

**“In the Heat of the Night” starring Sidney Poitier, Rod Steiger, Warren Oates, 1967, NR, 110 minutes**

**Major themes:**

- Murder
- Mystery
- Racism
- Prejudice
- Manners
- Morals
- Collaboration
- Respect
- Friendship
- Dignity

**Major characters:**

- Detective Virgil Tibbs
- Chief Bill Gillespie
- Sam Wood
- Mrs. Leslie Colbert
- Eric Endicott
- Mr. Lloyd Purdy, Delores Purdy
- Mayor Frank Schubert
- Mama Caleba
- Harold Courtney

## Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

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### Background info:

- This film is based on a novel of the same name by John Ball, set in the community of Wells, South Carolina. Sidney Poitier was adamant that filming be done in the north because he had almost been killed by the Ku Klux Klan during a visit to Mississippi. Most of the filming was done in Sparta, Illinois, except for scenes filmed at a Tennessee cotton plantation. Poitier received threats while in TN, at which time filming was immediately returned to IL. The film name of the town was changed to Sparta so that local signs would not need to be changed.
- This film won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1967. Due to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1968), the presentation of this Oscar was postponed from Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1968.
- This was the first major Hollywood production to honestly portray the topic of racism. It was also the first major color film that took variations in skin color into consideration to determine proper lighting.
- The American Film Institute voted the line, "*They call me Mister Tibbs!*" as #16 in their 2005 list of 100 Movie Quotes. Virgil Tibbs is ranked #19 in the Heroes category on AFI's list of America's 100 Greatest Heroes and Villains.
- Director Norman Jewison requested that Rod Steiger's character chew gum. Although initially resistant, he went through 263 packs of gum.
- An epiphyte is an organism that grows on the surface of a plant and derives its moisture and nutrients from the air, rain, water (in marine environments) or from debris accumulating around it. Epiphytes include mosses, liverworts, lichens, algae, ferns, cacti, orchids, and bromeliads.
- The greenhouse was added to an existing house and filled with orchids valued at \$15,000 (\$113,000 in 2019). The \$200 found in a wallet is equivalent to approximately \$1500 in 2019, adjusted for inflation.
- The film score was composed, arranged, and conducted by Quincy Jones, with the title song being sung by Ray Charles.

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### Scriptures:

Proverbs 27:17 (NIV) – *“As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”*

Psalms 6:6, 9 (ESV) – *“I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping . . . The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer.”*

Romans 13:7 (NLT) – *“Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and government fees to those who collect them, and give respect and honor to those who are in authority.”*

Proverbs 17:27-28 (ESV) – *“Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.”*

1 Corinthians 15:33-34 (NIV) – *“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’ Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.”*

Isaiah 10:1-4 (NLT) – *“What sorrow awaits the unjust judges and those who issue unfair laws. They deprive the poor of justice and deny the rights of the needy among my people. They prey on widows and take advantage of orphans. What will you do when I punish you, when I send disaster upon you from a distant land? To whom will you turn for help? Where will your treasures be safe? You will stumble along as prisoners or lie among the dead. But even then the LORD’s anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.”*

1 Samuel 2:6-8a (The Message) – *“God brings death and God brings life, brings down to the grave and raises up. God brings poverty and God brings wealth; he lowers, he also lifts up. He puts poor people on their feet again; he rekindles burned-out lives with fresh hope, restoring dignity and respect to their lives—a place in the sun!”*

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### Discussion points:

1. How have societal attitudes changed from what you experienced in this film? What encourages you about how times have changed? What do you find offensive?
2. The film portrays Tibbs as someone who possesses greater knowledge, experience, and character than the others. What does this say about the prejudices displayed?
3. This film shows how the relationship between two contrasting, strong personalities clashed, developed, and changed. What gifts did each one give to the other?
4. What do you notice about how the various characters address one other? How does this demonstrate class hierarchy, prejudice, disrespect, or levels of authority?
5. How do you feel about Tibbs' reaction to Endicott's provocation?
6. The entire film spans less than three days. What factors were critical to the timeline of the story?
7. What is significant about the film's title?