Usual Suspects

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Conventional storytelling has a structure of beginning, middle and end, however they do not always happen in that order. They use constant flashbacks that are used to reveal how the heist came about and how it goes wrong. This constant flashing back and forth from past to present day allows the film to move at a brisk pace, while at the same time offering the viewers a chance to understand the complexity of the situation and what each of the criminals have at stake.
Form (Cont.)

By using these flashbacks to tell out the story, the film not only finds a unique way of grabbing the audience's attention, but also a unique twist in how conventional storytelling is able to be altered in film for the sake of it’s story structure.
Opening Credits/Title

The opening credit of the usual suspects started with Keaton lighting the matches and aiming them the floor. This mysterious man gets welcomed into the story with little words to say and shoots Keaton. This scene is later brought up towards the end of the movie to tie everything up.

The title meaning “Usual Suspects” was made because 5 known criminals who are all familiar to the cops and all were believable suspects to pulling of the crime of hijacking a truck which is what they were brought in for.
The usual suspects revolves around one question that forms the core of the movie, who is Keyser Soze? The movie centers around five criminals Dean Keaton, Verbal Kint, Michael McManaus, Fred Finster, and Todd Hockney. They end up in a police line apparently being one of the suspects of hijacking a truck. This leads to them deciding to pull off a jewelry heist stealing emeralds from a smuggler as a way of getting back at the cops for hustling them. All goes well for them until they make another deal with a man named Redfoot.
Redfoot wants them to do a new robbery for jewelry but this time they end up killing the guy they were robbing as well as two other guards. It turns out they were actually hired to steal drugs not jewels, and they were now being lowered into a trap. Redfoot is working for a mysterious master criminal named Keyser Soze and Kobayashi forces them to go along with the plan to sell the drugs for Soze.
They are forced to accept the deal, but when they enter the boat it turns out that Soze wanted more people than they thought. They were only there to kill a snitch that was trying to give out information of Soze’s to others. After the killings of that night, Verbal and a majorly burned Hungarian survivor were the only ones to live to tell their stories.
Plot Chart

This contains the level of Keyser Soze’s prediction toward situations that might create some influence to his original plan. The level of influences measured by time and effect that each scene might influence to further the situation in the movie. It also categorizes the type of situation into 3 categories: investigating, planning, and action. It shows all the characters that had been lead and plot by Keyser Soze throughout the move.
Background of the story

Soze was able to create a lineup of a group of criminals that he knew were capable of his task. Flashing back and forth from past to present is Verbal telling his side of the story to Agent Kujan, who is trying to figure out who is Soze. But come to find that Verbal is making up the story by looking at the bulletin board in front of him.
Bulletin board explanation

The bulletin board itself symbolizes the untrustworthiness of certain stories that Verbal was telling agent Kujan to create a way for him to get away with what he did.
During the meeting, Fenster talks about Bricks Marlin whom he did jobs with.

“RedFoot” - fake name yet true event.
Shorkie, Illinois
“You know, back when I was in that Barbershop Quartet in Shorkie, Illinois”
“Back when I was picking beans in Guatemala we used to make fresh coffee”
Verbal sees “Kobayashi” underneath agent Kujan coffee cup and uses it to refers to another character in his story
Background cont.

Verbal walks out of the office with a limp and begins to walk normal.... He was faking it the whole time. He left with the Agent believing that Keaton was Soze. Only to find out the Verbal is Soze.
Motifs

- Cigarette - repeated in every and scheme
- Watch - shown in the first scene when Keaton ask for the time and at the end Verbal picks up his things which includes a gold watch
- Music - a certain song when Keyser appears
Characterization

If Verbal actually did all of the things that was said was done by Keyser Soze, such as killing all of those people, his character has a violent willpower and a sense of ruthlessness.

As for the other criminals, we get the sense that they are amoral, but not super evil. They try not to kill people when they commit their crimes, but when things go south, they don’t hesitate to pull out their guns.
Characterization (Cont.)

Dean Keaton - He plays a bigger role in the lie than the actual truth. He is seen as a womanizer, with a socially impressive nonchalance, and keeps the positive view on things. For example, when he's arrested and taken away in the restaurant he says, “Enjoy the meal! This is a small problem.”
Characterization (Cont.)

McManus - He is so divorced from his/others 'feeling' that he can become an superb marksman. Because he lacks emotional connection, people see them 'with a wire loose in their head'. The others call him 'crazy guy' but also indicate he usually is harmless to them. McManus laughs when its not appropriate, or nobody else in the environment sees any reason for laughing. He lives in his head.
Characterization (Cont.)

Tod Hockney - He's possessed by anger and resentment. These intense flashes of anger are caused by built up emotion which can be sustained to a certain level. He gave criticism on others behavior and was intellectually arrogant. For example, when someone said “You were in Queens that day,” he responded with, “I LIVE in Queens, did you put that together yourself Einstein? Have you monkey's working around the clock on this?” The others feared him because “He was the only guy who didn't give a f*ck about anybody.”
Characterization (Cont.)

Kint - Before we knew Kint to be Keyser Soze, we see him self pity and self denigration. For example when he said phrases such, “Why me?”, “I used to dehydrate as a child, one time my piss came out as snot,” and “It didn't make sense that I was there.” He was always putting the blame on others; 'It was all the cops fault'. He also had a melancholic sad face, enticing our compassion, as well as the fact that he's crippled. The intriguing thing about Kint is that he knows which image he makes in others heads; he knows it and manipulates his natural inclinations in order to deceive others.
Characterization (Cont.)

Fenster - He is very flashy and likes to show off his clothes. He can't sit still and he talks in a special way. His fellows say, “When it came to the job he was right on, a smart man.” He wanted to do what he wanted to do and didn’t care about what others wanted.
Characterization (Cont.)

David Kajun - The police officer that was impatient and defaming. For example when he told Verbal, “I am smarter than you, and I am gonna find what I wanna know.” He's the guy that runs the show to serve his own interests. However, his overconfidence in his own analyzing abilities makes him lose the mind game from Verbal.
Point of view

- There are two point of views
- Verbals point of view (restricted)

He tells agent Kujan his story leading up to the boat scene

- Objective point of view

Everything outside of the story, we know more than the characters about the plot, but we are limited to what Verbal tells us.
THREE

- Life is full of surprises.

Verbal seems as the least effective in the group, but we come to figure out that he’s effortlessly toying with everyone throughout the movie.
Subplot:

- Relationship between Keaton and Edie
- Agent Baer’s part of the investigation
- Verbal’s friendship with Keaton
The characters don’t openly discuss trust, but we know that they have trust at the end, because they are surprised that Verbal betrayed them.
Meanings

- Emotional: feeling of betrayal
- Explicit: one shouldn’t trust a criminal, especially a smart one
- Implicit: one should not too confident or arrogant
- Referential: Some people can be more sneaky and cruel than you think
- Symptomatic: People are fearful of the Devil and uncertainty
Good story? Yes.

- Unified plot- subplots tie into main plot
- Credible/plausible- The usual suspects has a believable story
- Internal truth- the characters are believable
- Artistic semblance- although the story is fiction the setting is realistic
Message:

- The film tries to show us a dark and deceptive side of human nature
- A person with strong will power can manipulate others into what that person wants them to believe
- It’s not always the “usual suspects,” with the obvious motives, who are guilty
Motivation

The motivation for Verbal to make up this elaborate story is to keep his identity as Keyser Soze a secret. Although we are not sure what in the story is actually true, the motivation for bringing the criminals together was for them to play a part in Soze’s grand plan of killing a snitch that had information on Keyser.
Voyeuristic - The movie portrays this world as a regular world there’s nothing out of the ordinary. If you were told this happened in your town you would be shocked but it would be believable.

Visceral - The story is something that will make you feel suspense on figuring out who Soze is. It truly grabs your attention.
Vicarious - We did care for Verbal because he seemed to be the cripple who wasn’t meant to be in crime. The story portrayed him as someone who was new to this.

Verisimilitude - Most of the movie appears to be real but in the end we found out that it was all one big lie.
Range V Depth

We know that people died in a boat explosion we just don’t know who did it. The movie only lets us know what Verbal is telling the police. So the angles during the boat scene at the end were intended to keep us from knowing the truth until Kajun makes up a truth that is really a lie.
Resources

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_6560AW1zQ

https://www.thecinemaholic.com/the-usual-suspects-explained/

https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/the-critics-cinema-confused-you-will-be-1598236.html