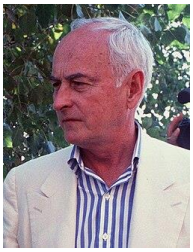
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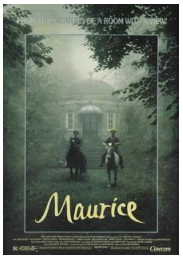
## Sexuality in Cinema

# *Maurice* (1987)

James Ivory (1928-)



*Director* Born and educated in California, Ivory's career took off when he and his partner Ismail Merchant and set up Merchant Ivory Productions in 1961. The independent film company was established in India with the goal of creating English-language films for the international market. With Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and Merchant backing him with their writing and production talents, Ivory went on to direct, write, or produce more than forty films. This earned Ivory and Merchant a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for the longest partnership in indie film history. Best known for directing films such as *The Bostonians*, *Maurice*, and *Howards End* and writing the likes of *Call Me by Your Name*, Ivory continues his film career into his old age and stands as a pivotal figure in gay cinema. Eroticism tends to be a frequent topic in Ivory's films, though it is subdued, cool, and underwhelming. This restraint mirrors his own struggles as a homosexual man who came of age during the past mid-century and adds a trademark mood to the somber and personal dramas the director tends to favor.




*Film* Riding off the success of another E.M. Forester adaptation produced by Merchant Ivory, *A Room with a View*, James Ivory was dead set on making *Maurice* an international success. With a budget of £1.58 million, the film made $2.6–3.3 million in its initial run. This is an impressive feat, given the incredibly short production schedule that totaled just fifty-four days and included no rehearsal period. At its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival, Ivory won Best Director, setting the film up for critical success. Big names like Roger Ebert and Claire Tomalin spoke positively of the film, and critical reception has remained about the same through the years. Currently, *Maurice* has an 82% approval rating on the review aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes.

*Background* Based on a novel of the same name by E.M. Forester, *Maurice* is set in Edwardian England and follows the titular character Maurice Hall and his struggles with homosexuality in the deeply repressive era. Originally written in 1913 but only published in 1971 after the writer's death, it was considered one of Forester's more minor works. Released at the height of the AIDS crisis, *Maurice* resonated with a global audience that was growing more receptive to homosexuality and a queer community that desperately needed positive portrayals in film. In a 2017 retrospective after the 4K restoration, James Ivory told *The New Yorker*, "So many people have come up to me since *Maurice* and pulled me aside and said, 'I just want you to know you changed my life.'" *Maurice* remains a foundational and groundbreaking piece of gay cinema to this day.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Maurice Hall – A young middle-class man who falls in love with Clive
Clive Durham – A rich young man who falls in love with Maurice
Alec Scudder – The under-gamekeeper at Clive's estate
Mrs. Hall – Maurice's mother
Mrs. Durham – Clive's mother
Anne Durham – Clive's wife
Simcox – The Durhams' butler

Lord Risley – an aristocratic school chum of Clive and Maurice
Lasker-Jones – An American psychologist and hypnotist

SYNOPSIS

On a trip to the beach with his class, fatherless 11-year-old Maurice Hall receives instruction from his teacher on puberty and sexuality. Maurice admits to his teacher that he believes he'll never marry, and his teacher laughs, saying it will happen to him within the next ten years. The story jumps to 1909 where Maurice attends university at Cambridge. There, he meets Clive Durham. The two become close, and Clive surprises Maurice when he confesses his love. Maurice recoils at first, but soon he realizes he feels the same way. While the two pursue romance, Clive insists they refrain from sexual contact. Clive, being an aristocrat, fears losing his title and lands if he is ever found out. Maurice drops out of college and becomes a stockbroker, but the relationship continues. That is until a schoolmate, Viscount Risley, is arrested for "buggery" and sentenced to six months hard labor in a well-publicized trial. Clive cuts things off after returning from traveling in Greece.

The two friends continue to see each other often, but Clive is intent on being faithful to his new wife, Anne, and he settles into a life of domesticity. At the same time, Maurice employs a psychologist in an attempt to hypnotize him out of his homosexual desire. While Maurice visits with Clive, a young gamekeeper, Alec Scudder, begins making advances to Maurice's chagrin. One night, the young man sneaks into Maurice's room and the two have sex. The next day, Maurice receives a letter from Alec asking him to come to the boathouse. When he fails to appear, Alec follows Maurice to London in what seems like a blackmail attempt but turns out to be a sort of lover's spat. They make up, and sometime later Maurice goes to the port with a farewell gift for Alec who is supposed to be shipping off for Argentina. When he doesn't show, Maurice returns to Clive's property and admits his love for Alec to Clive. After they part, Maurice finds Alec in the boathouse. There, Alec tells Maurice he has abandoned his plans to emigrate because of their love.

PLOT

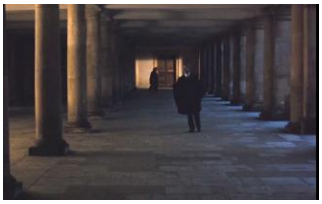


**The Talk** – In the windy sand hills near the sea, people fly kites as a class of schoolboys makes their way to the beach led by their teacher. Some hold nets to catch bugs while others simply roughhouse. As the boys scatter to play amid the windswept dunes, the teacher calls out, "Hall!" A boy separates from the others and joins his teacher. Through a long-winded discussion, we learn that the boy is fatherless, and the teacher has decided to take it upon himself to educate the boy in the "sacred mystery of sex" to spare his mother the embarrassment. Speaking through metaphors hidden behind Latin phrases, the teacher illustrates his points in the sand with the tip of his umbrella, drawing the lower halves of a man and woman joined in coitus. The boy is distracted by some women nearby and doesn't seem overly interested in the conversation. "Your body is His temple," the teacher concludes. "Never ever pollute that temple." He continues, speaking about the expectations of a husband and father. The boy says he's not very interested in such things and he doesn't plan to marry. His teacher simply laughs, inviting him and his future wife to dine in ten years' time.



**Informal dinner** – We see the grand façades of Cambridge University outside a window as a man talks. The camera twists around the room, turning to face the speaker. "Fat women with horns on their head, singing about how happy they are to be dying," he says over the clanking noises of people using cutlery on china. "It's a horrible noise..." "Music is about death," another man speaks up. "It always has been." "I think he's trying to provoke us," the first speaker says. "Go on then, Risley. Enlighten us." "A superior mind wouldn't need enlightening," Risley says with a snobbish sneer. The dean sits in a chair, looking up at his student while Risley continues to speak. The conversation continues as they all dine, some standing and others seated on couches. The others try to rebuff Risley for his snobbish talk, but he continues to bat aside their points, accusing them and the dean of Christian superstition. Eventually, the

dean stands, saying, “Oh, Risley, shut up.” The camera rests on Maurice for a moment as, his eyes downcast, he says, “I think if a man has ideas like that, he should have the courtesy to keep them to himself.” After dinner, Risley invites Maurice to his chambers to continue speaking.



**Risley’s chambers** – Later that evening, Maurice makes his way to Risley’s chambers, practicing what he’ll say while he walks. Some students in the distance overhear him and laugh as they pass. When Maurice knocks on the door, another young man is inside. He introduces himself as Durham, Risley’s roommate. He’s seated on the floor, boxes of musical scores sprawled around him. One of their classmates has a pianola, and Durham plans to use it to help him study for a paper he’s writing about Tchaikovsky. Maurice and Durham hit it off quickly, joking about Risley’s snobbish demeanor and speaking about modern music. At the gates of the college, Durham catches up with Maurice, and he drops some of his musical scores. Durham insists that he has them, but Maurice demands that he let him help, and they make their way to the student dorms together.



**Player piano** – In a room, the pianola bangs out a movement from Tchaikovsky’s 6th Symphony. Durham sits in front of the piano singing out the melody as Maurice stoops close by, watching the notes scroll through the viewing screen and nodding in time, pleased with the piece. When the movement ends, Maurice asks Durham to play it again, but he replies, “You can’t play it again: It’s a movement. You have to get right to the end.” Durham rises to grab a nearby apple, and Maurice sits, starting the next movement. “It’s much too fast, Hall,” says Durham before adjusting the playback speed. Swaying in time with the music, Maurice grins as he takes a bite from Durham’s apple and hands it back. The movement swells as violins and horns join in.



**Lent Term, 1910** – Someone unpacks a suitcase as the words “Lent term – 1910” appear on-screen. Off-screen, Durham complains about his mother’s behavior: “My mother’s only flinging the cat about because I wouldn’t go to communion on Christmas day… I’m unorthodox! I’m not a Christian! It was imperative I made a stand.” The camera moves to show us Maurice unpacking. Maurice’s roommate enters and tells him to come share in some Christmas goodies another classmate received, but Maurice makes an excuse to stay with Durham. Durham asks about Maurice’s relationship with his roommate and his mother, and Maurice responds positively. Durham, after asking for a cigarette which Maurice lights for him, confesses that he hates his mother and her character, saying he’s told Maurice something no one else knows. “I won’t tell,” Maurice says, unpacking his boxing equipment. As Durham continues to complain about his family, Maurice begins teasing him, smacking him in the head with his boxing gloves. Durham stands to fight back, but Maurice pushes him down and rolls him up in the rug, the both of them laughing. Placing a wastebasket on Durham’s head, Maurice tells him, “You think that I don’t think, but I can tell you that I do.”



“**The unspeakable vice of the Greeks”** – In the dean’s office, Maurice and others listen impatiently as one of their classmates reads aloud from a book on philosophy. The book discusses the love between male friends, and at a point, the dean tells the reader to “omit the reference to the unspeakable vice of the Greeks.” A couple of the students snort or chuckle, but the reading moves on: “He is experiencing a counter love, a reflection of the love he inspires, and he thinks of it as friendship, not love. Though, like his lover, he feels a desire to see, to touch, to kiss him.” A bit later, on an afternoon boat ride with Durham and Risley, Maurice tells them of the reading, and Risley, of course, has some snide remark about the subject of homosexuality in the text. Maurice defends learning about such things: “A masculine love of physical beauty and of moral beauty and of the beauty of the thirst for human knowledge: You omit that and you’ve omitted the mainstay of Athenian society.” He then asks Maurice if he read the full symposium. Maurice

dodges the question, stating the need for “some moral decency” and defending Christian cultural hegemony. Risley and Durham begin singing an Anglican hymn to mock him.



“**I’m not my father”** – Sometime later, Maurice eats a late breakfast at his family home while the women of the household prepare to leave for church. “I just don’t understand it,” his mother says, disappointed, “your father always went to church.” “I can’t help it mother. I’m made that way… Besides, I’m not my father.” Maurice’s sisters try to defend his choice, but their mother insults their intelligence and tells them to be quiet. She leaves in a huff. Choral music fills the air as overhead shots of Cambridge transport us to the summer term. In Maurice’s chambers, Durham lies with his head on Maurice’s lap as they discuss how they’ve been. Maurice strokes Durham’s hair gently, and the two begin holding one another. Durham then sits up and moves to embrace Maurice who, unsure of himself, returns the gesture. They are about to kiss when some of their schoolmates kick up a ruckus outside, and Maurice jumps up and scampers to the other side of the room. The other men burst in and demand tea, yammering about a sports match. Later, Durham pulls Maurice aside and confesses his love. Maurice reacts with surprise and disgust, and Durham runs away.



**Dinner** – In the grand dining hall at Cambridge, the students gather for dinner. The room buzzes with conversation that dulls as the professors and dean take their place at the long table at the head of the room. The students all stand, and Durham leads them in a Latin prayer. Maurice watches him closely, looking down when he meets Durham’s eyes. Durham keeps shooting glances his way as the meal is served, and Maurice refuses to return them. After the meal, Durham returns to his chambers only to find Maurice sitting inside in the dark. “Clive, you’re bloody hard…” Maurice starts. “Hall, don’t be so stupid,” starts Durham, “you must know that to be alone with you hurts me.” Maurice tells Clive he’s in hell, and Clive just grins, saying, “It’s just disgust. You haven’t done anything to be ashamed of. You don’t know what hell’s really like.” After a bit more back and forth, Maurice admits his love for Clive. “Rubbish,” says Clive, “as you so rightly said. Good night.” Maurice keeps trying to push the point, but Clive doesn’t let him, thanking him for not turning him in to the dean or the police.



**Through the window** – Later that evening, Clive Durham sleeps in his bed while the wind whistles outside. Suddenly, a hand appears outside his window and opens the latch. It’s Maurice, clumsily climbing in. Roused by the noise, Clive sits up and turns on his light, saying Maurice’s name before Maurice throws himself into Clive’s arms. “I love you,” says Clive before Maurice kisses him passionately. With that, Maurice leaves as quickly as he entered, climbing back out of the window. Jaunty romantic music plays as the two climb onto a motorbike the next day, Maurice behind the controls and Clive in the sidecar with an armful of picnic supplies. The dean tries to stop Maurice at the gate, but he joyously ignores the man, revving past. Somewhere beside a river, Clive and Maurice kiss and hold each other. “Do you realize,” Maurice begins, “I would have gone through life half-awake if you had the decency the leave me alone?” “Perhaps we woke up each other,” Maurice posits. Maurice begins feeling Clive’s body and trying to kiss him deeply, but Clive stops him, saying going too far would likely “bring them down.” Maurice looks away, a jilted look on his face: He wants more, but he knows Clive is right.



**Scolding** – “Why did you not stop when I called you?” the dean says to Maurice, who stands in his office, eyes downcast. “Yesterday you cut chapel, four lectures—including my own translation class—and hall. You’ve done this sort of thing before. It’s unnecessary to add impenitence, don’t you think?” Maurice simply stares, defiantly unspeaking. “Very well,” continues the dean. “I’m sending you down… Unless you write me a letter of apology, I shall not recommend your readmission to college in October.” The scene cuts to the train station, where Clive sees Maurice off. Maurice complains that his lack of aristocratic family is the only reason he’s being let go from school since “everyone cuts lectures.” The train begins

pulling away as Clive asks, “What will you do?” “Go into the stock market like father did?” Maurice replies. “I don’t need one of their rotten degrees!” With a final handshake as the train picks up speed, Clive asks, “You will come to Pendersleigh?” Maurice simply nods as the train runs down the line. Back home, Maurice gets another scolding about his unapologetic behavior from the family doctor. “You’re a disgrace to chivalry,” the doctor shouts as Maurice’s mother and sister listen from the other side of the door. “I’m disappointed and disgusted with you.”



**Pendersleigh Park** – A pair of white horses pull a carriage down a long drive, an intertitle informing us this is Pendersleigh Park, Clive’s manor. At the front of the mansion, Maurice steps out of the carriage, helping the woman seated inside onto the pavement. Clive steps out after, smiling as he introduces Maurice to his mother. She simply touches his hand before turning around and talking to her friend who rode in with them. Clive tells Maurice not to be nervous and tells him that he’s not expected to do anything with the women even if they ask: “You’re actually going to ride with me, and they know it.” Maurice says he hasn’t brought his riding breeches, and Clive jokes that he can’t associate with him because of that. The butler, Simcox, watches the two men with a strange look. Inside, Maurice is introduced to the rest of the family. Upstairs, Maurice begins unpacking, and Clive surprises him from another entrance, pushing him onto the bed and kissing him before showing him the grounds through the window.



“**Is there someone?”** - That night at dinner, the table buzzes with conversation as servants plate dishes and take away finished courses. Nothing can be made out through the overlapping conversation until the camera finds Clive’s mother speaking to Maurice: “This house is his. Did he tell you? Under my late husband’s will. I must move to the dower house as soon as he marries.” She speaks at length about Clive’s future responsibilities, mentioning that Clive should travel to see the colonies. “He wants me to go with him,” Maurice replies. Clive’s mother says that she hopes Maurice will keep her son from visiting Greece. Clive smiles at Maurice across the table. The conversation soon turns to romance: “Mr. Hall, is there someone? Some girl? Pippa declares there is.” The next day, Clive and Maurice ride horses across the grounds, heading deep out into the woods to a small ‘goblin house’ near a pond. Maurice is disappointing to find it locked, and Maurice throws his arms around Clive as he talks about his grandfather who had it built as a folly. They push each other apart quickly when Clive sees Simcox biking up the same path, giving the two young men a suspicious look.




**1911** – A stock ticker taps out the latest market information as Maurice and another man discuss potential options for a client. An intertitle reads, “The City – 1911.” The scene quickly cuts to Clive reading a book. He reaches up and finds another, taking notes in a study at Cambridge. Back at Pendersleigh, Clive’s mother writes a letter in the garden. Her voiceover tells us this is a letter to Maurice’s mother, and she hopes that the two families can get together sometime soon and perhaps they might strengthen the bond between their families with a romance. Some other women approach with a squalling baby. Mrs. Durham approaches a servant, saying, “Would you be so kind as to post this… What is your name?” “Scudder, ma’am,” the young man says as he takes the letter. Defiantly, he eats a leftover pastry and reads the letter himself. A voiceover relays Mrs. Hall’s reply and details Clive’s day-to-day life as we’re shown a luncheon with Maurice and his family and dinner party at Clive’s London home.



**Pub –** In a small pub in some industrial area of London, a barmaid talks with her patrons while pouring their drinks: “You cavalrymen must have legs so straight that they could hold a sixpence between their legs all the way up.” The soldiers across the bar laugh and one of them accepts the challenge. Nearby, Risley empties the change from his pocket, and the soldier takes them, placing one between his ankles, calf, knees, and thighs. Risley watches with interest, placing one more coin on the counter, implying the

soldier should place it higher up. The soldiers laugh, but when the man reaches for the coin, Risley stops him, gesturing with his eyes toward the pub's back entrance. Out into the alley they go, and Risley makes his intentions known, feeling the soldier's chest and trying to kiss him. Apparently, this was all a sting, as several policemen appear and cuff Risley, taking him to a nearby prisoner cart. The next day, Maurice and Clive are shocked to see Risley's face on the front page of their newspapers: "Viscount Risley apprehended on immorality charge."



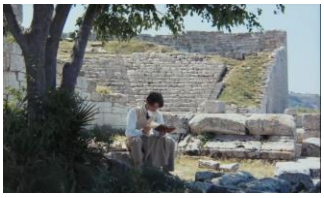
**Wigmore Hall** – "I'm told that if I plead guilty," Risley says into a phone receiver, "that publicity can be kept to a minimum." Clive listens on the other end before responding, "You must understand, if I were to give you a testimonial it would make me a sitting duck to any prosecution." Risley commiserates, realizing his school-chum association with Clive already puts him under suspicion. Sometime later, Maurice mills about the foyer of Wig more Hall. Clive enters, in a hurry, and the two walk into the auditorium together to see a concert. Once they're seated, Maurice tries to ask him about the situation with Risley, but Clive ignores him. "Clive?" Maurice pushes. Clive snaps back at him, "Don't nanny me." Soon thereafter, Risley's trial takes place. He is found guilty of indecency. At the sentencing, Clive makes an appearance, covering part of his face with his hat. The two lock eyes for a moment before Risley is pushed down the stairs to the holding cells beneath the courtroom.



**A toast** – The sun sets behind the Hall home. Inside, Maurice entertains a small party of guests, comically proposing a toast to "legal legislator, Clive Durham, barrister-in-arms." The others around the table hoist their glasses, laughing at Maurice's performance and wishing Clive the best in his new career. Clive smiles at them softly, his eyes quickly returning to his uneaten dinner on the table before him. The others asking him for a speech, Clive begins to stand, muttering, "Oh, I say, I'm going to faint." He falls to the floor. Maurice and the others rush to him, trying to rouse him. It's Maurice who takes charge, sending one of the women for the doctor and the other to fetch some brandy to revive Clive. When Clive does come to, Maurice quickly kisses him on the lips. With the help of his mother, Maurice gets Clive upstairs. After getting their guest settled, Maurice tries to explain himself, saying he's very good friends with Clive and in his worry, he had been overcome with relief, hence the kiss. His mother seems to accept this. Later, the doctor comes to check on Clive, and Maurice says he'll be happy to nurse his friend. Clive refuses this, however.



**Return to Pendersleigh** – Maurice speaks angrily into a phone: "Pendersleigh today? Mother he can hardly stand up." His mother says something on the other end, and he says to keep Clive at the home until he can get there. Outside his family home, Maurice jumps out of a taxi before it comes to a halt and quickly pays the driver. The Hall women are nearby, bundling Clive into the back of his car. They bid him farewell and Maurice jumps into the back seat with him. Speaking softly he says, "Clive, we both know you're far too ill to travel." Clive doesn't listen and refuses to hold Maurice's hand, calling for his mother so he can return home. Back at his manor, Simcox helps Clive out of his dress clothes while talking about Risley, bringing up that they were at Cambridge at the same time. "You will never mention that subject again, Simcox," Clive says with a dangerous edge, "while you remain in employment here." Sometime later, Clive seems to have recovered and dines with Maurice and their friends.



**Spring, 1912 –** An idyllic shot of an ancient Greek ruin appears while a mysterious composition of flutes and harp plays. Clive is seen climbing a hill toward a crumbling amphitheater. Under the shade of a tree near the ruin, he opens a letter. Maurice's voice narrates: "Dear Clive, Still no word from you, so here is my news. I am practicing a regimen of severe self-discipline…" The camera shifts from the Greek ruin to a boxing club somewhere in London. As Maurice details his self-discipline regimen, we

see him playing referee for a pair of boys, training them to box. “Clive,” his disembodied voice continues as the camera finds its way back to Greece, “I’m so worried not to have heard from you. I get no sleep worrying for fear that you’ve fallen ill again… I don’t have to tell you how much I miss you.” As Maurice finishes narrating, Clive is seen walking the rim of the theater.



**Surprise visit** – In the Hall home, one of Maurice’s sisters is surprised to see Clive. “Maurice is away tonight on business,” she tells him. She walks into the study, calling to her mother and sister before asking Clive about his trip to Greece. He calls the country “rather disappointing” before the other Hall women enter the room and apologize for not having a more fitting dinner ready for him. Clive politely rejects their hospitality, having to make his way home. They ask to practice their first aid skills on Clive before he goes, one of the sisters very proud that they’ve passed their “ambulance class” in preparation for what could be a coming war. Later, Maurice returns home to find Clive resembling a mummy. Maurice slaps his friend on the shoulders before inviting him to have a drink in the parlor. Away from the women, Maurice hugs Clive who doesn’t return the affection. “Why didn’t answer my letters?” Maurice asks. “Don’t you love me anymore?” Clive says he “doesn’t want to row,” but Maurice does, demanding to know why he didn’t write. Slowly, Clive explains that he is giving up his attraction to men, saying Maurice should do the same.



**Lashing out** – The fight comes to a head when Clive says he’s planning on trying to court one of Maurice’s sisters, the one who most resembles Maurice in appearance and voice. Maurice begins calling for his sister, but Clive blocks the door, and the two men begin grappling with each other for the door’s key. In the struggle, Maurice tries to kiss Clive, accidentally biting his lip when Clive shoves him away. “I didn’t mean to…” Maurice says tearfully. “Did I hurt you?” “I’m alright,” replies Clive, wiping the blood from his chin. “What an ending!” Maurice says, laughing through tears. Maurice’s sister appears at the door, knocking and inquiring about the noise. Clive leaves for home. Moments later, one of Maurice’s sisters enters the parlor to comfort Maurice, and he takes his anger out on her, accusing her of scandalous activities with Clive. “You’ve always been unkind to us!” she sobs before leaving. “It’s not my fault!” stammers Maurice.



**Boxing** – In the boxing gym, Maurice, now clean-shaven, pummels his opponent in the ring, an angry look on his face. H e backs the other man into a corner and the referee calls for them to stop. A date appears on-screen: 1913. The two return to the center and square off again. Maurice pushes his opponent into the corner again, but this time pulls back to avoid the referee interrupting the match again. The third time this happens, Maurice swings around, putting himself in the corner as if to taunt his opponent. The man grimaces and swings a hook into Maurice’s laughing face. Maurice just smiles as the crowd hoots. Later in the locker room, the referee and some of the boys thank Maurice for his help. Maurice looks around the locker room, smiling at the boys roughhousing nearby before trying not to stare at the men in the shower.



**Marriage announcement –** In the Hall home, Mrs. Hall enters a room reading a letter. “Children,” she says with a smile, “Clive Durham is engaged to be married. How friendly of his mother to tell me.” The announcement continues that his bride’s name is Lady Anne Woods. While the women gather around to look at the announcement, Maurice stands away, his back turned and a sour look on his face. A phone begins ringing, and Mrs. Hall leaves to answer. Maurice sits with his sister at the breakfast table and they chat for a minute before the maid enters to tell her the phone call is for her. Before she leaves, Maurice apologizes for his behavior after Clive’s last visit, admitting he made up what he said. His sister seems to accept his apology, smiling softly.



**Call for Maurice** – At his stockbroker's job in the city, Maurice works at the stock ticker, reading the latest numbers. A phone begins ringing. The man who answers passes the phone to Maurice: It's Clive on the other end. "You'll have heard my news," He says proudly. "Yes," Replies Maurice, "but you didn't write, so I didn't." Clive asks Maurice to be an usher at his wedding. Maurice tries to end the call, but Clive passes the phone to his betrothed. She speaks slowly and clearly into the receiver, apparently unfamiliar with using telephones: "I'm Anne Woods!" She admits that she doesn't know what she should say, but she wanted to hear Maurice's voice since Clive spoke so much about him. Maurice is offended that he's the eighth friend Clive has called this morning, but the conversation soon turns to his expertise, stocks. Putting on a professional façade, Maurice holds back his jealousy and tells them about the markets. Before he hangs up, Clive invites Maurice to Pendersleigh, which Maurice initially declines due to other marriages happening in the weeks to come, but Clive says he'll write next month to invite him to the yearly cricket tournament.



**Train carriage** – That evening, Maurice sits in a train carriage, his face pensive while soft music plays. Across from him, an older man reads a newspaper. He looks up to see Maurice's sensitive, thoughtful look, and he leans forward, placing his hand atop Maurice's. From behind the window of the private carriage box, we can't hear the conversation, but Maurice seems uninterested in what he has to say. When he stands to collect his things from the overhead rack, the older man stands, cornering him and trying to kiss him. Maurice reacts with anger, pushing the man down and shouting something we can't hear as the train's whistle blows. Collecting his briefcase and hat, Maurice storms out of the private box and into the hallway, leaving the older man cowering.



**Secret trouble** – Sometime later, Maurice visits his family doctor at the doctor's home. "I haven't even got a consulting room!" the doctor says. "You're the only doctor I dare tell," Maurice replies. "A secret trouble, eh?" The doctor says, "well then." The doctor excuses himself from his dinner guests and takes Maurice into the nearby study. Maurice begins to cry, sinking to an armchair by the fire. "There there," the doctor says, patting Maurice on the shoulder. "Take your time. And remember, of course, that this is professional. Nothing you say will ever reach your mother's ears." It takes him a moment, but Maurice admits that his problem is "about women." In couched terms and ambiguities, the doctor talks about venereal disease. "In my own wrong way, I've kept myself clean," Maurice says. Doubting this, the doctor asks him to drop trou for an examination. After a quick look, the doctor says there's nothing wrong with him. Maurice stops speaking vaguely and gets right to the point: "I'm like Lord Risley. I'm an unspeakable, of the Oscar Wilde sort." The doctor tells Maurice to "never let that evil hallucination" to cross his mind again and says a "pretty young woman" will cure him before sending him home.



**Wedding** – Loud organ music plays as Clive and Anne leave the church. Women cry and throw flower petals as the newlyweds enter their car. Maurice stands among the throngs of well wishers, a sad look on his face. The scene quickly fades into hunt. "Mine!" Clive's brother-in-law shouts before blasting his shotgun at a rabbit. Scudder is right behind him with a freshly-loaded gun. Maurice wanders a bit further back, disinterested but going through the motions. The brother-in-law picks up on Maurice's odd mood but is more focused on killing small animals than actually talking with Maurice. Maurice claims to be upset that Clive hasn't mentioned his birthday. At the hunting lodge, Simcox appears with a note for Maurice. It's a telegram from one Lasker-Jones confirming a future appointment. "Happy birthday, sir," Scudder says before Maurice leaves the lodge.



**Return to London** – In the foyer of the manor, Anne arranges flowers, asking Maurice about the day's hunt. She apologizes for Clive's absence, but says his political career is important. After a short conversation about politics, Maurice tells her he has to return to London. Sometime later, while dressing for dinner, Anne tells Clive about Maurice's return to London the following day. "He's only just arrived!" Clive says, shocked. "He received a telegram," Anne says. "He's being quite secretive." Sitting down at the vanity to touch up her makeup and put on perfume, Anne says she likes Maurice and, "I have a private notion he's in love." Clive tries to keep his shock from reaching his face.



**Downpour** – A storm pounds the roof of the house, causing water to leak into the parlor where Clive entertains his guests. Concerned with the crack and the leak, Clive asks for help moving the piano which his right under the flow of the water. "Why not a saucer?" his brother-in-law asks, doing nothing to help but suggest calling the servants. "I call for a servant and they bring me nothing," Clive says dismissively. When the maid does enter, Clive instructs her to return with a basin and some men to move the piano. While the other guests go into another room, Maurice stays to finish his cigarette, taking off his coat to help Scudder and Simcox scoot the piano across the room.



**Diary** – In the privacy of his room, Maurice writes in his diary. "As soon as my body developed," his voice narrates, "the obscene imaginings began. I thought that some individual curse had descended on me. My schooling was pure enough. A terrific scandal before my arrival meant that we were drilled all day and policed all night. I had little chance, therefore, to talk about such experiences with my schoolfellows. I am the only son in my…" A knock on the door interrupts the thought and the writing, and Clive enters the room. He has a smile on his face. "Maurice, I am glad," he says laughing. "It's the greatest thing on earth. Perhaps *the* only one. Anne guessed as much. Aren't women extraordinary?" Realizing that Clive thinks he's found a woman to date, Maurice tells him to tell everyone. Outside, Scudder hunts rabbits, keeping them away from the manor's gardens. He can see the light on in Maurice's bedroom, and he looks up toward it longingly. In the room, Clive kisses Maurice's hand to prove he hasn't forgotten their past. After some conversation and at Clive's insistence, Maurice returns the gesture.



**Early to bed** – In his bedroom, Clive finds Anne already in bed, and he begins to undress in the nearby dressing room. Maurice, haunted by his attractions, crosses to the window in his own room, throwing it open to face the storm. Below, Scudder watches from the treeline. Playfully, Maurice sticks his head out into the cold rain, whooping at its briskness. S cudder laughs, unseen. In their bedchamber, Anne stirs and finds Clive readying for bed. He climbs into bed, saying he's talked with Maurice: "You were right." Anne chuckles, "Told you he had something up his sleeve." Clive leans down to kiss Anne before lying in bed beside her. He stares up at the ceiling, a strange expression on his face as the scene fades to black.



**Departure** – The next day, Scudder and Simcox prepare a carriage to take Maurice to the train station. "I think he's after a tip," Clive's brother-in-law mutters to Maurice, speaking about how much attention the young man has been paying him. Maurice replies that he offered him five shillings, but Scudder refused it. Anne emerges to bid Maurice a fond farewell. "I'm so glad you're not really horrible," she says. "And I you," Maurice replies. On his way out, Maurice sees the brother-in-law speaking to Scudder and jokes with the servant: "Five shillings not good enough? You'll only take gold?" As he boards the carriage, Clive exits the manor to relay his own farewell. "You're coming back very soon," he insists. "Good luck." Another guest joins Maurice, and the carriage clatters away. "I do wish I knew the girl's name," Anne says as she and Clive wave goodbye.



**Hypnosis** – A man stands, moving his arm hypnotically. “You’re not quite off yet, I think,” he says. Maurice lays below him, eyes wide and face blank. He shakes his head: “No, I’m not.” After a few more moments of hypnotic motion, Maurice says, “I’m near off now.” After some simple questions about the room, the hypnotist asks if Maurice can see the picture on the wall in front of him. Staring at the ceiling, Maurice nods. There is no painting. Maurice is under the power of hypnotic suggestion. The hypnotist continues testing the power of his suggestion, telling Maurice to jump a crack in front of him. Maurice spasms on the table as if trying to leap. The hypnotist then asks Maurice to describe the picture he sees. Maurice shakes his head, tears beginning to form in the corners of his eyes. “It is Miss Edna May,” the hypnotist says. “I want to go home to my mother,” Maurice says, laughing uncomfortably. The hypnotist continues, saying the woman in the picture is attractive. “She’s not attractive to me,” Maurice says haughtily. A bit later, the hypnotist, Lasker-Jones tells Maurice he was susceptible to suggestion and schedules him for another treatment.



**In time for dinner** – In front of Pendersleigh Park, Maurice surprises Clive and Anne who are preparing to drive into town. “Good lord, you didn’t rush back?” Clive asks before apologizing for their inability to get out of their evening plans. Inside, a vicar and Clive’s mother speak for a moment, but they stop when they see Maurice enter. “You’re in time for dinner,” says Mrs. Durham. “Did you have a successful trip?” “That remains to be seen,” Maurice replies. A bit later, after changing into his dinner suit, Maurice strolls the grounds around the house, smoking a cigarette. He looks up to see Scudder working on the roof, patching holes. The servant comes down the ladder and strikes up a conversation about hunting. “ Glad to see you down again so soon, sir,” Scudder says. “That’s alright, Scudder,” Says Maurice coolly, walking away. It’s just Maurice, Mrs. Durham, and the vicar for dinner. Mrs. Durham talks about Scudder having found a job in Argentina and that he’ll be leaving their service soon. After dinner, walking the grounds while he smokes, Maurice runs into Scudder again. “Good night, sir!” Scudder says, surprising Maurice. Maurice wishes Scudder luck in Argentina, and they part. In the groundskeepers’ hut, Simcox packs for a trip, making a snide remark about Clive and Maurice’s past relationship to Scudder on the way out.



**Restless dreams** – Patrolling the grounds with his shotgun, Scudder walks through the night toward the manor. In his bed in the upstairs guest room, Maurice tosses and turns, dreaming. Mysterious music swells as Maurice’s dream fades into view. In a series of cross-fades, Lasker-Jones’ hypnosis appears, visions of Maurice and a woman lying in a boat as it drifts by follow, likening marriage to death, a Viking burial at sea. Maurice sits up desperately bailing water from the boat, the woman missing. Unable to remain asleep, Maurice jumps from his bed and rushes to the window, opening it and breathing the fresh night air. Scudder hears the squeaking of the window, watching from the treeline below. Maurice returns to bed, and he’s surprised to see Scudder climb up a nearby ladder and enter his room. The young man locks eyes with Maurice and climbs into his bed. “I know, sir” he repeats as he begins holding Maurice. Unsure what to do, Maurice simply lies back and allows Scudder to do what he pleases.



**Morning tea** – The next morning, Simcox opens the shutters in the parlor, giving the ladder leading up near Maurice’s room a disgusted look. In Maurice’s room, the two men lie in bed together, Maurice straddling Scudder. They discuss cricket and Scudder’s fear of drowning. Lying atop Scudder, Maurice presses himself close, sharing one last embrace. They both know Scudder can’t stay. Downstairs, Simcox prepares a tray of tea for Maurice’s breakfast. He opens the door after knocking, simply saying, “Nice day, sir,” to Maurice who lies under the blankets, pretending to have just awoke. The butler moves to the window and parts the curtains. “Finally moved that ladder at last, I see,” he comments. “About time.” Simcox begins preparing Maurice’s clothes, talking about the upcoming cricket match and asking Maurice to captain the servants’ team since Clive is away. Maurice suggests he let Scudder captain, saying he’s not a good

cricket player. Simcox seems disappointed not to have a “gentleman captain.” Before the butler leaves, he comments on some mud on the carpet, Maurice tries not to react.



**Cricket match** – A group of aristocrats sits watching a cricket match, some women gossiping about Scudder putting himself in first, one saying that Clive would never do such a thing and that it lacked instinct for the game. Scudder makes a mistake, leading to Maurice stepping up to bat for the opposing team, but he quickly surprises the crowd when he hits a ball over the heads of the catchers, and the gathered aristocrats clap and whistle. As they play, Maurice and Scudder smile at one another. A few rounds go by as they take turns batting the ball and running for points.



**Clive’s return** – In the outfield, Clive appears dressed in a fine business suit. He retrieves the ball Maurice hit deep into the outfield and pitches it toward the nearest catcher. H e approaches his in-laws in the crowd of onlookers, and they tell him Scudder has been doing a good job, reversing their opinion from earlier. “Well, I supposed I’d better play for a bit,” says Clive, “please these people.” He takes off his jacket and joins the game, chatting with Maurice on the field for a moment before taking his place to bat. He bunts the ball and begins to run, but realizes he’s not hit it far enough. “Wait!” he says. “Sorry Maurice.” Maurice turns around and tries to run to his base but is tagged out. Back in the crowd, Maurice watches Scudder whisper to one of his friends. As they laugh to each other, he hears Scudder’s voice in his head: “I know, sir.” Maurice runs away from the crowd.



**Driving the grounds** – Sometime later, Clive takes Maurice on a drive in his new automobile. They pass Scudder, who opens the gate for them, and Maurice asks what sort of character the young man is. “Scudder?” asks Clive. “Well, he’s a little bit smart, but Anne would say I’m being unfair.” Maurice asks about his background, and Clive replies, “Wasn’t his father the butcher? Yes…” Seeing Maurice react as if he has a headache, Clive tries to calm him, saying he wishes he’d think of Pendersleigh as his second home: “Just treat it like a hotel. Come and go when you like. Doesn’t matter if I’m home or not. Anne feels as I do.” Later still, Scudder smokes a cigarette while milling around the boathouse. He soon sits to write a letter in one of the boats, his voiceover narrating: “Pretend to the other gentlemen that you’re on a stroll. It’s easily managed. Then come down to the boathouse. Dear sir, let me share with you once before leaving old England. It’s not asking too much.”



**Second treatment** – Maurice walks London’s soggy streets and rings the bell at a building. Inside, Lasker-Jones speaks to him: “You should not resist me. You’re resisting me… You’re less suggestible than you were.” In a hypnotic state, Maurice begs him, “Don’t give up.” But after a few more exchanges, Maurice sits up, coming fully to. “I needn’t remind you that your sort were once put to death in England,” Lasker-Jones says sternly. “I would advise you to live in some country—France, Italy—where homosexuality is no longer criminal.” Maurice wonders if it will ever be like that in England. “England has always been disinclined to accept human nature,” the hypnotist says. Maurice admits to his fling with Scudder, thinking this has affected his treatment. “I’m terrified he might blackmail me,” He continues. “Apparently, he’s quite smart enough to do so.” He gives Scudder’s letter to Lasker-Jones who looks it over before burning it, telling Maurice he doesn’t have the legal knowledge to advise him on this situation. As he dresses to leave, Maurice ponders how Scudder knew he was at his weakest that night.



“**I know something”** – Scudder purchases a ticket in a station before going to stand on the platform, waiting. Now in London, the young groundskeeper finds his way to Maurice’s stockbrokerage, Hull & Hall. Mysterious music stings as Maurice sees him from across the room and moves to intercept him. “ What brings you to London, Scudder?” he asks, and Scudder explains that his brother and he have business in town. Some of Maurice’s associates watch curiously before being dismissed by Maurice. “Scudder, is it?” Scudder says, offended by the lack of familiarity. “‘Alec, you’re a dear fellow,’ you said. You did… Are you ashamed to be seen with me?” He demands to know why Maurice didn’t come to the boathouse, and Maurice maneuvers him outside so they can speak in relative privacy. “I know something,” Scudder reminds him. “I know about you and Mr. Durham.” At the nearby British Museum, they find a quiet place, and Scudder makes his threat clear: Money for silence. Suddenly, Maurice’s primary school teacher notices him and tries to identify him, failing. He tries to strike up a conversation, but his family drags him away. Thinking Scudder can be reasoned with, Maurice invites him back outside.



**Final fling** – Under an umbrella, the two men walk the rainy streets. “It rained even harder than this at the boathouse,” Scudder says. “ It was even colder. Why did you not come?” “I was frightened,” Maurice admits. “And you let yourself get afraid of me…” Scudder tells Maurice that he doesn’t want the money or to hurt him, he just wants to be with Maurice. “Stop with me,” he pleads. “Spend the night with me.” “I-… I can’t,” Maurice says. “I’ve got an engagement… Meet me another evening instead?” “I can’t come to London again,” says Scudder, explaining his boss and family will be suspicious. The two men’s clothes lie on a bed in a double room as they hold each other close in the other. “First time I see’d you,” says Alec, “I thought, ‘I wish I had that one.’ You’re the only good thing that’s happened to me at Pendersleigh.” He complains about how the family treats him, how Mrs. Durham can’t even remember his name, and how Simcox is always breathing down his neck. Maurice laughs with him and apologizes for his fear as they revel in their last moment of privacy. As they begin to dress, Maurice begs for Alec to stay, but he says he can’t and speaks at length about how it would be impossible for them.



**Dockside** – Whistles blow and crowds throng on a London dockside. A taxi’s horn honks to force people aside so it can pull alongside an old wooden steamer. Maurice hops out and climbs aboard the ship, a fancy bottle of liquor tucked under his arm: A parting gift for Alec. He inquires with a ship’s mate about Alec and his family. While Alec’s family is aboard, none of them know where Alec is. They eye Maurice suspiciously, unsure why a gentleman would want to see their son off. The vicar from before boards the ship and recognizes Maurice. He introduces himself to the family, saying he has a letter of recommendation for the young man. Pulling Maurice aside, the vicar tells Maurice that Alec has been “guilty of sensuality.” The ships whistle blows for the last call, and the sailors begin making perpetration to disembark. Realizing that Alec has changed his mind about staying, Maurice steps off the ship and gets back into his taxi, smiling to himself.



**Admission** – In a plant-filled room at Pendersleigh, Clive sips on a glass of liquor while talking to some guests and relations. He picks up a letter and begins composing, moving outside to think in private. A figure appears from the shadows. “Clive?” says Maurice, stepping from the shadows. “Don’t tell Anne I’m here. I’ve only a few minutes.” “She’ll be furious if you don’t stay the night!” Clive replies. “Maurice, I hope nothing’s wrong.” Maurice chuckles, replying, “Pretty well everything. You’ll think so.” T hey meet in the nearby garden. “I’m at your service,” Clive says. He continues on, assuming Maurice is having girl troubles and insisting he speak with Anne about it. “I’m not here to see Anne, or you Clive,” Maurice says, cutting him off. “I’m in love with Alec Scudder.” “What a grotesque announcement,” Clive says. He stands, offended that Maurice would confide this in him. Again, he pleads with Maurice to try to give up his homosexuality. Maurice refuses, saying he’s given up on Clive’s rules. He then reveals that Alec missed his boat and is forsaking his career for their love.



**The boathouse –** Mysterious music plays as Maurice runs through the dark woods near Pendersleigh. He nears the boathouse, slowly entering. Inside, he whispers, “Alec?” The music’s tone shifts, an edge of longing entering as Maurice looks for Alec. In a servant’s room he finds the object of his desire asleep by a small fire. He rouses the young man, and Alec is elated: He had sent word to Maurice’s home to meet him at the boathouse “without fail.” Maurice pulls Alec into a kiss and they embrace. “Now we shan’t ever be parted,” Alec whispers into Maurice’s ear. “It’s finished.” Maurice responds with another deep kiss, then another.



**Domestic ‘bliss’** – Somber music plays as Clive enters his home once more. “Will that be all, sir?” Simcox asks, and Clive dismisses him. Upstairs, Clive enters his bedroom and finds Anne at her vanity. Putting his arms around her, he kisses her cheek and stares at them in the mirror. Anne senses something odd in his expression and can’t keep a mask of worry from slipping onto her face. Clive crosses around the vanity to the window and closes the shutters. While doing so, he stares out at the boathouse, remembering Maurice calling to him at Cambridge. Anne appears behind Clive, holding her husband. “Who were you talking to?” she asks. “No one,” Clive chuckles. “I was just trying out a speech. With a hollow, sorrowful look, he continues looking out of the window as the scene fades to black.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Maurice Hall**

Maurice is the eldest son of a middle-class family. He encounters Clive while studying at Cambridge, and the two strike up a romance. After disobeying the dean to go on a date with Clive, Maurice is kicked out of college, and he starts up a life as a stockbroker, though he still struggles with his homosexual desires.

*Curious* Curiosity is a subdued but important trait of Maurice’s. He loves to learn, frequently reading for pleasure or reading more of the text than he is assigned. He admits to Risley and Clive that he read the sections about homosexual expression in their class on Greek history and philosophy, having been curious about it. This curiosity is what attracts Clive to Maurice in the first place. It also causes Maurice to be softer than other men in some ways. While several times we do see him act in performative disgust about homosexual advances, he never does anything to physically hurt the men he’s scorning or damage their social standing. Understanding how curiosity is natural and sharing a similar curiosity for male romance, he doesn’t follow through with the societal norm of abusing Maurice for confessing his love or striking the old man on the train. This trait is really what sets Maurice and Clive apart and why one accepts his desires while the other represses them.

*Playful* Maurice has a very playful attitude. This often shows, especially in how he treats his lovers. One of their first private moments includes Clive being wrapped up in a rug by Maurice who is teasing him for his responsible nature. Likewise, when Maurice blows past the dean to go out for a picnic with Clive instead of attending lecture, he does so with playful bravado. When he is punished for the act he feels (rightfully) that the dean was being unfair: Everyone skips lecture or classes from time to time. We are given another glimpse of playfulness during the cricket match. Alec and Maurice can’t help but grin at one another as they compete on the field. Toward the film’s end, we see Alec and Maurice wrestling as they spend what they believe to be their last afternoon together.

*Cruel* Maurice has a cruel streak. We see this mostly in off-screen interactions with his family. While he shares the developmental struggle of losing his father with Clive, they both react differently to this familial trauma. Clive dives into personal responsibility as the head of the household while Maurice avoids his responsibilities and blames others for his position and lack of care. This is shown in the way he lashes out at his mother and sisters, who try to goad him into taking responsibility for his actions and position as the man of the house. While it’s hinted at by the family doctor after Maurice is kicked out of Cambridge, we

see it most clearly when Maurice turns his anger at Clive's rejection on his sister, calling her all manner of cruel names, accusing her of illicit conduct with Clive and scaring him away from their family.

**Clive Durham**

The young heir to a great fortune and title, Clive is a rising star at Cambridge when Maurice first meets him. They engage in a whirlwind romance, though Clive—having thought long and hard about his attraction to men—refuses to let them get to physical, worried about what will happen to them and their families if they're ever found out. Eventually, he forsakes his sexual and romantic proclivities to marry a young heiress and expand his family's power and fortune.

*Loyal* Clive shows great capacity for loyalty throughout the film. Despite other people's disdain and distaste for Risley's behavior and beliefs, Clive becomes fast friends with his roommate. It's clear they share a special bond, as after his arrest, Risley calls Clive before others, asking him legal advice and for a character statement at his trial. Though he has loyalty for Risley, Clive's loyalty to his family comes first, and he declines to make a statement so as to avoid suspicion. Risley understands this. Clive is intensely loyal with Maurice as well, giving him free roam of Pendersleigh even after breaking off their romantic relationship: "Treat it like a hotel." When Maurice admits his love for Alec, Clive does everything he can to hide this fact from the others at Pendersleigh. One of his final lines is a lie to his wife, that he wasn't talking to anyone in the garden, just practicing a speech. Even as he forsakes his own desires, he wants to do what he can to keep his friend safe from an unfair society.

*Responsible* Clive is responsible, at least in appearance. While he does risk his family's status and title in his homosexual romances, he does so in a way that mitigates risk, refusing to engage in sexual acts with another man. He also uses his privilege and position to keep his romances secret. After his fling with Maurice, he sees the need to repress his urges, a strategy created from his inborn sense of responsibility as the head of an aristocratic house. Had his father lived into Clive's adulthood, perhaps he would have made different choices and taken more risks in romance, but because he is the head of a powerful family, he acts like it. Ultimately, Clive does everything he can to separate his homosexuality from his position and social life as possible as an act of familial responsibility.

*Repressed* From his first admission of love, Clive seems to be holding himself back. When he tells Maurice that he loves him, it's almost from an academic standpoint, based in a textual understanding of the "vice of the Greeks" instead of true emotions. While Maurice makes many decisions based on emotion and shows an outpouring of sadness and distress when he tries to confront his homosexual feelings, Clive remains cold and collected throughout the film. His emotions are a performance because of the fear of being discovered, called out, or creating scandal. Because of his position of great wealth and power, Clive represses his urges, desires, and feelings in order to do what is best for his family in the broader understanding of Edwardian society.

**Alec Scudder**

Alec is a young grounds- and gamekeeper for the Durham family. He lives and works at Pendersleigh, often overlooked and forgotten by his employers. He falls for Maurice at first sight, but he ends up causing a lot of drama when they misunderstand each other after their first sexual encounter.

*Confident* Alec has a silent, swaggering confidence that's hard to miss. While he keeps quiet around his employers and typically doesn't express his thoughts through words, it's clear that the young man is confident in his own abilities and skills. When he does express these opinions, heard during post-coitus chats with Maurice, he has nothing but derision for his employers who he sees as boors and babies with too much money. It's through his abilities that they're able to hunt and win cricket tournaments, although the landowners get the credit. His confidence leads him to enter Maurice's room for the first time, then to track him down in London to confront him about his avoidance. While often subtle and subdued, Alec's confidence is one of his key character traits.

*Observant* As a servant, Alec Scudder retains his employment through his observational skills. In his first on-screen appearance, he takes food from Mrs. Durham's table once she has left with her daughter, using the moment where he is unobserved to take privileges and read the letter she just wrote. His observational skills make him a keen hunter and a servant entrusted to patrol the grounds with a shotgun, looking for trespassers and keeping wild hares from the manor gardens. Alec's skills extend to interpersonal relationships, as he is able to suss out the romance between Clive and Maurice from afar. Knowing that the two men are attracted to each other and seeing Clive distance himself to marry Anne, he takes a chance with Maurice, who he has admired since his employment began. His observant nature comes to his aid once again when he leaves Maurice's guest room just before Simcox appears with Maurice's breakfast tea, although he does leave some evidence of his presence: mud on the carpet. While the butler has his suspicions, he has no proof and simply calls for servants to clean the spot.

THEMES

Society

**Values/Norms/Taboos** These ideas are interwoven in such a way that it's hard to separate them. While outwardly the Victorians were a very chaste and unforgiving society, in private—especially among the upper classes—it wasn't uncommon to see people breaking social norms with body modifications like nipple rings and tattoos or sexual practices that would be frowned upon if made public. The Edwardians, however, took their sexual repression much more seriously, and scandals became much more common as men and women were outed as homosexuals, sexually voracious, or simply existing outside strict social norms. We see these ideas explored throughout *Maurice* as many of the film's men grapple with the multifaceted issue of homosexual attraction. We also see it explored from the opposing pole, people like Simcox and Maurice's doctor actively police the young men in their care, looking for signs of homosexual desire and trying to snub them. While it is a subdued theme, the punishment for running against societal values remains the main fear in the main characters minds.



*Illustrative moment* Perhaps the clearest moment in the film of these themes comes during Risley's trial. We're shown the double-edged sword of societal privilege and how fragile it is. Even as he is being sentenced to a life changing punishment for kissing another man, his status protects him from the worst punishments, and Risley faces only six months of hard labor instead of any number of worse punishments typically doled out to men convicted of "buggery." While he is insulated from the worst punishment, he is also banished from 'polite' society because of his desires running counter to heteronormative norms and values.

**Class** Class is an inescapable theme in *Maurice.* The drama of the situation comes from the class of the characters. Only a few lower-class characters exist, such as Alec, and they tend to take more risk in grasping their desires. Clive's high class leads him into a life of repression to protect his family standing and fortune. Maurice, being middle-class, doesn't face the same expectations, but he does face a similar societal pressure to be normal and meet the ideals of the "man of the house." While we never hear Clive's ideals around class, Maurice lets his disdain for the poor be known in a conversation with Anne, saying they have it well enough already and are a class of complainers.



*Illustrative moment* While the opulence of Pendersleigh Park is easy to see, what really makes the high class of Clive's family clear is the sheer number of vehicles his family owns. For most, simply owning a carriage in the early 1910s was an impossibility: Caring for the vehicle and the horse or team that pulled it was a full-time job and expensive. Clive's family owns several carriages, many horses, and several motor vehicles including cars and a tricycle. It seems like every time Clive is seen getting into a vehicle it's a different one. *Maurice* is a story of social and economic elites.

**Patriarchy** Another minor theme, and one connected with class, is that of patriarchy. Edwardian society was inherently patriarchal, as the long-sitting Queen Victoria passed the throne to Edward, meaning the country's leader and figurehead was once again a king. It was also on the tail of the massively publicized trial of Oscar Wilde for indecent conduct, and the public's voracious appetite for upper-class scandal stories would only grow. We see how this affects society, as the more typically socially permissive Victorian (especially in private) give way to active policing of gender and class roles. Maurice tells us in a diary entry how his childhood at boarding school was heavily policed, so he had no chance to explore his homosexual urges. Similarly, Maurice goes basically unpunished when he takes out his anger on his mother and sisters, as he is the head of the household and, as such, his word is law in their home. The first scene shows us the incredible chasteness of this society when Maurice's teacher is almost unable to give the young Maurice the puberty and basic sexuality talk because of his embarrassment with the idea. He also makes it his duty, as Maurice's father is dead, and it would be too embarrassing for his mother to discuss. While the film doesn't focus on these ideals, the norms of Edwardian culture lend themselves towards patriarchy.



*Illustrative moment* One of the clearest moments of patriarchal ideals comes up during Maurice's first introduction to the Durhams. Clive's mother converses deeply with the young man during their first dinner together. During the conversation, Clive's responsibilities to the family take center stage. While talking about her and other's expectations for Clive, she casually mentions that she must move into the dower house when he is married, as the main house belongs to Clive as per the will of her late husband. This represents not only women's separation from social and economic power, but also Society's desire to keep women in a lower position than men. Other cultures value their matriarchs highly, and it's expected they'll live in the family's main house until their death. In Edwardian society, however, widows were seen as a burden or an embarrassment to be hidden even among the upper classes.

Psychology

**Love** The moments of love in *Maurice* are so fleeting and overshadowed by the film's tense drama that they could almost be forgotten. They are, however, key to the plot and character development. We see love for the first time when Clive confesses his love to Maurice, which is quickly rejected. After thinking on his desires, Maurice attempts to retract his rejection with a bit of difficulty, but like most lovers, these issues are eventually sorted out. Their love affair is stunted by a strange request by Clive, that the two do not have a sexual relationship. While seemingly contradictory, This request is based in a desire to keep them both safe from the repercussions of their taboo desires: If they don't have sex, they have plausible deniability if their relationship is ever made public, and this keeps them from the worst legal and social consequences. The love between Clive and Maurice continues after Clive breaks things off. Clive wants to be a source of comfort and support for Maurice, and Maurice still pines after him. The love between Maurice and Alec comes too close to the film's end, but it's clear they are smitten with each other, even if their initial confessions lead to confusion and threats of blackmail.



*Illustrative moment* One of the more powerful moments in the film comes in the penultimate scene where–after confessing that he is in love with Alec to Clive–Maurice rushes to the boathouse in a desperate search for Alec. Inside, he finds his love asleep in front of the fire, and he wakes him. Alec is elated to see Maurice, and as they kiss and embrace, Alec tells Maurice, "Now we shan't ever be parted."

Sexuality

**Homosexuality** The driving theme of *Maurice* is that of homosexuality. It comes up again and again, driving most of the main plot points and many of the more minor ones. There is the basic drama of Clive and Maurice being in love but are unable to be together because of the society and time they live in. Risley's capture during a sting stirs up a massive scandal which destroys his political career and casts those who associated with him into suspicion. Several times men approach Maurice and Clive with lusty

intent, and each of these moments plays out in a fight, such as when the older man tries to kiss Maurice on the train. The struggle to maintain one's position in a homophobic society drive the story to its eventual conclusion, and we're shown two different outcomes. Clive represses his desire in order to protect his standing and family name while Maurice and Alec abscond together, no longer caring what people think and—contextually, though we don't see it ourselves—begin a life abroad where people are more accepting of their love for each other.

*Illustrative moment* There isn't a moment in the film that shows this theme more clearly than any other. It is ever-present, haunting the main characters between private moments. *Maurice* makes it clear that homosexuality is as natural and understandable as heterosexuality by connecting the viewer to the feelings of desire and anxiety these men have in a deeply repressive and heteronormative society.

**Denial** A recurring theme in *Maurice* is that of denial. It takes a few forms as the story goes on as well. We see it first in Clive's denial of sexual pleasure, forcing himself and Maurice to keep their affections mostly verbal in order to save face if they're ever discovered: Physical touch between men is acceptable in their society, but sexual acts are not. We see another form of denial in Maurice's initial disgust with Clive's love. Though he later admits to having homosexual feelings since puberty, he denies them at first, seeing them as vulgar and wrong. Clive ultimately denies himself his desires and marries Anne, pretending it's the happiest he's ever been, although in small moments we see his regret and the way he grapples with his ongoing homosexual desire. Similarly, Maurice tries to deny his attraction to Alec, acting as if he was an alcoholic who gave into temptation instead of a man who loves a man after their first sexual encounter. The overarching denial in the film comes from Edwardian society, the societal denial to accept anything but heterosexual desire, and specifically that which was "godly" and chaste.



*Illustrative moment* The clearest moment of denial in the film comes when Maurice employs the skills of the hypnotist Lasker-Jones. Lying on the table in a semi-catatonic state, Lasker-Jones tries to hypnotically suggest that Maurice is attracted to women. While he seemed somewhat receptive in the first treatment, Maurice talks back, saying he doesn't find the actress the hypnotist mention attractive and saying that he likes short hair. Although in turning to hypnosis is an act of denial for Maurice, he is unable to shake the reality of his sexual and romantic desires. While he can deny that he is a homosexual, for him, such denial is impossible to maintain, and we clearly see that, unlike Clive, he will falter.

**Repression** Repression is another big theme. We see it first in Risley, who mocks Maurice's teacher for even deigning to teach about "the unspeakable vice of the Greeks." His repression leads to him taking risks at bars trying to pick up men where he is caught in a sting operation and taken to prison. Maurice and Clive experience repression as well. Where Clive's is more successful in that he is able to maintain a façade of normalcy and marital bliss, Maurice is unable to do the same. Not only does Alec hunt him down, Maurice cannot deny his desires in the same way as Clive. Where Clive is protecting his family name and fortune, Maurice has no such drive to secrecy or self-denial. It's only the fear of prison or blackmail that drives him to repress his homosexual urges.



*Illustrative moment* The clearest moment of repression comes in the film's final moment. Having talked with Maurice about his plans to abscond with Alec, Clive thinks about the man who was once his lover. He remembers Maurice calling to him from below his college dorm room window. Interrupting this memory, Anne appears, asking who Clive had been talking to in the garden. Clive lies and says he was practicing a speech. Anne accepts this and lovingly caresses her husband. Unmoving, Clive stares out the window, a forlorn look crossing his face as the film fades to black. While Clive's repression has saved his standing in society, it has robbed him of his romantic bliss.

**Desire** We see desire mostly through Clive and Maurice's eyes, though we are given glimpses of it at several other points in the film. We see Risley trying to pick up a soldier at a pub which results in his arrest and subsequent scandal. Alec's desires are often overshadowed by plot development, but he does

admit to Maurice that he desired him from the first time he saw him. We see the broader idea of male homosexual desire throughout the film, especially between Clive and Maurice. Both struggle with desire, though in different ways. From the get-go, Clive refuses to have sex with Maurice to keep them both safe from the cruel society they live in if they're ever exposed. Maurice turns to hypnotism in a desperate bid to repress his desires, although he eventually gives into his desire for Alec.



*Illustrative moment* One of the clearest moments of desire in the film comes fairly early on. Skipping lecture to go on a private picnic in the countryside, Maurice and Clive lay in the grass, kissing passionately. We see Maurice begin to give into his desire, trying to undress Clive and kissing all over his body. Clive forces Maurice to stop, saying they need to remain sexually chaste to protect their standing in society. This conflict between societal norms and taboo desire is at the crux of the film's plot.

**Lust** Unlike desire which is often a more thoughtful, romantically-inclined feeling, lust is animalistic and drives people to satiate more base sexual urges. Lust comes up surprisingly few times in *Maurice*. The key moment we see comes when Risley tries to pick up the soldier at the pub, only to be captured in a police sting and tried for homosexuality. We see Maurice in a moment of lust at the picnic with Clive. Here, Maurice tries to unbutton Clive's shirt, but before he can get as far as four buttons, Clive stops him, saying sex will be their downfall and that they'll have a purely romantic relationship even in private. Later, Maurice gives in to Alec's advances, having sex with the gamekeeper despite Clive's warnings and strategizing. This moment of lust eventually leads to Alec and Maurice running away together.



*Illustrative moment* When we see Risley at the pub, we see a man overcome by lust. He is unable to keep up his normative façade and gives in to his desires, asking a soldier to follow him into a nearby alley. Their interaction toes a line between violence and sexuality: Until the police make themselves known, they could be beginning a bout of rough intercourse, grabbing each other by their jackets and pushing each other against the wall. It's Risley's lust that spells his social and economic downfall.

<u>Appearance</u>

**Secrets** Secrets may be one of the most important themes in *Maurice*. The secretive nature of closeted or repressed homosexuality comes to the fore of the dramatic plot again and again. Because of their fear for punishment and social or economic isolation, Maurice and Clive try very hard to keep their relationship a secret. As if to highlight the necessity for secrecy around these issues, Risley is put to trial for simply trying to kiss a man during a police sting of a local pub, and he faces massive political and economic ruin for his desires. This forces Clive to change his mind about pursuing the company of men, and he forsakes his romantic relationship with Maurice because of it, diving into repression and marriage to Anne to keep his desires secret.



*Illustrative moment* In a moment of dual meaning, Maurice is seen writing about his childhood in his diary. As he writes, he narrates in a voice-over, telling us about the repressive and over-policed nature of his upbringing. Because of his inability to privately discuss his feelings with his trusted peers, he simply kept them a secret his entire life, even trying to repress them in a misguided attempt to keep them a secret from himself. He stops writing and covers the pages when Clive interrupts him. In spite of their past romantic entanglement and continuing friendship, Maurice keeps his thoughts a secret from Clive.

**Dreams** Another minor theme, dreams are diminished in this film, in part by the storytelling and in part by the society in which the story takes place. Edwardian England was a place of heavy expectations and gendered ideals. We see the relatively simple dreams of the characters squashed by others, such as the way Clive's family wants to keep him from visiting Greece, a long-held dream of his. There is only one dream sequence in the film, but it plays a major part in the plot. Waking from his bizarre and allegorical

dream, Maurice is pushed into a dream-like situation with Alec in which he gives into his homosexual sexual desires.



*Illustrative moment* While sleeping one stormy night at Clive's manor, Maurice has a dream. In it, he remembers Lasker-Jones hypnotizing him and suggesting he cease to desire men. Overlaid with this image, we see Maurice laying with a woman in a small boat. They hold hands, but both look displeased, scared. Yet another image overlays the others, that of Maurice desperately bailing out the boat as it begins to sink, himself all alone. The dream is so disturbing to Maurice that he is startled awake. The allegorical nature of the dream is that of stress with societal expectations and his inability to repress his homosexual desires.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the film use weather as a foil for romantic tension?

2. Did you find the costuming and set dressing convincing? Why or why not?

3. In what ways does wealth and class impact the romantic themes of the film?

4. Does *Maurice* have a place in modern queer discourse, or has it aged into something more akin to a typical period piece?