

Movies & Languages 2016-2017

Hail, Caesar!

About the movie (subtitled version)

DIRECTOR	Ethan and Joel Coen
YEAR / COUNTRY	2016 / USA
GENRE	Comedy
ACTORS	Josh Brolin, George Clooney, Alden Ehrenreich, Ralph Fiennes, Scarlett Johansson



PLOT

The film is set in the 1950s and follows a single day in the life of Eddie Mannix, “a studio fixer” (in a good way) for Capitol Pictures Studios. No matter how big the crisis, Eddie goes about his business in a calm, efficient manner. He's the film's center of gravity whose job is to make the studio's different productions run smoothly. His visits across the studio give us glimpses into the several different genres of '50s movies: B-westerns, Esther Williams-style water ballet, a Gene Kelly-inspired musical, a screwball comedy of manners and a biblical epic.

To make his job even more complicated, some of Mannix's well-paid, but poorly behaved Capitol stars are having personal problems and Eddie, the “fixer” and tough “father figure” manages to sort them out (with some slapping around). These subplots unfold in an episodic manner, weaving around the central colossus of Eddie, for whom, it's all in a day's work.

Until, on this day, something goes terribly wrong! The dim-witted Baird Whitlock, the star of the major prestige production - a Quo Vadis-style biblical epic called “Hail Caesar” - is kidnapped and held for ransom by a group of Communists & their dog Engles. Production grinds to a halt and it falls to Eddie to keep the production from going under.

The Coen brothers have made a sparkling comedy that allows them to lovingly parody different studio-system genres in the '50s - the bygone Golden Age of Hollywood.

LANGUAGE

Standard & Informal American English.

GRAMMAR

CLAUSES OF IMPORTANCE

After certain introductory clause verbs & adjectives, the verb following dependent clause is in the subjunctive form. The subjunctive form of a verb is the same as the base form - be, go, do etc. These clauses are also called subjunctive clauses.

INTRODUCTORY CLAUSE

Our teacher demanded
It is very important

DEPENDENT CLAUSE IMPORTANCE

that we be quiet during the exam
that Jessica see her adviser as soon as possible

The introductory clause verbs & adjectives that follow this pattern express the ideas of importance or advisability.

VERBS

advise, ask, command, insist, order, prefer, require, propose, recommend, request, require, suggest, urge.

- It is **essential** (that) my husband lose weight
- The doctor has **suggested** (that) he exercise more often
- She also **recommended** (that) he go on a diet
- Now my husband **insists** (that) we change doctors

ADJECTIVES

advisable, desirable, essential, important, mandatory, necessary, urgent, vital.

Notice these points:

1. The introductory clause verb can be in any tense
2. You can often omit **that**
3. Put **not** before a subjunctive verb to make it negative: *She recommended that he **not** smoke*
4. In informal spoken English, we often use **should**. Base form instead of the more formal subjunctive. Speakers of British English prefer **should**: *She recommended that he **should** go on a diet.*

VOCABULARY

s.o. = someone s.th. = something

* Informal American English

* I snuck a cigarette (to sneak) : to steal s.th. in a secretive manner	* the water ballet is "in the can" : it's completely finished
* a stick-in-the-mud : s.o. lacking in initiative, imagination or enthusiasm; an old fogey	* to bite off more than you can chew : to try to do something that is too difficult for you
* I'm pulling your leg! : I'm joking	* screwballs : crazy, irrational or eccentric persons
dirndl : a sort of Tyrolean dress	mirthless chuckle : laughing quietly to yourself
* to get s.o.'s two cents (worth) : s.o.'s opinion, point of view	* I'll give it a shot : to make an attempt or effort to do s.th.
to drop in/ drop by/ pop in : an unexpected visit	a pout : "broncio" to importune : to annoy s.o. with repeated & insistent requests
the box office : where cinema tickets sold; also degree of good/bad financial results of films	* schmoe (from Yiddish shomk) : a person you think is stupid & ignorant, a jerk
* if s.o. is drying out : being cured of alcoholism	like peas in a pod : persons who look very similar or are always together
* he's a dust actor : actor plays in cowboy films	* it's no skin off my nose : meaning that it makes no difference to you what s.o. else does or thinks. "It's no skin off my nose if you don't take my advice"
I don't know if he has the poise (elegance) in a dinner jacket ("smoking")	ransom money : money paid to set free s.o. who has been kidnapped
* scram : beat it, get out of here	to stall : procrastinate, delay
brazier : a metal pan for holding burning coal	* if s.th. is up to snuff : it has an acceptable level of quality
backwater : an isolated, undeveloped or intellectually stagnant place or condition "The country remained an economic backwater"	* if s.th. cuts the mustard : it meets a required standard
* to be out on a bender/ a binge : to drink a very large amount of alcohol	* a louse/ a swine : an unpleasant person who does nasty, dishonourable things
A sentence from the film : "would that it were so simple" (say it quickly). Brings to mind tongue-twisters : "four furious friends fought for the phone", "I saw a kitten eating chicken in the kitchen"	