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Bonnie and Clyde: Critical Thinking Essay

# **Situation in 1930’s America**

1930’s was the decade of the Great Depression. The largest stock market crashed in the United States in 1929. The depression caused severe effects on the economy of America as well as the rest of the world. During this time, people suffered from harsh economic, social, and cultural conditions. The American people elected a new President, Roosevelt, who undertook to make the lives of people better. However, this depression lasted until the late 1930's. People were fed up with news updates about the prevalent adverse conditions.

# **Emergence of Gangs**

During the period of the Great Depression, there was a considerable increase in the rate of crimes. People were desperate as they had no jobs and securities. New gangs started to emerge in different parts of the county. Among them was the Barrow gang that was headed by Bonnie and Clyde, a notorious American criminal couple. They attracted the attention of the public very soon because of their particular backgrounds and the attributes of their personalities. People were fascinated by the idea of a romantic, young couple who set out to commit robberies.

# **Criminal Exploits of Bonnie and Clyde**

Bonnie and Clyde, after they first met in 1930, came closer to each other, and Bonnie was attracted to Clyde. She was tired of her routine, boring life and wanted to do something exciting. Later, they started traveling across Central America in pursuit of money. They were accompanied by Raymond Hamilton who was a gunman. During a robbery in Texas, they killed a store owner named Bucher. After a few months, they had an encounter with policemen at a country dance, where they killed a law officer and badly wounded the policemen. Later, they killed Howard Hall when they robbed the store.

In 1933, Buck Barrow, the brother of Clyde, and his wife also joined the gang, which now consisted of five members. They committed bank robberies in Indiana and Minnesota. During these robberies, they even kidnapped several policemen and civilians. They went on to do robberies in different places, which alarmed the security forces and efforts for their hunt became more intense. They robbed banks, stores, and gas stations mostly. In pursuit of these robberies, they committed thirteen murders, including policemen.

Buck Barrow was shot dead during an encounter with police in Lowa and his wife, Blanche, was arrested after a few months they had joined the gang. Bonnie and Clyde managed to escape and moved forward. The sheriff of Dallas, Texas planned to capture the couple by setting up a trap, but it was of no use. In 1934, the couple continued robbing people and killing officers in Texas, Oklahoma, and other areas. They wounded fatally many individuals as a result of which the law and order authorities start chasing them more rigorously.

At last, on May 23, 1934, an ambush was set by a posse of police officers who hid in bushes along the highway. Bonnie and Clyde were seen in the early morning attempting to move ahead. In the meantime, the officers opened fire and both the criminals were shot dead. It was reported that they were shot fifty times in total. A large number of people attended their funerals. They wished to be buried side by side, but it could not happen because their families did not allow that.

# **Analysis of Characters and the Law Enforcement Response**

The reasons behind the crimes of Bonnie and Clyde were social, financial, and of course psychological. Both emerged in an era of unemployment, economic scarcities, and social upheavals. Bonnie and Clyde were remembered because of their friendship and mutual connection. They were a symbol of the worst possible outcomes of the circumstances of their time. They were the misled youngsters whose characters could not have been reformed by the society. They not only robbed people but also killed people. That is why they deserved no mercy from the governing authorities. However, their criminal careers pose serious questions on the social, economic, and cultural conditions of their time.

Clyde belonged to a poor family, and he indulged in crimes to get money and power. Whereas, Bonnie did it all more for satisfying her psychological needs as well as out of her love for Clyde. She wanted more from her life than it could have offered normally. Clyde became a ruthless criminal during his early imprisonments and due to the undisclosed happenings therein, as cited by her sister, Marie. On the other hand, the poems written by Bonnie gave many clues to understand her subconscious and deprivations of life.

Frank Hamer was the team leader of the posse that was set up to encounter Bonnie and Clyde. He was convinced to take charge of this mission by Simmons. The newspapers at that time stated various stories about the crimes of the Barrow gang. This led to increased pressure on the law enforcement authorities to hunt down the outlaws. Hamer spent time in studying patterns and methodologies adopted by the Barrow gang. He ultimately succeeded in putting an end to the story of Bonnie and Clyde.

# **Critique of the film ‘The Highwaymen’**

The Highwaymen is a 2019 movie which can be seen on Netflix. It is a remake of the 1967 film ‘Bonnie and Clyde’. The 2019 film is different from its predecessor in its focus on the characters involved. The new version highlights the characters of Frank Hamer and Maney Gault more than that has been done in the previous version and the historical counts. This is due to the changes in social, cultural, and political environments of the world. The film is a deliberate effort to promote the positive characters of the story and suppress the negative ones. The ultimate goal is to discourage following the footsteps of the notorious criminal couple.

Most of the time, we see the two Texas rangers on screen. There is no charm left with Bonnie and Clyde in this film, and they are presented like ordinary villains of an average story. However, there are scenes in the film that point to the popularity of the criminal couple, and the script is unable to deny their historical charm. The two rangers have certain skills they acquired during their childhood and their long careers, which will enable them to catch and terminate their targets. This is notable that these cops are capable of doing what FBI agents and the other law enforcement authorities cannot do.

The onscreen chemistry of the two lead characters is deep and enjoyable. Their well-performed acts keep the audiences engaged. The content of violence in the movie is huge. Therefore, it is not suitable for sensitive viewers. The original, historical locations have been selected mostly for filming purposes. The subject of the film has been dealt with care and by keeping in view the law enforcement policies of the country.

There might be historical inaccuracy in portraying Bonnie's character. In the film, she has been shown as a professional killer and gun-shooter. Whereas, according to her historical narratives, she never killed anyone ever and might have fired a gun a few times in her entire life. Further, the two rangers have been shown all through the film chasing Bonnie and Clyde, but the criminals stay out of their reach until the last scene. Whereas, the heroes and villains confronted one another not before than the day of the final encounter.