

# The Castle

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Gabby

# Filmic Background

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- Rob Sitch (Director) was born in 1962 in Melbourne and attended the University of Melbourne, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery in 1987 → he practised medicine for a short time before switching to a career in film
- The screenwriting team consisted of Rob Sitch, Santo Cilauro, Tom Gleisner and Jane Kennedy - all of whom were veteran writers and performers
- *The Castle* was filmed in 11 days mostly in Melbourne, on a \$750,000 budget and ended up grossing \$1,0326,428 at the box office in Australia
- The film was immensely popular in Australia and New Zealand, but not so much globally
- It plays on the notions of national self image, more specifically, the concept of working-class Australians and their place in modern Australiana

# Plot

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- The Kerrigan's live in the blue-collar outer suburb of Melbourne, in a house built on toxic landfill that is adjacent to an airport runway.
- Despite this, Darryl Kerrigan (the father) believes that the family lives in the lap of luxury, referring to his home as his 'castle'
- Their blissful life is turned upside down one day, when a property value inspector inspects the house, with the Kerrigans subsequently receiving a letter of compulsory acquisition for the house a few weeks later
- In an attempt to ensure his 'castle' won't be taken, Darryl attempts to fight the eviction and hires the incompetent lawyer, Dennis Denuto
- While in court one day (awaiting the court's decision) Darryl makes small talk with a man outside the courthouse, Lawrence Hammill. In the meantime, the court rejects the family's appeal
- Despite this, hope is not lost, as Lawrence reveals himself to be a retired Queen's Counsel and takes interest in the Kerrigan's case due to his extensive experience in constitutional law
- Lawrence argues in court that the Kerrigan's have the right to just terms of compensation and closes his case by saying that the house is more than just a structure, but that the Kerrigan's house has been built on love and shared memories

# Characters

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- Darryl Kerrigan - the father and protagonist, a family man who holds strong family values
- Sal Kerrigan - the mother, adored by her family particularly for her craft and cooking abilities
- Dale Kerrigan - the youngest son who narrates the film, fills his day with menial tasks such as 'digging holes',
- Tracey Petropoulos - the family's only daughter and newlywed hairdresser, presumed to also be the favourite child
- Con Petropoulos - Tracey's new husband, an accountant and amateur kickboxer
- Steve Kerrigan - the second oldest son and apprentice mechanic, bonds with his father over 'The Daily Post'
- Wayne Kerrigan - the oldest son, he is serving time in prison for armed robbery, he is the black sheep of the family but is still loved regardless
- Dennis Denuto - a bumbling, inept, 'suburban' lawyer, who previously failed to defend Wayne on his armed robbery charges
- Lawrence Hammill Q - a retired barrister who comes to the Kerrigans aid by representing them (and representing them far better than Dennis Denuto!)

# Themes

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## The patriarch and masculine identity

- Dale's voiceover establishes Darryl as an honourable patriarch from the start of the film,, "Dad is the backbone of the Kerrigan family"
- The motif of building and construction is associated with the idea of Darryl being a competent, masculine figure
- The recurring image of the father at the head of the table reinforces the power and masculinity of Darryl

## The patriarch and the discourse of commerce

- The 'bargain hunting' is seen as a symbol of competitiveness and thriftiness which reinforces the Kerrigan's working-class status
- Economic language continues in the sons with them having an interest in the trading post, cars, boats (imitating their father) and Steven eventually joining the tow truck business, following the footsteps of his father

# Themes continued

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## Representations of female identities

- The women in the film constantly reinforce the traditional, conservative motherhood identity
- The mother is praised yet confined to her domestic ability → she is praised for her cooking ability and works in the Sunbeam office (symbolic of domestic appliances)

## Representation of authority and 'the rich'

- We see that the police have an affinity with the working class opposed to the rich → as seen when Darryl steals the gates and the policeman says "Daz, I know you did it... Put them gates around the back."
- This is symbolic of the affinity between the working class

## The underdog and the battler

- The fighting spirit of Darryl is seen with his mix of jargon and over the top claims → making him somewhat comical yet a loveable underdog who fights the ruling authority

# Practice Essays

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1. The language we use or fail to use can reflect our status. Language can serve as access into certain contexts or reinforce our exclusion from these contexts. Agree or disagree with reference to *The Castle*
2. Language can reinforce parallel identities and lead to an exploration of the concept of reconciliation and the building of new relationships. Agree or disagree with reference to *The Castle*
3. Explain how characterisation has been used by director Rob Sitch to shape perspectives on identity and culture in *The Castle*
4. Write a 'filmic review' about *The Castle*
5. "What we know of the world is captured in the way we talk about it" Agree or disagree with reference to *The Castle*
6. How has your study of *The Castle*, affirmed or refuted common stereotypes?
7. How does *The Castle* use voice and other cultural signifiers to explore differences between groups of people?