Seahaven. At one point, he is almost hit by a bus, but it stops just short of him. Truman puts out his hand, and an approaching car stops at his command, as well. He breaks into a run and barrels into a nearby building, saying he has an appointment at Gable Enterprises. The Security Guards scramble to keep him away from the elevators, but he manages to glimpse a craft service table and some waiting extras behind one of the elevator doors. The security guards drag Truman outside despite his protests.

Truman runs to the market where Marlon works and finds his friend stocking a vending machine. Truman insists that he is on to "something BIG" and tries to explain what's happening, but Marlon laughs it off. Later, Marlon and Truman watch a spectacular sunset from the beach. Truman asks Marlon how far he has ventured off the island, and Marlon says he has gone all over, but there's no place like home. Truman tells Marlon in confidence that he's going away for a while.

Truman, still raw and paranoid from his recent discoveries, looks through childhood photos with Meryl and his mother. Then, Meryl offers to drive her mother-in-law home so that Truman can watch his favourite show, "Golden Oldies." Truman flips through the photo album again wistfully, but is shocked to notice that in the photo of him and Meryl on their wedding day, her fingers are crossed. The next day, Truman tries to confront his wife, but she hurries out the door. She claims that she is needed in surgery because many people were injured in an elevator crash in the Gable Enterprises building.

Truman watches Meryl go and as soon as it's safe, gets on his bicycle, and rides off down the street after her. He arrives at the hospital and asks for his wife, but a doctor tells Truman that Meryl is in pre-op. Truman leaves a message for Meryl: he's going to Fiji and he'll call her when he gets there. Recognizing the shock on the doctor's face, Truman stealthily follows her through the halls of the hospital, dodging all the obstacles suddenly coming his way. Truman peers through the window at the operating theatre, forcing Meryl and the "medical staff" to bungle their way through the fake "surgery."

**Analysis**

In 1997, the year before [*The Truman Show*](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show) came out, the Walt Disney Company created a New Urbanist Village called "Celebration" near Orlando. In theory, the town bore a close resemblance to [Christof](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show/study-guide/character-list#christof)'s design for Seahaven Island. Critic Douglas Cunningham compares Disney's philosophy behind Celebration to Seahaven: "It isn't fake, it's just controlled." Both these settings are based on a utopian ideal that comes from 1950s American idealism. Shows like "The Honeymooners," "Leave it to Beaver," "Lassie," and "My Three Sons" showed a vision of middle-class white suburbia. Later in the film, Christof calls "The Truman Show" a source of comfort for his viewers - he wraps Truman in a cocoon of nostalgia, "protecting" him from the diverse urban world outside Seahaven's walls.

Unlike the televised depictions of suburbia from the 1950s, though, Truman is trapped in Christof's version of utopia, which, in Cunningham's opinion, actually makes Seahaven a dystopia. This interpretation is compounded by Christof's totalitarian control over Truman's life. Ultimately, though, the drama from the show comes from the conflict between Christof's plans and Truman's natural desires. Even though the producers endeavoured to keep Truman and Lauren/Sylvia apart, Truman's longing for his lost love has propelled one of the show's most beloved story lines.

The producers have gained from and celebrated Truman's heartbreak over Lauren/Sylvia, even though it was never meant to happen - but they also make sure to control it, only letting it go so far as to benefit the show. Earlier in the film, Truman makes a secret phone call from his office, trying to reach Lauren/Sylvia in Fiji. Soon thereafter, his co-worker shows him a headline boasting that Seahaven is the best place in the world. Later, another co-worker sends him on an assignment that involves his traveling on a ferry - reminding him how terrified he is of the water.

However, when Truman lifts Lauren's red sweater out of his trunk, the "Truman Show" feed cuts to a montage of their brief, illicit relationship. It becomes clear that Lauren/Sylvia was a distraction from Meryl, Truman's intended mate. When Truman asks Lauren out, she warns him that they have to go now or "it won't happen" - because the producers won't let it. As Lauren/Sylvia and Truman run out of the school, the cameras scramble to keep up with him. However, by the time they are alone on the beach, they are framed in a poetic over-the shoulder shot. They are allowed to have these stolen moments that make a deep impression on Truman's mind - but before he can actually comprehend what Lauren/Sylvia is telling him; she is whisked away.

To the producers, Truman's yearning for Lauren/Sylvia gives him a sense of purpose as an adult, fueling his wanderlust and his conflicts with Meryl about the future. For Truman, though, she represents unanswered questions - questions he might not yet even know to ask. The photograph of Meryl with the hidden image of Lauren/Sylvia on the back is indicative of the fact that even though Lauren/Sylvia is an actor, she made a real impact on Truman. Critic Maurice Yacowar writes, "The reversal of images shows the antithetical nature of the two women. Meryl is false, Sylvia is genuine; Meryl's image is whole but posed, while Sylvia's is made of pieces of other pictures, but represents the real woman Truman preserves in his mind."

Meanwhile, this section of the film marks Truman's growing awareness of a suspicious agenda, and he starts to get one step ahead of the show's architects. He starts behaving in a way that they cannot explain away with a radio announcement or a perfectly timed extra. Yacowar observes, "When Truman acts unpredictably, he forces actors to do what they were only pretending to do, like drive a bus or amputate the leg of a woman pretending to be anesthetised" (Yacowar). Truman is now pushing the limits of his show's artifice, and only the truth will stop him.

Lauren/Sylvia sits at home, one of the millions of viewers watching Truman's emotional reunion with his father. She looks troubled and then, determined. On television, a news story about Truman begins, summarizing the show's popularity over the past three decades. Meanwhile, the 24-hour feed continues in a tiny window in the corner of the screen, showing Truman sitting in his kitchen drinking Mococoa. The news story reveals the "intricate network of cameras" that gives [Christof](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show/study-guide/character-list#christof) and his team the ability to capture Truman's every move without his knowledge. Then, the newscaster announces that Christof, who is notoriously private, has decided to grant an interview. His office and the show's massive control room is hidden behind the "moon" over Seahaven Island.

The newscaster speaks to Christof through video conference, allowing Christof to do the interview from the control room. The newscaster reviews other instances (before the return of Truman's father) that civilians have successfully infiltrated Truman's world. Christof agrees that people have popped out of Christmas presents and parachuted out of the sky, but Kirk (Truman's father) is the first former cast member to make his way back onto Seahaven island. Christof takes his television audience through his manipulations in order to keep Truman on the island, capped by Kirk's death at sea. Christof is going to explain Kirk's 22-year absence by saying the man had amnesia.

Christof says that there are 5,000 cameras in Seahaven Island, but the show only started with only one. He says that Truman was cast as a baby because his birth coincided with the show's air date, and he is the first child to ever be legally adopted by a corporation. The newscaster comments that "[The Truman Show](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show)" has generated revenues equal to the "gross national product of a small country," mostly through product placement. Everything in Seahaven is available for sale in "The Truman Catalog."

A viewer calls in and criticizes Christof for his "sick" manipulation of Truman and his life. Cut to see who is on the other end of the phone - it is Lauren/Sylvia, pacing in front of a bulletin board filled with "Free Truman" propaganda. According to Christof, Truman's life is normal and Seahaven is the way the world should be. He calls the real world "sick," and tells Sylvia that Truman prefers his cell. Christof indicates that Meryl will be leaving Truman and he still wants to broadcast the first "on-air conception," so he will be bringing in a new love interest for Truman.

Late at night, Christof watches a wall-size screen filled with a close-up of Truman sleeping and touches the image tenderly. Early the next morning, Truman looks into the bathroom mirror as usual. Two technicians watch him and wonder if he's looking at them, but he's simply drawing cartoons on the mirror with soap. Truman appears to be back to his normal routine, and viewers all over the world watch him happily. He goes to work and does his job with a smile on his face. He meets "Vivian," his beautiful new co-worker and planned love interest. Later, he mows the lawn with his new Elk Rotary lawnmower. In the control room, the technicians appear to be on autopilot.

Truman is now living in the basement, because, as one of the technician’s states, Meryl has packed up and left him. Suddenly, in examining the feed, Christof notices that something is wrong. He tries to call Truman, but he doesn't answer, even though he seems to be lying asleep on a mattress. Back on Seahaven, Marlon's truck comes squealing to a halt outside Truman's house and he barrels inside with his usual six-pack of beer. He pulls back the covers to find that there is only a plastic snowman under the covers. Christof directs Marlon to look around the room, but Truman is gone. For the first time in over 10,000 days, Christof suddenly cuts off transmission from Seahaven Island.

Christof and his team go into panic mode as thousands of extras patrol the streets of Seahaven looking for Truman, to no avail. Christof decides to cue the sunrise early so it will be easier to search the island. Meanwhile, he instructs all of the extras take their "first positions" as if the day is proceeding as planned. Finally, they shift to the cameras on the harbor. Christof whispers Truman's name and there he is, on a sailboat in the middle of the water. In a closeup, Truman is wearing a captain's hat, happily navigating his way towards the horizon. He is holding his makeshift photo of Lauren/Sylvia.

Christof orders another boat to sail out to meet Truman, but the actors on the ferry can't actually drive the boat. In a desperate attempt to stop Truman, Christof authorizes starting a storm over the boat, hoping that it will scare Truman into turning back. As the storm rages, Truman shows uncharacteristic courage, trying to keep going through the treacherous waters.

**Analysis**

In this section, the viewer gets a look at the machinations that go into running Seahaven Island smoothly while keeping Truman in the dark. The ironically private Christof accurately describes the Island as a "cell" in his conversation with Sylvia. Meanwhile, just as this gilded cell keeps the horrors of the real world out, it also keeps Truman locked inside. Thomas More's version of utopia was an island with only one exit, just like Seahaven, but the community stayed there voluntarily. Christof's utopia, then, is a dystopia for Truman. Christof's utopia complies with the suburban ideal that populated American television screens in the 1950s and 1960s.

Just like Disneyland, Truman's suburban street has a mostly white population, everyone is happy, works 9-5 jobs, and nobody goes hungry. When a needy or dirty entity (like Kirk) appears - it is perfectly permissible for a middle-class white woman like Truman's mother to complain about the filth that has infiltrated the lily-white community - her complaint about the homeless is echoed in a newspaper headline the very next day. Earlier in the film, Christof claims that viewers find "comfort" in "The Truman Show," thus insinuating that his audience is most comfortable with the antiquated, artificial, white-picket-fence ideal. In this way, Weir is able to accuse the viewers of complicity in Truman's entrapment.

Weir also makes a conceded effort to minimize his depiction of the world outside of Seahaven Island, except for the most vital tether - the viewers who keep "The Truman Show" relevant, year after year. We see the same viewers in the same place in shot after shot, commenting on Truman. He is an embodiment of these viewers' desire to break away from the monotony of their own lives. While he hits all the benchmarks of life that Christof has planned for him, the viewers might be remaining stationery - in a job, a tiring relationship, or any other kind of rut.

Because the success of his show is based on dedicated viewership, Christof can never create a total separation between the world inside and outside the dome. The people outside are curious about what's going on inside, even breaking in on certain occasions. The insiders are dependent on the outside to fuel their livelihood. Everyone on Seahaven Island (with the obvious exception of Truman) has a life outside the dome. This is what Truman realizes when he sees that Meryl crossed her fingers while taking her wedding vows. Their marriage was real for Truman, but Meryl's crossed fingers indicate that she did not mean her vows, and might want to get married one day "for real."

The 18th century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham designed the Panopticon, an institutional building that would allow one watchman to observe all inmates at once. In his 1975 book *Discipline and Punish*, French Philosopher Michel Foucault wrote about the Panopticon as a metaphor for society. Foucault re-defined the panopticon to address the tendency of modern society to normalize itself. No longer were despots needed to exercise complete control; rather, permanent visibility forces members of society to comply by a common set of rules.

Many years later, contemporary social critics have invoked Foucault's theory to describe the effect that surveillance has on society. In an article from July 2013, nearly 15 years after the release of *The Truman Show*, *Vice* Magazine's Motherboard blog compares the ubiquitous Christof to the surveillance culture in the United States after 9/11. DJ Pangburn writes, "Christof's vocabulary echoes some of the common themes we recognize in national security language." He goes on to point out the crucial voyeurism involved in the success of "The Truman Show" in *The Truman Show*. He therefore compares Lauren/Sylvia and others like her to Edward Snowden - the infamous CIA whistle-blower who alerted Americans to the extent of government surveillance.

Truman struggles for his life in the "ocean" surrounding Seahaven Island as [Christof](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show/study-guide/character-list#christof) increases the intensity of the storm bearing down on him. Christof calmly watches Truman cling desperately to the side of the boat and viewers all over the world cheer him on. Truman screams his challenge to Christof, "you'll have to kill me!" Christof tells his crew to capsize the boat, but Truman does not care if he drowns. A giant wave crashes over the boat, but Truman has tied himself to the boat with ropes. As he is finally submerged in water, eyes closed, Christof can't take it anymore. He orders his crew to stop the storm. The sun comes out and Truman, who is flung over the side of the boat, chokes and sputters - he is alive.

Weakened, he raises the sail, determined to keep going. Cut to a wide shot of Truman's lonely boat floating out to sea. Truman turns his battered face to the sun, appearing serene. Suddenly, the boat pierces the horizon - the end of the massive Seahaven Island set. Truman presses his hand against it and then flings his body at the wall with all his might - but it won't give. Truman, defeated, collapses in tears. He sees a camouflaged flight of stairs and walks up them. Finally Christof decides to speak to Truman directly from the sky.

Christof tells Truman that he is the "creator of a television show that gives hope and joy and inspiration to millions" and that Truman is the star. Truman asks if anything was real - and Christof tells him that he is real, which is what made him so good to watch. Christof tries to keep him from exiting the world, warning him of the horrors that await him on the other side of the wall.

Christof tells Truman that he is too afraid to leave, because he knows him, saying, "I have been watching you your whole life." Truman keeps his back to the camera, as the whole world awaits his response. He turns to face the invisible Christof, and says his famous line, "in case I don't see ya, good afternoon, good evening, and good night." With his signature laugh, Truman takes a deep bow and leaves Seahaven Island for the first - and the last - time.

Lauren/Sylvia runs out her apartment, tears in her eyes. The patrons of Truman's bar scream with joy. Truman has inspired them all, and everyone cheers him on - except for Christof. They cease transmission of [The Truman Show](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show) once again, this time for good. The security guards wonder what else is on and go searching for the TV Guide.

**Analysis**

When [Peter Weir](http://www.gradesaver.com/author/peter-weir) describes his emotional connection to Andrew Niccol's screenplay, he recalls that he really became committed to the project when he realized that Truman was willing to risk his own life for his freedom. The character of Truman starts out as deceptively bumbling and compliant, but Christof and his millions of regular viewers have no idea how much courage lies dormant beneath his goofy smile (an apt comparison to Jim Carrey himself).

As Truman says to Christof at the end of the film, "you never had a camera in my head." Because of this, Truman's character development can be viewed twofold - the way "The Truman Show" viewers see it, and the way that [Truman Burbank](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show/study-guide/character-list#truman-burbank) himself actually experiences his life. It is possible that his arc is not as severe as it seems. There is no confirmation that when Truman was sitting on the beach looking out at the water, he was actually thinking about his father's death. He may have been concocting ways to get out of Seahaven Island. Just as "The Truman Show" viewers are not privy to Truman's most private, intimate moments, neither is the audience of *The Truman Show*:

Christof cuts away from Truman and Meryl whenever they're about to make love. When Truman makes the decision to escape from Seahaven Island by boat, thus conquering his greatest fear, he does it away from both Christof's and Weir's cameras. When Christof rediscovers Truman, he looks happier than he has throughout the film, sailing his boat and looking off into the horizon. The last time Truman was faced with the prospect of crossing over water (in a car, no less), he had to close his eyes and force Meryl to drive.

Simone Knox differentiates between the "film" shots (shots that Weir composed for *The Truman Show*) and the "television" shots (the shots that mirror what "The Truman Show" audience is seeing) at the end of the film, when Truman finally hits the "horizon." She writes,

The smoothly composed shots of Truman himself here should all be 'film' shots, considering that the television show would be unlikely to position permanent cameras near the fake horizon-- after all, in the unlikely event that Truman gets to this place, the show would effectively be over... but there are some vignetted shots here, which hints that the 'television' camera in the end assumes the position of the invisible and potentially omnipresent 'film' camera, becoming less bound to notions of diegetic justifiability and logic.

There are no clear answers to Knox's query, and at the same time, Truman is sick of Christof's answers. The ending of the film is deliberately ambiguous. Throughout his life, someone has been able to offer Truman an explanation for every anxiety, every strange event - his dad's disappearance, the cinema light falling, the interference on the radio. However, as Truman steps out of the Seahaven Island set, at least he realizes that the world does not function so neatly. He embraces the idea of the unexpected, because at least he finally has control over the narrative. Truman's choice, then, is to recede from the public eye - both the viewers of his television show and of Weir's film. His importance has been an illusion, and he has chosen to abandon it for the truth.

John McGuire uses Plato's famous cave allegory to describe the viewers of "The Truman Show." Plato's story is about a group of prisoners who are chained in a dark cave and cannot see anything except the wall in front of them. The prisoners' knowledge of the outside world is dependent on whatever shadows appear on this wall. Therefore, their understanding of reality is limited in comparison to those who can turn around and look at the real thing, not the two-dimensional outline.

Plato's tale draws the distinction between reality and illusion. In this context, Truman becomes a "paradigmatic philosopher and teacher" who renounces the world of illusion (or television). However, the audience of "The Truman Show" is not inspired by Truman's courage. Instead, they look for a new illusion to lose themselves in. In essence, McGuire asserts, Truman breaks through the walls of the cave, while the viewers voluntarily keep staring at shadows.