Groundhog Day

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Form and Content

Form - Phil Connors is an egocentric weatherman for a news program. This movie takes a third person view of Phil and his experience in Punxsutawney.

GroundHog Day is set in a loop, which Phil Connors is repeating February 2nd - Groundhog Day - over and over.

Content - This creates a comedic tragedy for Phil as him being an egocentric person believing his life is perfection, going to a situation where he miserably cannot escape from a loop on Groundhog Day.
The intro is a perspective of the clouds and the sky with the song *Clouds* by George Fenton playing in the background, which emphasizes weather.

The scene then changes to the introduction of our main character, Phil Connors. His occupation ties in with the intro scene as he is a weatherman.
Phil Connors

- Self-centered
- Egotistical
- Sarcastic
- Weatherman
- Overall bad attitude within his life and towards his peers
- Treats everyone as inferior
- Has no filter
- Believes he is some celebrity just because he is a weatherman for a national news program.
Theme
Redemption

Why Does Phil get stuck in the first place?
Phil is egotistical and self-centered. He believes he is so important like a celebrity and it can be seen when he is on the telephone when he first experiences the blizzard at Punxsutawney.
Phil gets stuck in Punxsutawney because of his underappreciation for his life, and the people who support him.
Theme
The theme of redemption is also philosophical. Phil’s journey can relate to the 7 stages of grief. Although he might not express guilt he does express the shock, disbelief, anger, depression, and soon his reconstruction and acceptance.
Story and Plot and Setting

Story: Phil Connors is stuck in Punxsutawney repeating February 2nd over and over. He is an egocentric weatherman with no appreciation for anything. And what can be seen as “punishment” he is living the same day over and over.

Plot: Phil Connors initially wakes up for the first time in disbelief, and this pattern is repeated of him waking up and soon he realizes that he is stuck on the same day and he takes advantage of it believing he is a “god” but soon becomes redundant and annoyed. It is also a unified plot in which he later accepts it and some things are changed at the end…
Story, Plot, and Setting

Subplot: He is in love with his producer, Rita and it can be seen how far Phil will go to repeat multiple days to make her fall for him.

- The homeless man, Ned Ryerson encounters, and Phil’s reconstruction.

Setting: The story is set in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania during winter on February 2nd.

Director of the Movie, Harold Ramis said Phil was stuck in Punxsutawney for 10 years.
Conflict

Phil Connors is stuck in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania and is repeating the same day, February 2nd, over and over. It soon seems hopeless that he cannot escape and that he may be stuck in the time loop forever.

Sub-conflicts: Winning the heart of Rita because another primary goal of Phil which later becomes the facilitator to Phil’s moral changes.

Phil can’t seem to shake off Ned Ryerson.

The old homeless man.

Groundhog Day reports.
POV of the Story

Groundhog Day is in Third Person Limited POV.

- Phil expresses that omniscience when he is eating with Rita in the diner and says “I am god.” And when Rita implies that he is not… Phil responds “Maybe the real God uses tricks. Maybe He's not omnipotent. He's just been around so long He knows everything.”

- The story is a journey of Phil’s time in Punxsutawney and how he will ultimately get out of the time loop.

- The other characters may not seem real… because their personalities don’t change and they get reseted everytime Phil repeats the day.
Casual, Spatial, Temporal

Casual:

- Adolescence: going on a hit and run and stealing the groundhog
- Trying to win the heart of Rita: his personality changes
- The homeless man and Ned: he changes how he interacts with these individuals

Spatial and Temporal:

- Being stuck in a time loop
A Deeper Meaning

The Story of Groundhog Day can be seen in the perspective of Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell. But Phil’s position is moreso in Purgatory than Hell, although he may believe it is Hell.

Punxsutawney - the Purgatory. Moments repeat giving Phil the chance to make repentance. There were many trials and Phil doesn’t seem to change which is why he may have been stuck for years.

Heaven - Getting out of February 2nd.

Sub-Heaven - Winning the heart of Rita
Irony

Phil - means “love” or “lover” in greek

- Heavily ironic because Phil has no ounce of love towards his producers and crew. More so he has the wrong idea of love especially when he is trying to win the heart of Rita.
Characterization and Motivation

How does the story portray Phil? On the car ride to Punxsutawney we can see how sarcastic Phil is and his dislike to always going to Punxsutawney. We can also see how he feels that it is out of his way to do basic reports.

Initial Motivation - Phil is motivated to live out his life in any way he can. He feels he can take advantage of his situation.

Phil doesn’t have the motivation to get out of the loop and instead he is accepting of his situation nearing the end of the story. But the audience can see a motivation factor in Rita in which if Phil is able to win her heart he is free from the loop BUT only if he is able to change. (that’s why there’s a sequence of her slapping him because Phil is just not doing it correctly)
Characterization (cont.)

Rita - Phil’s producer, she becomes the key to Phil’s escape that influences the changes in his personality and morality.

Larry - the support character that builds the “projected” view of Phil as a cold and heartless person.

The homeless man - a key character that is used to help the development and change for Phil’s new character along the story as it is seen him helping the homeless man.

Ned - another key character that Phil has to do with in a sense that Phil has to become “nicer” to people.
Motif

The alarm clock is the symbol for everytime that the day has been reset and occurs when Phil wakes up at 6AM. There’s always the pattern of the same song playing, and the same intro of the news reporters of the Punxsutawney local news.

Parallelism
- The moment of the alarm clock occurs every time Phil repeats the day and is taken through different angles.
- Phil meets the homeless man and Ned at the same spots and time.
- Phil also has a report to give in the morning on the groundhog.
4V’s

Voyeuristic- The movie is appealing to viewers because it have a love story with Phil and Rita, it has Phil doing crazy things like driving recklessly and even driving off a cliff, and Phil being a nice guy by saving people’s lives and helping people out. The movie also makes sense, people don’t remember Phil because he is the only one in the time loop so it is normal that Phil sometimes keeps on having the same conversation with the same people over and over again and that he knows what other people are going to say.

Visceral- The movie makes the viewers feel sick at first when we see Phil being selfish and egotistical in the beginning of the movie. Viewers would start to feel worried and scared when Phil keeps on trying to kill himself after realizing he can’t fall in love with Rita. The movie also makes the viewers feel happy when Ph changes his personality and gets out of the time loop.
4V’s

Vicarious- The movie makes the viewers feel emotionally involved with Phil because the viewers have seen Phil’s entire journey from having a big ego and being selfish to someone who tries to help and save people in Punxsutawney. This causes viewers to root for him near the end of the movie to find true happiness and love with Rita.

Verisimilitude- The movie seems real to the viewers and seems believable as we see a normal looking town with regular people there for Groundhog day.
Range and Depth

Range- The viewers gain knowledge of whatever Phil knows in the movie. Whenever Phil learns something or sees what is going to happen, the viewers find out as well.

Depth- The viewers know much more than all the characters in Groundhog day other than Phil because we follow Phil as he is stuck in Groundhog day and knows when and what is going to happen.
Structure of Events

The story signals the repeat of the day as Phil wakes up in bed at 6AM by his alarm clock that plays *I Got You Babe* by Sonny and Cher.

- It repeats: Then put your little hand in mine. There ain't no hill or mountain we can't climb. Babe. I got you babe. I got you babe.

Why this line over and over? Punxsutawney is cynical. The town is telling Phil to change his ways and mocking him saying “I Got You Babe” like he is trapped which he is.
Structure of Events + Important scene 1

Why is repetition of the same day used in this story?

The puddle symbolized how the day controls Phil as it seems in the beginning that it is controlling him and he has no free will.

BUT

The puddle scene - Phil is able to learn from his mistakes and adapt day by day to bend his situation to his will making it seem like he is in control.
Although it is a collection of scenes, the depressed side of Phil is important. We can see how Phil transitions from feeling in control, to losing hope. He tries to kill himself, spends the days doing nothing, and gives a bad report over and over while treating his crew in a bad manner.
The scene where Phil proclaims that he is a “god” to Rita shows his vulnerability and begs Rita to believe him. We can see Phil’s desire to escape and change but can’t. It seems that he is still self-centered in the eyes of Rita as he proclaims himself a god BUT …

This event at the diner shows how much Phil has changed into becoming a more insightful person in the eyes of Rita. He passes a note to Rita that says “stay ahead of the weather” to finally convince Rita that his situation exists and believe his plea for her to stay with him. This leads Rita to spending a night with Phil. Unfortunately, Phil repeated another day but what did he do wrong? Didn’t he have it right?
Important Quote

What would you do if you were stuck in one place and everyday was exactly the same and nothing that you did mattered?

This quote shows the realization of Phil. From feeling that he is a king and upholds the most importance to first experiencing how his life doesn’t seem to matter. By everything repeating and having no effect it really does seem that he doesn’t matter at all.
Important Dialogue

Dialogue 1: Phil finally gives a heartfelt speech on Groundhog Day which groups many of the residents around him as he gives his report.

Dialogue 2: The SECOND night that Rita and Phil spend together show how much Phil has changed from being self-centered to admitting that he is a jerk and how wrong he treats the people around him.
How does the Character of Phil Connors Change?

Near the beginning of the movie, Phil Connors is about as selfish as it gets; looking out only for himself, as shown in scenes where he doesn’t give the old man any money, or lying to Nancy so that she would sleep with him. Seeing that this doesn’t work with everybody, aka Rita, Phil changes his actions to get people to like him. This only goes so far, however, because Phil doesn’t realize you have to actually care about people, changing your actions doesn’t make you a good person. By the end of the movie, we see the contrast in ambition compared to the beginning; now Phil Connors tries everything he can to save the old man. This new good-hearted Phil is the one that wins Rita over.
The Resolution

The SECOND night that Phil is able to get Rita to spend with him turns out to alter his fate, and escape the time loop and we can identify this through when Phil kisses Rita the night before, you can hear a little ring in the background symbolizing that Phil is possibly free.

Why was it that getting to Rita’s heart allowed Phil to leave the time loop?
Director’s Commentary
- The actual film wasn’t shot in Punxsutawney because it didn’t have an aesthetic town center so it was shot at Woodstock, IL.
- Ramis said that the scene where Phil broke the pencil took place of another shot where it showed him destroying the room to leave a mark but Ramis thought it was too aggressive since Bill Murray’s character didn’t seem so.
- Ramis also appreciated the spiritual community and their support for the film and enjoyed.
- The drink that Phil and Rita shared was actually Bill Murray’s wife’s favorite drink.
Websites Used

- https://rock929rocks.com/2018/02/02/shocking-amount-days-bill-murray-stuck-groundhog-day-2/
- https://www.gradesaver.com › groundhog-day › study-guide › themes
- https://www.shmoop.com/groundhog-day/wisdom-knowledge-theme.html
- https://www.shmoop.com/groundhog-day/point-of-view.html#targetText=Third%2DPerson%20(Limited%20Omniscient),the%20perspective%20of%20Phil%20Connors.
POV (cont.)

- The POV is limited to Phil’s situation because he is able to remember and act freely within the time loop.
- The other characters are always reset after the day repeats which shows how the actions of Phil had no effect on the day before the repeat.
Casual (cont.)

- When Phil tries to win the heart of Rita he tries to do everything perfectly according to her standards. EX) when Rita says she drinks to world peace, it causes Phil to have the need to repeat the situation and imply that he drinks to world peace as well. This then leads to Phil repeating a countless number of days to get Rita to like him by saying the things she likes.

- The homeless man - causes Phil to have a character change as it is revealed that he dies on February 2nd. This causes Phil to have sympathy for the homeless man and is compelled to save his life but is unsuccessful. This makes Phil realize the value of life and develop a different morality aside from his self-centeredness.
Meaning

Emotional- Viewers feel emotional towards Phil because we feel pity at times when Phil is depressed and we feel happy for Phil when he gets out of the time loop.

Referential- Groundhog day takes a lot of references from Buddhism/Hinduism because it focuses on reincarnation. It also takes references from Christianity because Punxsutawney is a sort of Purgatory for Phil.

Explicit- Groundhog day shows that people should help others out before themselves in order to find true happiness.

Implicit- After analysis and reflection, viewers realize that people have to adapt to certain circumstances or even accept the way things are and move on.
Groundhog day can be interpreted as a metaphor for psychoanalysis. Harold Ramis, the movie’s director, once spoke of the many mental health professionals who have compared the repetition of Bill Murray’s character Phil’s day to the patterns we tend to relive continuously. Bill is given at least 34 chances to relive his day and break free from the routines he’s created in his life. As people, we are able to “checkout” of our lives by always completing tasks, interacting with people, and making decisions on autopilot. It’s when we don’t follow the standard routines of life we’re used to that we learn and grow.
Groundhog Day as Philosophical

Being stuck in time has its many interpretations. For Phil’s situation, anything he does in his present time frame has no effect on the next day because time will repeat and everything will reset.

If we take the character of Phil we can compare it to the myth of Sisyphus. They both have a redundant punishment where everything they do has no effect on the outcome and the Phil’s day would reset just like the boulder and efforts of Sisyphus.

The movie also represents the standpoint of everyday life as we tend to live it out through routines, schedules, and clockwork. But there will be some moments in our lives where we break free from our own time-loop through self-enrichment.
Is it a good story?

- Groundhog day is a good story because it has a unified plot, is truthful, has emotional moments, and is interesting.
- Emotional moments include Phil not being able to save the homeless man and when he keeps on trying to kill himself during his depression phase.
- The story is interesting because we see Phil take multiple approaches on his problem of being stuck living the same day over and over again.
Restricted vs. Non-Restricted

- Groundhog day has restricted narration for the most part because we know as much information as Phil.
- The rest of the characters do make the movie a little bit non-restricted as the viewers know what the other characters are going to say or do.
- This causes the viewers to know more than the other characters themselves.
Symbols

Alarm Clock- Whenever the clock appears on screen with the song playing, it shows how Groundhog day keeps on repeating itself.

Punxsutawney Phil- The groundhog predicts that the winter will continue to go on for another 6 weeks. This symbolizes how Phil Connors will continue to live the same day, but for much longer.
Movie Motivation

- One example of movie motivation is when the clock is purposely shot at from far in the first day of the movie. The next days show the clock closer and closer to emphasize the fact that Phil is still reliving Groundhog day over and over again.

- Another example of movie motivation is showing how Phil Connors gets slapped by Rita numerous times on different (same) days in a succession. The movie does this because it is showing that no matter how many times Phil tries to get with Rita selfishly and not because of true love, he will never succeed.
Just some facts we missed

Phil Connors was named Phil because Danny Rubin (the screenwriter) wanted the main character to be named after the groundhog in Punxsutawney.

On Screen, there is about 33 days that are shown excluding the last day which breaks the cycle.