

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Oscar and Lucinda (1997)

Gillian Armstrong (1950-)

OVERVIEW

Director Gillian Armstrong was born in 1950 and raised in a suburb of Melbourne, Australia. While studying directing at the newly established Australian Film and Television School, she made several much-lauded short films. With Peter Weir, Armstrong was one of the first Australian directors to be recognized internationally, beginning with her first feature film, *My Brilliant Career* (1979), which competed at Cannes. Armstrong went on to make other films in Australia (including *Starstruck* [1982], *High Tide* [1987], *Oscar and Lucinda* [1997], and several documentaries) and in Hollywood (including *Mrs. Soffel* [1985] and *Little Women* [1994]). Internationally acclaimed throughout her career, Armstrong has won numerous awards in Australia and abroad.

Film *Oscar and Lucinda* is based on the Booker Prize-winning novel of the same name by Peter Carey (1988). It is an historical fiction narrative about the relationship between Oscar, an English clergyman, and Lucinda, an Australian heiress, who bond over their shared love of gambling. The film includes a voiceover containing some of the novel's narration. Despite tragic events, the film maintains a fairly lighthearted tone.

Background Producer Robin Dalton secured the film rights to Carey's novel, but it took several years for a script to be finalized; eventually Armstrong came on board and suggested writer Laura Jones. Armstrong also brought on costume designer Luciana Arrighi, with whom she had worked on previous period films. Ralph Fiennes and Cate Blanchett played the title characters. The film ultimately was nominated for and won several awards from the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts, in addition to earning an Oscar nomination for best costume design.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Oscar Hopkins – young English clergyman; gambler
Lucinda Leplastrier – young Australian woman; gambler
Reverend Dennis Hasset – Australian clergyman, friend of Lucinda
Theophilus Hopkins – Oscar's father; clergyman
Hugh Stratton – Oscar's adoptive father
Becky Stratton – Oscar's adoptive mother
Mr. Jeffries – glassworks employee, leader of expedition to move glass church building
Miriam Chadwick – woman living in rural Australia; rapes Oscar

SYNOPSIS

In mid-nineteenth-century England, a young boy named Oscar Hopkins contends with the death of his mother and his dissenting clergyman father's strict form of Christianity. Doubting some of his father's assertions about religion, Oscar uses chalk to draw a grid on a rock, in which each square represents a Christian denomination. After praying to be given a sign from God, Oscar turns around and tosses a rock behind him to see where it lands. This game of chance leads him to go visit the nearest Anglican minister, Hugh Stratton, and announce that he has been called to ministry with the Anglican church. Hugh, delighted, adopts Oscar. Oscar eventually attends Oxford, where he starts betting on horse races. He uses the money to pay for his basic needs and donates the rest to the church. He becomes a teacher but decides to leave England to become a missionary in Australia.

On the boat to Australia, Oscar meets Lucinda Leplastrier, a young Australian woman whose parents' death left her with enough money to buy the Prince Rupert's Glassworks in Sydney. Lucinda's

friend Reverend Dennis, an amateur glass connoisseur, had advised her to buy glass-making machinery in England. Oscar and Lucinda discover a shared love of gambling. They go their separate ways but then reunite in Sydney, again meeting to play cards. They are seen by parishioners of Oscar's, which leads to the loss of his position as a minister. To cheer him up, Lucinda shows him the glassworks. He loves it and immediately gets the idea to make a church building out of glass—and to send it to a spot in rural Australia where Reverend Dennis has recently been sent only to discover that there is no dedicated church building there. Oscar bets Lucinda that he can spearhead the construction of this church and its transportation to Reverend Dennis's congregation by Good Friday; the stakes are her inheritance. Oscar and Lucinda begin a romantic relationship just before Oscar leaves on the trip to transport the church materials. However, when he arrives, a nearly unconscious Oscar is raped by a woman and later drowns while trapped in the glass church still sitting on its raft. Lucinda arrives later, mourns the loss of Oscar and destruction of the church, and eventually adopts Oscar's child.

SCENES

Rupert's Drop – In New South Wales, Australia, in 1848, a little girl with red hair opens a box as a woman says "Happy birthday, Lucinda! Your own Rupert's Drop." Lucinda pulls a small glass object that looks like a water drop out of the box. Encouraged by the adults, she breaks the object, sending a shower of particles flying into the air as they all smile.



Bereavement – A redhaired boy runs on the beach, identified as Dover Beach in England, as an adult male voiceover says that this is his great-grandfather Oscar Hopkins and that Oscar's mother has just died of cancer. The boy yells "Papa!" as a man runs into the ocean, crying and carrying a bundle of clothing. He eventually turns around at the sound of the boy's cries and walks back to shore, picking up the boy and embracing him. The voiceover says that Oscar would henceforth always associate the sea with death.



Christmas conflict – A group of people sit in a circle as Oscar's father describes the evil of celebrating Christmas and explains that their congregation will not do so. Oscar, now several years older, is present. Oscar and his father eat a meal together afterwards and discuss Oscar's latest approach to classifying his mother's collection of buttons—this time by color and size. Two servant women take Oscar into the kitchen and present him with a small Christmas pudding. Oscar begins to eat it and smiles, but then his father comes into the room, hits Oscar, and throws the rest of the pudding in the fire, saying "this is the food of Satan!"



Leaving the fold – Outside by himself, Oscar uses chalk to draw a grid on a rock, in which each square represents a Christian denomination. After praying to be given a sign from God, Oscar turns around and tosses a rock behind him to see where it lands. Multiple times, it lands on the "Anglican" square. He then promptly walks to the nearest Anglican church. A middle-aged man and woman, the man dressed in a clerical collar, sit outside talking as she plucks chickens. They initially try to get Oscar to leave, but he says "I am called." They take Oscar in and give him a meal. He explains that his father is in doctrinal error and so he cannot live with him. The minister, Hugh, smiles in delight, saying that Oscar can go to the same Oxford college he did and become a minister too.



Lucinda swims – A redhaired young woman swims alone in a lake. She runs to a house and enters, telling an older woman that she went for a swim. The older woman says that they should have gone back to England after the girl's father's death. Lucinda protests.



Introduction to gambling – A redhaired young man with a button collection—Oscar—sits in his rooms at Oxford, reading. Another young man knocks on the door. Oscar opens the door; the man has the wrong room, but Oscar asks him to come in anyway. The man asks if he would like to make a bet on a horse; Oscar does not understand what this means and asks him to explain. The man, Fish, takes him to a racetrack and explains the whole process of betting on horse racing. Oscar is fascinated and participates eagerly (and successfully). He explains to Fish that he has been praying to God for funds and will now be able to pay his bills.



Lucinda's tragedy – Lucinda reads a will, overseen by an older couple. She expresses dismay at their assertion that she is supposed to live with them now that her mother is dead, and that she will find it easy to make a good marriage because her fortune will be large when she comes of age. Lucinda weeps at having to leave her home.



Lucinda's plan – One year later, Lucinda takes a boat to Sydney alone. She sees a "for sale" sign on the Prince Rupert's Glassworks factory. She goes to see a man who is an expert on glass, asking for instruction and for help in purchasing the factory. He agrees.



Hugh confronts Oscar – Oscar puts money in a church donation box as Fish looks on in dismay, telling him he should use the money to buy new clothes. But Oscar insists that he has kept as much money as he needs. Alone in his room later, he makes detailed notes on horses. Hugh comes to visit him and asks him how he can afford to pay his bills and send gifts to Hugh and his wife. Oscar says only that God is providing for him. Hugh looks skeptical.



Lucinda socializes – Lucinda settles into her new life in Sydney, spending a lot of time with Reverend Dennis, her glass expert advisor, and also with Charlie Figg, who runs a gambling circle in which she participates. Reverend Dennis advises her to go to London to buy state-of-the-art machinery for the glassworks, which is now officially hers. Before she goes, Reverend Dennis tells her that he is hearing gossip about her participation in a card-playing circle. She confesses that it is true.



Oscar plans to leave England – Oscar bets on a dog fight. Fish comes to visit him at the school where Oscar now works as a teacher; Oscar tells Fish that he has applied successfully to become a missionary in Australia. In England, "I do not fit," Oscar says. He also expresses concern about the fact that he cannot stop gambling. He asks Fish to flip a coin in order to make the final decision as to whether he will go to Australia. The coin says he should go.



Oscar and Lucinda sail – Lucinda stands aboard the Leviathan, the ship that will bear her back to Australia after shopping for machinery in England as Reverend Dennis recommended. Oscar boards the ship too. He hosts a small going-away party on the ship, attended by Hugh and his wife as well as Oscar's father. The three older adults speculate about where Oscar's money comes from. Lucinda peeks at the party from a hallway. Oscar and his father pray together. Oscar's father gives him the caul that was taken off his head when he was born, saying that cauls are believed to prevent people from drowning. After everyone else leaves and the ship is about to set off, Hugh comes to Oscar and demands that he tell him where his wealth is coming from. Oscar finally admits to gambling. Hugh asks him to share his system; Oscar says that Hugh must get off the ship but that he will write him a letter explaining his system.



Oscar and Lucinda meet – Four members of the ship’s crew play cards for money as Lucinda watches surreptitiously. She walks down to the second-class deck and sees Oscar reading. She introduces herself and asks him whether she can make confession to him; he introduces himself and agrees. Oscar follows Lucinda to her cabin in first class and begins to read a confession protocol; she confesses to several instances of gambling. Oscar reveals his familiarity with various terms of gambling jargon that she has used. “Where is the sin?” he asks her. He says that gambling goes back to Pascal’s wager: we bet that there is a God. They begin to play cards. But later Oscar panics and throws her cards out the porthole, which then causes further panic when he sees the ocean that he fears. Oscar remains anxious and ill in his own cabin for the remainder of the voyage.



Back in Sydney – The ship arrives in Sydney. Lucinda goes home; Oscar walks around looking at the city in wonder. He then attends a meal with other clergymen, including Reverend Dennis. Reverend Dennis goes to the glassworks and talks to Lucinda, revealing to her that he has been sent to a rural parish by the bishop. She correctly deduces that he is being sent away because of his association with her. But he insists on going.



Ministers face challenges – Hugh and his wife, Becky, go through their finances. Over Becky’s objections, Hugh insists on taking all of their cash to the racetrack in order to use Oscar’s system. Meanwhile, Reverend Dennis arrives at his new post. He discovers that there is no real church, only an abandoned building behind the blacksmith’s. The locals greet him.



Reunion and more gambling – Lucinda goes to a gambling establishment frequented by Chinese-Australians. She finds Oscar there. They smile at one another. The next day, they play cards together in Oscar’s lodging. They are spied on by Mr. and Mrs. Judd, who enter through the window and chastise them for gambling. Lucinda accuses them of rudeness and tells them to leave. Oscar and Lucinda laugh after they are gone, though Oscar worries that he is “done for” now. Indeed, the church leaders do not believe his insistence that he does not gamble for personal gain, and he is stripped of his position. Oscar writes to his father and tells him what has happened.



Oscar desperate – Lucinda finds Oscar praying alone in a church. His hands are injured. She takes him to her house and dresses his wounds. Lucinda’s servant tells her that the wounds appear to have been made by folding his hands too fiercely while praying. Oscar takes up residence in a guest room in Lucinda’s house.



Oscar’s worries – Lucinda goes swimming in the sea. Oscar sees her while out for a walk. He tries to walk away, but she comes after him, asking him why he has been avoiding her while staying at her house. He says that he simply cannot gamble anymore—“it is like opium to me”—and he is worried that they will start up again together. Lucinda suggests that they make a pact never to gamble again. He agrees, and they shake hands. They sit together and talk about their families and their aspirations. Later, Oscar sees a letter ready to be sent to Reverend Dennis; he looks at it pensively.



Glassworks visit – Oscar visits the glassworks with Lucinda and watches glass-blowing. He is delighted. He tells Lucinda that he has never seen anything so splendid. She shows him a prototype for an exhibition hall built mostly of glass. Oscar finds it magnificent and tells her that he has an idea: that they build a church of glass and then transport it to be Reverend Dennis’s church. He suggests that one purpose of a church is to celebrate the glory of



God, and that a glass church would fulfill this purpose wonderfully. Oscar bets Lucinda that he will supervise the transportation and can have the new church in its place by Good Friday. She agrees, staking her inheritance. They laugh about the fact that they have avoided all gambling for five weeks and now have made an extremely high-stakes bet. Lucinda and Oscar engage a Mr. Jeffries as a guide for the journey. He says that they should go by sea because it is dangerous to go through Aboriginal territory as they would have to if going overland. Oscar, though, cannot stand to go by sea, so he insists on the overland route.

Hugh's death – In England, Becky runs away from the Anglican church, where Hugh has hanged himself. Oscar's father looks pensively at the sea. Oscar tearfully reads a letter from his father conveying the news.

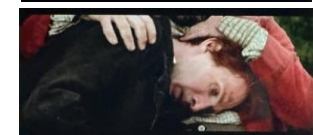
Journey begins – At night, Oscar gets out of bed and goes to get a drink of water. Lucinda comes up behind him. They embrace and then tentatively kiss. Oscar goes back to bed. In the morning, the expedition prepares to set out from the glassworks. Mr. Jeffries comes to Lucinda's office, where she is with Oscar. She shows Mr. Jeffries an envelope and says that it contains a bonus, which Oscar will deliver to Mr. Jeffries when they arrive safely. Mr. Jeffries leaves. Oscar hands something to Lucinda, they kiss, and then he leaves the office. The expedition departs, comprising several men on horseback and Oscar riding on a large wagon with the pieces of the church building. One Aboriginal man is with the expedition.



Aboriginal settlement attacked – The expedition crosses the first of what it turns out will be six rivers on the journey; Oscar has a panic attack on the boat. Mr. Jeffries tells one of the men, Percy, that his job henceforth is to monitor and take care of Oscar. The expedition proceeds overland. They approach an Aboriginal settlement, where one of the inhabitants asks another what these strangers are doing on their land. Mr. Jeffries, smirking, shoots an Aboriginal man, prompting a skirmish that ends with several Aboriginal people dead. Oscar shouts in protest while this is going on. Mr. Jeffries laughs at him.



Oscar kills Mr. Jeffries – The expedition stops at a pub. Oscar looks on unhappily as one of the men rapes a crying Aboriginal woman in a corner. He stands and says that he cannot fight Mr. Jeffries physically but will play poker with him using the hundred-pound bonus from Lucinda. Mr. Jeffries shoves Oscar down and pushes him outside, then brandishes his sword. Percy grabs an ax and comes to Oscar's aid by cutting Mr. Jeffries on the arm. Oscar seizes the ax and drives it into the top of Mr. Jeffries's head, killing him. Oscar, stunned, leans against Percy.



Percy helps Oscar – The next morning, Oscar awakes and finds Percy, who tells him that the other men have left, believing that Mr. Jeffries absconded with their pay (because Percy told them to believe this). "I have killed a man," Oscar says. "A bad man," Percy replies. He has hired local men to assemble the pieces of the church—which the other men gladly left behind. Meanwhile, Lucinda rides a steamer that will take her to the same location Oscar is going to.



Church arrives – A woman, addressed as Miriam, hands over the care of the children for whom she is a governess to their mother. She sees a raft with a small glass church on it floating down the river, with Oscar inside. A small pane of glass in the ceiling cracks, and pieces fall down around Oscar. Nevertheless, he and the two men pushing the raft arrive at the dock of their destination. Reverend Dennis looks at them and says, "Lucinda!" Oscar, looking sunburned and exhausted, shakes Percy's hand and says that he will go alone now. He goes up to Reverend Dennis and presents the church to him as a gift.



Oscar compromised – Reverend Dennis engages Miriam to take Oscar to their existing church. She does so. Oscar lies on the ground; she wipes his face with a wet cloth. Then she removes his shirt and shoes and wipes his feet. She moves her hands toward his genitals as he makes a sleepy, confused sound. She climbs on top of him and has sex with him.



Oscar drowns – The voiceover narrator says that although Oscar's heart cried out for Lucinda, he now believed he would have to marry this woman he had "compromised," not thinking that she had compromised him. Oscar returns to the church, still sitting on its raft near the dock. He sits in the church and prays for forgiveness for the deaths of the Aboriginals and Mr. Jeffries, as well as for the "seduction" of Miriam Chadwick. Oscar eventually goes to sleep; night falls. A rope breaks, and the church slowly sinks into the river. Oscar wakes and realizes what is happening, but he is unable to free himself from the building. He drowns, picturing his father's face and then Lucinda's.



Oscar laid to rest – Oscar is buried; Reverend Dennis reads the burial service. Miriam, Lucinda, and Percy are among those present. Afterward, Lucinda goes into what's left of the church building, which has been pulled from the water. There she finds the wooden box containing Oscar's casket. She weeps.



Lucinda adopts Oscar's child – In a church building made partly of wood and partly of the iron frame from the glass church, Miriam and Oscar's baby is baptized by Reverend Dennis; Miriam has died in childbirth. Lucinda takes the child with her back to Sydney; some years later, they laughingly swim together.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Lucinda Leplastrier

Even before she develops a love of gambling, Lucinda is someone who takes risks in life. She acts independently, making her own sometimes unconventional choices about how to spend her time. She is bold in her decision-making, but not overconfident; she follows risk-taking with dedication to making the venture successful.

Independent – As a girl, Lucinda is uninterested in proper society, preferring to swim and enjoy the outdoors on her own. Later, Lucinda socializes with various people who are considered disreputable, including Oscar. She expresses no interest in marriage, instead purchasing the glassworks simply because she likes their products.

Bold – Lucinda acts boldly, taking risks throughout her life. She leaves rural Australia for Sydney, alone, as soon as she comes of age. She purchases the glassworks even though the business is in rather bad shape when she takes it on and even though she knows nothing about business or glass.

Dedicated – Lucinda's boldness is rewarded in part because of her dedication to learning and hard work. Though bold, she is also humble enough to know her own ignorance. She asks for lots of advice when she purchases the glassworks, follows that advice, and works hard to improve the business.

Oscar Hopkins

Oscar has several characteristics that remain consistent from his childhood in England to his adulthood in Australia. First, he is religious: though he disagrees with some of his clergyman father's beliefs, he too becomes a minister. Oscar is also very superstitious, playing all forms of games of chance. Finally, he is a worrier, characterized by constant self-doubt.

Superstitious – Even beyond his addiction to gambling, Oscar is extremely superstitious throughout his life. He essentially tosses a coin to determine which Christian denomination to join and whether to undertake missionary work in Australia. He believes that the sea causes death but that carrying a caul can protect him from it.

Religious – For Oscar, superstition is compatible with religious faith. He likens modern forms of gambling to Pascal's wager. He uses his gambling winnings only for basic needs and donates the rest to churches. As a child, it mattered deeply to him to select the right Christian denomination; he later becomes a clergyman and missionary.

Self-doubting – Oscar worries about everything—choosing the right religious affiliation, dealing with his addiction to gambling, deciding what he should do for a living, figuring out how much Lucinda likes him, and so on. He doubts himself constantly; games of chance seem to be a way to offload decision-making onto an outside authority.

THEMES

Society

Gender Gender is a subtle theme throughout the film. When Lucinda's parents have both died, an older couple (seemingly friends of the family) assert that she is supposed to live with them now, and that she will find it easy to make a good marriage because her fortune will be large when she comes of age in a year. Lucinda weeps at this news. Although she does not articulate dismay at the proposition of marriage, it is telling that as soon as she comes of age, she leaves this couple, moves to Sydney by herself, purchases the Prince Rupert's Glassworks, and henceforth devotes most of her time to business. She does nothing that would be likely to lead to marriage. When she goes to Reverend Dennis for advice about glass, he is initially surprised to find that she is a woman interested in taking over a business. Still, partly thanks to her financial independence, Lucinda manages throughout the film to transcend 19th-century expectations about gender. Miriam Chadwick is not so lucky. Her behavior and the comments of her employer indicate that she is a widow looking to find another man to save her from being a governess; getting pregnant by Oscar, however, leads her not to marriage but to death in childbirth.

Illustrative moment: When an exhausted and disheveled Oscar arrives with the glass church, Reverend Dennis tells Miriam Chadwick to take him away and take care of him. She takes advantage of this situation by bathing him and then raping him. When he realizes what has happened, Oscar does indeed think to himself that he will have to marry her. Miriam's plan, though obviously unethical, is an attempt to leverage the only power she feels she has to improve her situation.

Psychology

Gambling Gambling is a major theme in *Oscar and Lucinda* on a literal level: Oscar begins betting on horses early in the film, and he and Lucinda both play cards for money (separately and together). Unlike many films about gambling, this one does not moralize; there is no scene, for example, in which a character loses their life savings in a card game. The risk of gambling does exist in this film, but in a different way. First, Oscar loses his position as a minister in Australia because two of his parishioners see him playing cards with Lucinda—so he loses a lot because of gambling, but not through the game itself. Similarly, Oscar's bet that he can spearhead the construction of the glass church and its installation by Good Friday does lead to the loss of his life, but indirectly: he gets trapped in the church and drowns when it sinks in the water. The film encourages an expansive view of gambling in the sense of risk-taking and leaps of faith; Oscar explicitly likens gambling to Pascal's wager (acting devoutly due to making a "bet" that God exists), and both Oscar and Lucinda make risky decisions (such as her purchase of the Prince Rupert's Glassworks and his move to Australia to become a missionary).

Illustrative moment: On the boat from England to Australia, Lucinda discovers that Oscar is a minister and asks whether she can make a sort of "confession" to him even though he is Anglican rather than Catholic; he agrees. Her confession includes a mention of various forms of gambling; Oscar's response makes

clear that he is intimately familiar with gambling himself. The confession turns into an eager conversation about gambling, punctuated by Oscar's insistence that it is not incompatible with religious faith. They begin playing cards.

Faith Like gambling, faith is both a literal and a more abstract theme in *Oscar and Lucinda*. Literally, much of the early part of the film is about Oscar's search for a religious home for himself. He believes his dissenting minister father to be in error but is unsure what Christian denomination is the right one; he ends up praying for a sign from God and then believing he has gotten a sign that the right church is the Anglican Church. He then joins the fold of the local Anglican minister, Hugh, and eventually goes to Oxford to become a minister. He duly becomes ordained, first working as a teacher in a religious school and then taking up missionary work in Australia. He believes that the glass church will glorify God with its striking appearance. Another character, Lucinda's friend Reverend Dennis, is also a minister. But the film is also interested in "faith" beyond literal religion. To gamble is to have faith that you will win a game you have no direct control over. As discussed above, Oscar explicitly casts faith in God as a sort of gambling. Oscar and Lucinda also both make leaps of faith in their lives, such as her purchase of the glassworks and his career decisions.

Illustrative moment: As a boy concerned that his father is in doctrinal error, Oscar asks for a sign from God telling him which Christian denomination he should follow and, eventually, preach. He uses chalk to draw a grid on a rock in which different squares represent different denominations. He then turns around and tosses a pebble behind him several times. Each time, it lands on "Anglican." Oscar is displeased but takes the sign as definitive. Placing his faith in God, he walks to the nearest Anglican church.

Relationship

Love The film portrays various examples of love. Most prominently, the relationship between Oscar and Lucinda is a loving one. It takes a romantic turn when they kiss just before his journey with the glass church. But even before that moment, Lucinda shows love for Oscar by taking him in when he loses his position as a minister after being seen playing cards with her. Whenever they interact, Oscar and Lucinda clearly enjoy each other's company tremendously. In addition to playing cards together, they also have long conversations about their families, aspirations, and so on. Lucinda also expresses love for her mother and for Australia. Oscar, meanwhile, clearly loves his father despite their religious dispute, and he also comes to love his adoptive father, the Anglican minister Hugh. In the end, Oscar's death deprives Lucinda of him but not of his legacy: she adopts his child and is seen, in the final scene of the film, happily playing with the child in the water. Oscar's death is tragic, but the compensation of his child ends the film on a positive note.

Illustrative moment: Love sometimes takes the form of jealousy. Although Lucinda's relationship with Reverend Dennis is not romantic, Oscar worries that it might be. One day after he has started staying at her house, Oscar spends a pleasant afternoon talking with Lucinda but then gets a worried look on his face when he sees a letter on the mantelpiece addressed to Reverend Dennis.

Family Family is presented in the film as a source of love but also of loss, dispute, and difficulty. The film's first scene portrays Lucinda as a child, celebrating her birthday with two apparently happy and loving parents. In the next scene, child Oscar's father is weeping and mourning his wife's death; he almost drowns himself in the ocean but returns to shore when he sees his crying son. The next time we see Lucinda, her father is dead, and soon enough her mother is dead as well. Oscar's relationship with his one remaining parent soon becomes strained by his father's austere religious beliefs. They continue to love each other, but almost always from afar; the relationship never really normalizes. We see one other family: the married pair of Reverend Hugh and his wife. They, too, love each other but must suffer loss when Hugh kills himself in desperation about his finances. The film's final comment on family is perhaps its most interesting: after Oscar and the woman who forced him to have sex with her have both died, Lucinda adopts their child. This child has red hair like Oscar, and the film's penultimate scene suggests that he and Lucinda live happily together despite the lack of a biological relationship.

Illustrative moment: Oscar is on the boat that is about to leave England for Australia. His adoptive parents, Hugh and Betty, have come to see him off. Then his father, Reverend Hopkins, shows up too, even though he has not seen Oscar for a long time. Although father and son have never reconciled their doctrinal differences, Reverend Hopkins encourages his son to pray with him for a safe journey; he also gives Oscar the caul taken from his head when he was born, saying that cauls are believed to protect people from drowning. Father and son obviously still care about each other a great deal.

Friendship Friendship is perhaps more prominent in the film than family. After their childhoods, Oscar and Lucinda both spend more time with friends than with relatives. At university, Oscar makes friends with a fellow student named Fish, who introduces him to betting on horse races. Oscar and Fish remain friends both during and after their time at Oxford; Fish gently criticizes Oscar's clothes, and Oscar seeks Fish's input when he is trying to decide whether to become a missionary. Lucinda also has friends before she meets Oscar: Reverend Dennis advises her on glass, and they spend several evenings each week in each other's company. Other evenings she spends with a different group of friends, often playing cards. Once Oscar and Lucinda meet, they develop a strong friendship. They initially bond over their shared love of gambling, knowing that society largely disapproves of this activity. But Lucinda becomes a true friend to Oscar when she invites him to stay at her house after he loses his ministerial position. At this point, they do all kinds of activities together and share confidences about their lives. For these two characters, friendship helps fill the void left by deceased and disputatious family members.

Illustrative moment: Soon after Oscar comes to stay at Lucinda's house, Lucinda's servant learns that he is a minister who has lost his position due to being caught gambling. The servant disapproves of this and quits her position in protest. Instead of being upset, Oscar and Lucinda take this as an opportunity to make a game out of the household chores. They start with scrubbing the floor together, starting on opposite ends and racing to meet each other in the middle. Both laugh, clearly enjoying the playful activity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. To what extent does *Oscar and Lucinda* fit your impression of gambling (from other films, from personal experience, or from the general cultural conversation)? If it differs, how so?
2. What do you think about Oscar's assertion that gambling is compatible with religious faith because Pascal's wager is essentially a gamble?
3. Were you rooting for a romantic relationship between Lucinda and Oscar? Why or why not?
4. Discuss the film's portrayal of the interactions between Miriam Chadwick and Oscar.
5. What do you think of Oscar's whole scheme with the glass church? Is it indeed a worthy attempt to glorify God, or a foolish undertaking? Or something in between?