



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

- Main page
- Contents
- Featured content
- Current events
- Random article
- Donate to Wikipedia
- Wikipedia store

Interaction

- Help
- About Wikipedia
- Community portal
- Recent changes
- Contact page

Tools

- What links here
- Related changes
- Upload file
- Special pages
- Permanent link
- Page information

Article

Talk

Read

Edit

[View history](#)

On the Waterfront

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For other uses, see [On the Waterfront \(disambiguation\)](#).

On the Waterfront is a 1954 American [crime drama](#) film with elements of [film noir](#). The film was directed by [Elia Kazan](#) and written by [Budd Schulberg](#). It stars [Marlon Brando](#) and features [Karl Malden](#), [Lee J. Cobb](#), [Rod Steiger](#), and, in her film debut, [Eva Marie Saint](#). The soundtrack score was composed by [Leonard Bernstein](#). It is based on *Crime on the Waterfront*, a series of articles published in the *New York Sun* by [Malcolm Johnson](#) that won the 1949 [Pulitzer Prize for Local Reporting](#). The film focuses on [union violence](#) and corruption amongst [longshoremen](#) while detailing widespread [corruption](#), [extortion](#), and [racketeering](#) on the waterfronts of [Hoboken](#), New Jersey.

On the Waterfront was a critical and commercial success and received 12 [Academy Award](#)

On the Waterfront



Theatrical release poster

Print/export

Create a book

Download as PDF

Printable version

Languages 

العربية

Azərbaycanca

Български

Bosanski

Català

Čeština

Dansk

Deutsch

Ελληνικά

Español

Esperanto

Euskara

فارسی

Français

Հայերեն

Hrvatski

Italiano

עברית

Latina

Latviešu

Magyar

nominations, winning eight, including [Best Picture](#), [Best Actor](#) for Brando, [Best Supporting Actress](#) for Saint, and [Best Director](#) for Kazan. In 1997 it was ranked by the [American Film Institute](#) as the [eighth-greatest American movie of all time](#) and in AFI's 2007 list it was ranked 19th. It is Bernstein's only original film score not adapted from a stage production with songs.

In 1989, *On the Waterfront* was deemed "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant" by the [Library of Congress](#) and selected for preservation in the United States [National Film Registry](#).

Contents [hide][1 Plot](#)[2 Cast](#)[3 Production](#)[3.1 Political context](#)[4 Reception](#)[5 Awards](#)[6 Home media](#)[7 References](#)[8 Further reading](#)[9 External links](#)

Directed by	Elia Kazan
Produced by	Sam Spiegel
Written by	Budd Schulberg
Starring	Marlon Brando Karl Malden Lee J. Cobb Rod Steiger Pat Henning Eva Marie Saint
Music by	Leonard Bernstein
Cinematography	Boris Kaufman
Edited by	Gene Milford
Production company	Horizon Pictures
Distributed by	Columbia Pictures
Release dates	July 28, 1954
Running time	108 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$910,000
Box office	\$9.6 million

magyar

Македонски

Bahasa Melayu

Nederlands

日本語

Norsk bokmål

Polski

Português

Română

Русский

Simple English

Српски / srpski

Srpskohrvatski /
српскохрватски

Suomi

Svenska

தமிழ்

Türkçe

Українська

中文

 [Edit links](#)

Plot [\[edit\]](#)

Mob-connected union boss Johnny Friendly ([Lee J. Cobb](#)) gloats about his iron-fisted control of the waterfront. The police and the [Waterfront Crime Commission](#) know that Friendly is behind a number of murders, but witnesses play "D and D" ("deaf and dumb"), accepting their subservient position rather than risking the danger and shame of informing.

Terry Malloy ([Marlon Brando](#)) is a dockworker whose brother Charley "The Gent" ([Rod Steiger](#)) is Friendly's right-hand man. Some years earlier, Terry had been a promising boxer, until Friendly had Charley instruct him to deliberately lose a fight that he could have won, so that Friendly could win money betting against him.

Terry meets and is smitten by Edie ([Eva Marie Saint](#)), the sister of Joey Doyle (Ben Wagner). She has shamed "waterfront priest" Father Barry ([Karl Malden](#)) into fomenting action against the mob-controlled union. Terry is used to coax Joey, a popular dockworker, into an ambush, preventing him from testifying against Friendly before the Crime Commission. Terry assumed that Friendly's enforcers were only going to "lean" on Joey in an effort to pressure him to avoid talking, and is surprised when Joey is killed. Although Terry resents being used as a tool in Joey's death, and despite Father Barry's impassioned "sermon on the docks" reminding the longshoremen that Christ walks among them and that every murder is a Calvary, Terry is nevertheless willing to remain "D and D".

Soon both Edie and Father Barry urge Terry to testify. Another dockworker, Timothy J. "Kayo" Dugan (Pat Henning), who agrees to testify after Father Barry's promise of unwavering support, ends up dead after Friendly arranges for him to be crushed by a load of whiskey in a staged accident.

As Terry, tormented by his awakening conscience, increasingly leans toward testifying, Friendly decides that Terry must be killed unless Charley can coerce him into keeping quiet. Charley tries

bribing Terry with a good job and finally threatens Terry by holding a gun against him, but recognizes that he has failed to sway Terry, who places the blame for his own downward spiral on his well-off brother. In what has become an iconic scene, Terry reminds Charley that had it not been for the fixed fight, Terry's career would have bloomed. "I coulda' been a contender," laments Terry to his brother, "Instead of a bum, which is what I am – let's face it." Charley gives Terry the gun and advises him to run. Friendly, having had Charley watched, has Charley murdered, his body hanged in an alley as bait to get at Terry. Terry sets out to shoot Friendly, but Father Barry obstructs that course of action, telling Terry that violence is pointless because as long as Johnny is in charge, the law will always be on his side, and finally convinces Terry to fight Friendly by testifying.

After the testimony, Friendly announces that Terry will not find employment anywhere on the waterfront. Edie tries persuading him to leave the waterfront with her, but he nonetheless shows up during recruitment at the docks. When he is the only man not hired, Terry openly confronts Friendly, calling him out and proclaiming that he is proud of what he did.

Finally the confrontation develops into a vicious brawl, with Terry getting the upper hand until Friendly's thugs gang up on Terry and nearly beat him to death. The dockworkers, who witnessed the confrontation, declare their support for Terry and refuse to work unless Terry is working too and push Friendly into the river. Finally, the badly wounded Terry forces himself to his feet and enters the dock, followed by the other longshoremen. A soaking wet and face-scarred Friendly, now left with nothing, swears revenge on all the workers, but his threats fall on deaf ears as they enter the garage and the door closes behind them.

Cast [\[edit\]](#)

- [Marlon Brando](#) as Terry Malloy



- [Eva Marie Saint](#) as Edie Doyle
- [Lee J. Cobb](#) as Michael J. Skelly aka "Johnny Friendly"
- [Karl Malden](#) as Father Barry
- [Rod Steiger](#) as Charley "The Gent" Malloy
- Pat Henning as Timothy J. "Kayo" Dugan
- Ben Wagner as Joey Doyle
- [James Westerfield](#) as Big Mac
- [Katherine MacGregor](#) as a Longshoreman's Mother (*uncredited*)
- [Fred Gwynne](#) as Mladen "Slim" Sekulovich
- [Leif Erickson](#) as Lead Investigator for Crime Commission
- [Martin Balsam](#) as Gillette, Secondary Investigator for Crime Commission (*uncredited*)
- [Pat Hingle](#) as Bartender (*uncredited*)
- [Nehemiah Persoff](#) as Cab Driver (*uncredited*)



[Marlon Brando](#) as Terry Malloy with [Eva Marie Saint](#) as Edie Doyle 

Production [\[edit\]](#)



This section **needs additional citations for verification**. Please help [improve this article](#) by [adding citations to reliable sources](#). Unsourced material may be challenged and removed.
(*January 2015*)

On the Waterfront was filmed over 36 days on location in various places in [Hoboken, New Jersey](#), including the docks, workers' slum dwellings, bars, littered alleys, and rooftops. Furthermore, some

of the labor boss's goons in the film—[Abe Simon](#) as Barney, [Tony Galento](#) as Truck, and Tami Mauriello as Tullio—were actual former professional heavyweight boxers.

Terry Malloy's (Brando's) fight against corruption was in part modeled after whistle-blowing longshoreman Anthony DiVincenzo, who testified before a real-life [Waterfront Commission](#) on the facts of life on the Hoboken Docks and suffered a degree of ostracism for his deed. DeVincenzo sued and settled, many years after, with [Columbia Pictures](#) over the appropriation of what he considered his story. DeVincenzo claimed to have recounted his story to screenwriter [Budd Schulberg](#) during a month-long session of waterfront barroom meetings. Schulberg attended DeVincenzo's waterfront commission testimony every day during the hearing.

Karl Malden's character, Father Barry, was based on the real-life "waterfront priest" [Father John M. Corridan](#), S.J., a [Jesuit](#) priest, graduate of [Regis High School](#) who operated a Roman Catholic labor school on the [west side of Manhattan](#). Father Corridan was interviewed extensively by Budd Schulberg, who wrote the foreword to a biography of Father Corridan, *Waterfront Priest*, by Allen Raymond. The church used for the exterior scenes in the film was the historic Our Lady of Grace in Hoboken, built in 1874, while the interiors were shot at the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, also in Hoboken, at 400 Hudson Street.^[1]

Political context [\[edit\]](#)

The film is widely considered to be Kazan's answer to those who criticized him for identifying eight (former) Communists in the film industry before the [House Committee on Un-American Activities](#) (HUAC) in 1952. Kazan's critics included his friend and collaborator, the noted playwright [Arthur Miller](#), who had written the original screenplay—titled *The Hook*—for the film that would become *On the Waterfront*. Miller was replaced by [Budd Schulberg](#), also a witness before HUAC.^[2]

Budd Schulberg later published a novel simply titled *Waterfront* that was much closer to his original screenplay than the version released on screen. Among several differences is that Terry Malloy is

brutally murdered.

Reception [\[edit\]](#)

Upon its release, the film received positive reviews from critics and was a commercial success, earning an estimated \$4.2 million at the North American box office in 1954.^[3] In his July 29, 1954, review, *New York Times* critic A. H. Weiler hailed the film as a masterpiece, calling it "an uncommonly powerful, exciting, and imaginative use of the screen by gifted professionals."^[4]

In 1989, the film was deemed "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant" by the [Library of Congress](#) and selected for preservation in the United States [National Film Registry](#). Film critic [Roger Ebert](#) lauded the film, stating that Brando and Kazan changed acting in American movies forever, and then added it to his list of [The Great Movies](#).

It is also on the [Vatican's list of 45 greatest films](#), compiled in 1995.^[5]

Review aggregation website [Rotten Tomatoes](#) retrospectively collected 55 reviews and gave the film a score of 100%, with an average rating of 9.1 out of 10.^[6]

Awards [\[edit\]](#)

Academy Awards

Academy Awards

On the Waterfront received twelve [Academy Awards](#) nominations in ten categories and won in eight of the categories.^[7]

Award	Result	Winner
Best Motion Picture	Won	Sam Spiegel , producer
Best Director	Won	Elia Kazan
Best Actor	Won	Marlon Brando
Best Story and Screenplay	Won	Budd Schulberg
Best Supporting Actor	Nominated	Lee J. Cobb Winner was Edmond O'Brien – <i>The Barefoot Contessa</i>
Best Supporting Actor	Nominated	Karl Malden Winner was Edmond O'Brien – <i>The Barefoot Contessa</i>
		Rod Steiger Winner was



Marlon Brando as Terry Malloy and Eva Marie Saint as Edie Doyle in the film's trailer 



Karl Malden as Father Barry with Eva Marie Saint. 

Best Supporting Actor	Nominated	Edmond O'Brien – <i>The Barefoot Contessa</i>
Best Supporting Actress	Won	Eva Marie Saint
Best Art Direction-Set Decoration Black-and- White	Won	Richard Day
Best Cinematography (Black-and-White)	Won	Boris Kaufman
Best Film Editing	Won	Gene Milford
Best Score of a Dramatic or Comedy Picture	Nominated	Leonard Bernstein Winner was Dimitri Tiomkin – <i>The High and the Mighty</i>

After Marlon Brando won the Academy Award for Best Actor, it was stolen and did not turn up until much later, when a London auction house contacted him and informed him of its whereabouts. Before that he had been using it to help hold his front door open.

American Film Institute recognition

- AFI's 100 Years... 100 Movies – #8
- AFI's 100 Years... 100 Heroes and Villains:
 - Terry Malloy – #23 Hero
 - Johnny Friendly – Nominated Villain

- [AFI's 100 Years... 100 Movie Quotes](#):
 - "You don't understand! I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender. I coulda been somebody instead of a bum, which is what I am." – #3
- [AFI's 100 Years of Film Scores](#) – #22
- [AFI's 100 Years... 100 Cheers](#) – #36
- [AFI's 100 Years... 100 Movies \(10th Anniversary Edition\)](#) – #19
- [AFI's 10 Top 10](#) – Nominated Gangster film

Home media [edit]



This section **does not cite any references or sources**.

Please help improve this section by [adding citations to reliable sources](#). Unsourced material may be challenged and [removed](#).

(January 2015)

The first home video release of the film was in 1984, on VHS and Beta. The first DVD version was released in 2001. Among the special features is the featurette "Contender: Mastering the Method," a video photo gallery, an interview with Elia Kazan, an audio commentary, filmographies, production notes, and theatrical trailers. The film has been added to the [Criterion Collection](#).

References [edit]

Notes

1. [^] Alleman, Richard. *The Movie Lover's Guide to New York*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. [ISBN 0060960809](#), p.10-11

2. [^] Haas, Geneveive (November 21, 2006). "Dartmouth acquires Budd Schulberg '36 papers" . *Dartmouth News*. Retrieved January 6, 2007.
3. [^] 'The Top Box-Office Hits of 1954', *Variety* (January 5, 1955)
4. [^] Weiler, A. H. "Movie Review: *On the Waterfront*" *New York Times* (July 29, 1954)
5. [^] "Vatican Best Films List" . USCCB. Retrieved March 7, 2010.
6. [^] "On the Waterfront" . *Rotten Tomatoes*. Flixster. Retrieved January 1, 2014.
7. [^] "On the Waterfront" . *New York Times*. Retrieved December 21, 2008.

Bibliography

- Raymond, Allen, *Waterfront Priest* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955); forward by *On the Waterfront* screenwriter [Budd Schulberg](#)

Further reading [[edit](#)]

- Rapf, Joanna E. (2003). *On the Waterfront*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-79400-5.

External links [[edit](#)]

- *On the Waterfront* at the [Internet Movie Database](#)
- *On the Waterfront* at the [TCM Movie Database](#)
- *On the Waterfront* at [AllMovie](#)
- *On the Waterfront* at [Rotten Tomatoes](#)
- [Literature](#)
- [filmsite.org](#)
- [Bibliography of articles and books about On the Waterfront](#) via UC Berkeley Media Resources Center



Wikimedia Commons has media related to *[On the Waterfront \(1954 film\)](#)*.



Wikiquote has quotations related to: *[On the Waterfront](#)*

[Categories: 1954 films](#) | [English-language films](#) | [1950s drama films](#) | [American films](#)
| [American drama films](#) | [Best Drama Picture Golden Globe winners](#)
| [Best Picture Academy Award winners](#) | [Black-and-white films](#)
| [Compositions by Leonard Bernstein](#) | [Films about the labor movement](#)
| [Films based on newspaper and magazine articles](#) | [Films directed by Elia Kazan](#)
| [Films featuring a Best Actor Academy Award winning performance](#)
| [Films featuring a Best Drama Actor Golden Globe winning performance](#)
| [Films featuring a Best Supporting Actress Academy Award winning performance](#)
| [Films set in New Jersey](#) | [Films shot in New Jersey](#)
| [Films whose art director won the Best Art Direction Academy Award](#)
| [Films whose cinematographer won the Best Cinematography Academy Award](#)
| [Films whose director won the Best Director Academy Award](#)
| [Films whose director won the Best Director Golden Globe](#)
| [Films whose editor won the Best Film Editing Academy Award](#)
| [Films whose writer won the Best Original Screenplay Academy Award](#) | [Irish-American media](#)
| [Mafia films](#) | [Union violence](#) | [United States National Film Registry films](#)
| [Films produced by Sam Spiegel](#)

This page was last modified on 8 September 2015, at 23:46.

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.

