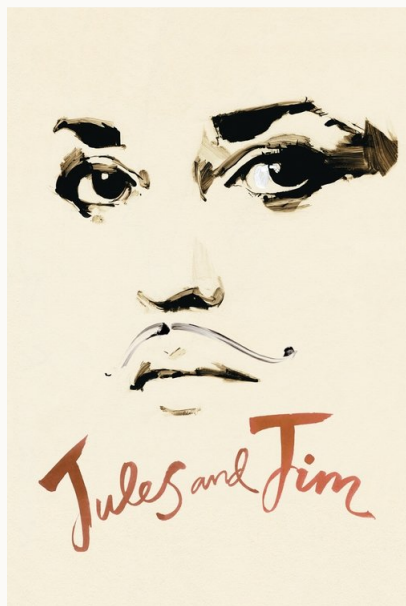




DRAMA · ROMANCE

Jules and Jim

1962 · Directed by François Truffaut

- French New Wave
- Art Cinema
- Melodrama
- Auteur Cinema

Before the First World War, a shy Austrian writer and a spirited Frenchman become inseparable friends in Paris. Then a captivating, unpredictable woman enters their lives, and the friendship is tested across two decades. Playful and tender in tone, with a restless, inventive style.

DIRECTOR	François Truffaut
YEAR	1962
RUNTIME	1h 46m (106 min)
COUNTRY	France
GENRES	Drama, Romance
CAST	Jeanne Moreau, Oskar Werner, Henri Serre, Marie Dubois, Sabine Haudepin
MUSIC	Georges Delerue
IMDB	7.7 / 10 (46,204 votes)
ROTTEN TOMATOES	94% (critics)
METACRITIC	97 / 100
TMDB SCORE	7.5 / 10 (1,076 votes)
WHERE TO WATCH	Stream (US): HBO Max Amazon Channel, HBO Max Rent: Amazon Video, Apple TV Store, Fandango At Home Buy: Amazon Video, Apple TV Store, Fandango At Home

Part one is spoiler-free. Part two, "After watching", reveals the story, scenes and ending.



Before watching

Spoiler-free

WHY WATCH THIS?

1 The New Wave at its most lyrical and generous

Truffaut's third feature, after *The 400 Blows* and *Shoot the Piano Player*, is among the most beloved films of the French New Wave. It shows the movement's freedom of form applied to romance rather than crime or youth.

2 A landmark performance by Jeanne Moreau

Moreau's Catherine is one of the defining screen roles of the 1960s: mercurial, magnetic, never reducible to a type. The whole film turns on how she is seen.

3 Cinema that tells a story with the camera, not just the script

Freeze frames, narration, newsreel inserts and swift tracking shots keep the story moving like a memory being told aloud. Few films make formal play feel so warm.

WHY IT MATTERS IN CINEMA HISTORY

A defining film of the French New Wave's second phase, when its young directors moved from raw debuts to confident, emotionally ambitious storytelling that still broke the rules of classical narrative.



WATCH WITH INTENTION

YOUR LENS

Watch it as a story being remembered and narrated, where the style itself shows how the characters feel about time and each other.

THREE THINGS TO NOTICE

- How narration and rapid editing compress years into moments, then suddenly slow down for a single glance or gesture.
- The freeze frames and the moving camera: when the film stops an image, and when it chases the characters at speed.
- How Catherine is framed and costumed compared with the two men, and how Moreau's expression changes from scene to scene.

ONE QUESTION TO CARRY WITH YOU

Is Catherine being understood by the film, by the two men, or by neither of them?

CINEMA AT THE TIME

- **Movement:** By 1962 the New Wave had arrived: Truffaut, Godard and Chabrol had made their debuts, shooting on location with light crews and treating film as personal expression.
- **Director's moment:** Truffaut, a former critic, had followed the autobiographical 400 Blows with the genre experiment Shoot the Piano Player. This film adapts a novel by Henri-Pierre Roché, written late in his life.
- **Technology:** Lightweight cameras and fast black-and-white stock let cinematographer Raoul Coutard shoot fluidly in CinemaScope, a format then associated with large spectacles, not intimate stories.
- **Dominant styles:** Mainstream romance still favoured tidy plots, moral verdicts and studio gloss. Here a three-way relationship is treated with curiosity rather than judgment.

WHERE IT CAME FROM

FILM

The 400 Blows (1959)

Truffaut's debut established his warm, observant style and the New Wave's freedom, which he turned here toward adult love and fiction.





FILM

The Rules of the Game (1939)

Renoir's ensemble tragicomedy of love and class shaped Truffaut's compassion for flawed characters and his refusal to simplify them.



FILMMAKER

Henri-Pierre Roché

His semi-autobiographical novel provided the story, the three-way relationship and the calm, unjudging narrative voice.



THIS FILM

Jules and Jim (1962)

NEW AT THE TIME *A love triangle told with a novelist's voice and a New Wave toolkit, refusing to condemn anyone and treating freedom in love as an open question.*

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Made in de Gaulle's France as the Algerian War ended, by a former critic newly famous, adapting a novel set in a vanished pre-1914 Europe.

- **Country and moment:** France in 1961–62 was emerging from the Algerian War, which ended in March 1962, and entering rapid modernisation and consumer growth under de Gaulle's Fifth Republic. The story looks back to the era before 1914 and the interwar years.
- **Society and audience:** Young French people were changing attitudes towards marriage, sexuality and women's independence. Postwar generations were also reconsidering the First World War and French–German relations, a theme that runs through the friendship of a Frenchman and an Austrian.
- **Politics and censorship:** Official film censorship still existed in France. A story of an openly unconventional three-way relationship drew some objections, and the film was given age restrictions in some markets.
- **The filmmaker's situation:** Truffaut was a former critic who had won fame with *The 400 Blows* (1959). His second film, *Shoot the Piano Player*, had been commercially disappointing. He adapted Henri-Pierre Roché's semi-autobiographical novel, which Roché published in his seventies, and had discovered it in the 1950s.



WHAT TO EXPECT

- **Pace:** Brisk and episodic, covering around two decades. Scenes are short, with a light touch, and the mood shifts from joking to sorrowful without warning.
- **Style:** Narrated by an offscreen voice, with freeze frames, archive footage and long tracking shots. It feels like a spoken novel.
- **Colour and ratio:** Black and white, widescreen CinemaScope (2.35:1).
- **Language:** French with a little German; watch with subtitles.
- **Performance:** Naturalistic and playful, with sudden emotional turns. Moreau sings a song that became closely tied to the film.

WATCH WITH KIDS?

14+ SUGGESTED AGE

Rated 12 in Germany, TP (all audiences) in France and unrated in the US; the adult relationship themes, subtitles and black-and-white style make 14 a sensible age for watching together.

Official ratings: US NR · Germany 12 · France TP

- **Good for:** Older teens curious about classic cinema may enjoy the playful, energetic style, the witty narration, the period Paris and countryside settings, and a story about friendship and love.
- **May unsettle, mature themes:** Adult relationships, infidelity, jealousy and emotional turmoil drive the story. Little is shown explicitly, but the ideas are grown-up and may need discussion.
- **May unsettle, dated attitudes:** Its view of women and of relationships reflects its era, and the central female character is often seen through the men's idealising gaze.
- **May unsettle, violence:** Brief, non-graphic violence and moments of danger. The impact is more emotional than gory.
- **Explain first:** It is in French (plus some German) with subtitles, in black and white, and the narration and editing move very quickly.
- **Explain first:** It is set in the years around the First World War, so some attitudes and customs are those of that time.
- **Explain first:** It was a landmark of the French New Wave, which broke conventions by using fast cuts, narration and a free, experimental style.

Talk about it after: *Do you think the friends' idea of freedom in love is realistic, and what do you think it costs the people involved?*

Cinespective's own guidance, a draft. Check it against the official ratings and your own judgement.



After watching

CONTAINS SPOILERS

THE FILM, UNPACKED

CENTRAL IDEA

The film explores whether love can be free of possession, and what that freedom costs. It can be read as a study of three people trying to live outside convention while history and their own needs press in.

THEMES

- **Freedom versus possession:** Catherine insists on living by her own rules, while the men's generosity and jealousy show how hard it is to love without claiming.
- **Friendship between men:** Jules and Jim's bond is deep and almost unspoken. It both survives and is strained by their feelings for the same woman.
- **Time and memory:** The narration, the pre-war and post-war worlds, and the freeze frames make the story feel like something already remembered and slipping away.
- **Women's autonomy:** Catherine wants a life without limits in a world that offers women few options. The film can be read as admiring, tragic and critical of her at once.
- **War and history:** The First World War cuts the story in two, and the film hints at the darker age approaching.

Key scenes

The statue slides

The friends are struck by a stone face with a mysterious smile. When Catherine appears, she is tied to that image, showing how the men idealise her before they know her.

The race on the bridge

Catherine suddenly runs ahead and wins, a joyful display of energy and a sign of her will to lead. Truffaut films the moment with a headlong camera and a burst of freeze-framed delight.

The song "Le Tourbillon de la vie"

Catherine sings it in a small gathering, and the camera lingers on her. The song sums up the film's view of love as a whirl that people cannot hold on to.



The final drive and cremation

Catherine's last act is coldly planned, and the aftermath is quiet and almost clinical. The tone shifts from playful to final, showing how the freedom the film has celebrated can turn destructive.

Filmmaking

- **Narration and structure:** An offscreen narrator, taken from the novel's literary voice, lets the film summarise years in a sentence, then slow down for a gesture. The effect is of someone retelling a life.
- **Camera and editing:** Coutard's mobile camerawork, swift pans, freeze frames and jump-like transitions give the film a breathless rhythm that feels spontaneous. Truffaut also inserts newsreel footage to place the story in history, including the war.
- **Performance:** Moreau shifts from warmth to coldness in a moment; Oskar Werner's gentle Jules and Henri Serre's easy Jim give the men contrasting temperaments, while neither becomes a simple victim.
- **Music:** Georges Delerue's score is light and bittersweet, matching the film's mix of lightness and sorrow, and supports the film's songlike, remembered quality.
- **Widescreen black and white:** CinemaScope compositions keep all three characters in the frame, showing the triangle visually as well as emotionally, and give landscapes and cities an airy openness.

THE FULL STORY

The full plot, including the ending.

In Paris before the First World War, the Austrian writer Jules and the Frenchman Jim become close friends, sharing books, women and long conversations. They are captivated by a slide of an ancient statue's smiling face. When they meet Catherine, a woman who resembles it, both fall under her spell.

Jules and Catherine become a couple, and war separates the friends, who each fear having to kill the other. After the war, Jim visits them at their house in the Black Forest, where Catherine and Jules have a daughter, Sabine. Catherine is restless and unfaithful, and Jim finds himself drawn to her.

Jules, afraid to lose her, gives Jim his blessing to pursue her. Jim and Catherine try to build a life in France, but their passion turns into quarrels, and Catherine's wish for a child becomes a source of pain. Jim also keeps an old attachment, Gilberte, as an escape. Catherine tries to shoot him, and they part and reconcile again.

Finally, Catherine invites Jim for a drive, and Jules watches from a distance as she steers the car off a broken bridge into the river. She and Jim both die. Jules attends their cremation, left alone with his memories of the friendship and the woman who bound it.

BEHIND THE FILM

- **A novel found late:** Truffaut came across Henri-Pierre Roché's novel, written when Roché was in his 20s, in 1955. He was already a major French actress, known for films by Louis Malle.
- **A song for the story:** Le Tourbillon de la vie, written for Moreau's character with music by Georges Delerue, became the film's theme song. It was also Werner's idea to use a song as a leitmotif.
- **Moreau's casting:** Moreau was already a major French actress, known for films by Louis Malle. She was also a friend of Truffaut's, and her role as Catherine was a dream role for her. She became the most famous of Truffaut's early discoveries.
- **Widescreen black and white:** CinemaScope compositions keep all three characters in the frame, showing the triangle visually as well as emotionally, and give landscapes and cities an airy openness.

Truffaut and Roché's tone is sympathetic to all three, so it resists a simple verdict.



LEGACY AND CONNECTIONS

Its place in the lineage before → after

FILM

The 400 Blows (1959)

Truffaut's debut established his warm, observant style and the New Wave's freedom, which he turned here toward adult love and fiction.



FILM

The Rules of the Game (1939)

Renoir's ensemble tragicomedy of love and class shaped Truffaut's compassion for flawed characters and his refusal to simplify them.



FILMMAKER

Henri-Pierre Roché

His semi-autobiographical novel provided the story, the three-way relationship and the calm, unjudging narrative voice.



THIS FILM

Jules and Jim (1962)

MOVEMENT

New Hollywood

Directors such as Arthur Penn borrowed the film's playful editing and open treatment of unconventional relationships.



FILM

Bonnie and Clyde (1967)

Its blend of comedy and tragedy, a charismatic trio and sudden violence echoes Truffaut's tonal shifts, and Truffaut was once considered to direct it.



FILM

A Man and a Woman (1966)

Lelouch's romance shares the film's lyrical, mobile style, shifting between colour and black and white and treating love as memory.



Reception and reputation

The film opened in 1962 to strong critical admiration in France and abroad, and became one of Truffaut's biggest successes. Critics praised its freedom, tenderness and Moreau's performance. Some found its moral outlook shocking, and it ran into censorship and age restrictions in certain countries.

It is now regarded as one of Truffaut's finest films and a central work of the New Wave. Viewers have returned to it for its emotional honesty and playful form, and modern readings often debate Catherine's portrayal and the film's attitude to gender.

Cultural impact beyond cinema

- **Le Tourbillon:** Jeanne Moreau's guitar-accompanied performance of "Le Tourbillon", written by Serge Rezvani under the name Bassiak, became one of the best-known songs in French cinema. It remains closely tied to the film and to Moreau's persona.
- **Moreau as icon:** Catherine helped make Jeanne Moreau an emblem of modern, independent, enigmatic womanhood in 1960s European culture. Her scenes dressed as a young man, with cap and drawn-on moustache, and her carefree bicycle rides remain widely reproduced images.
- **Three-way shorthand:** The film is often cited as a reference point for the love triangle and the open, unconventional relationship. Its title is used as shorthand for a trio bound by friendship and desire, and it is often linked to the era's debates about free love.
- **Debated heroine:** Catherine is still argued over in discussions of gender and desire, seen either as a woman defying convention or as a figure shaped by male fantasy. This keeps the film in film-course and critical conversation.

Its lasting influence

Its mix of voiceover, freeze frames and fluid camerawork shaped later romantic and ensemble films, and its open treatment of non-traditional relationships influenced filmmakers in Europe and America, including those of the New Hollywood generation.



WHAT NEXT?

CONTINUE THE DIRECTOR

The 400 Blows (1959)

Truffaut's debut shows the autobiographical, observant side of his work and makes a useful comparison with this film's literary one.

EXPLORE THE ERA OR MOVEMENT

Breathless (1960)

Shot by the same cinematographer, Godard's film shows the New Wave's jump cuts and street-level energy in sharper, more provocative form.

SEE WHAT INFLUENCED IT

The Rules of the Game (1939)

Renoir's ensemble film of love, deception and social change is an ancestor of Truffaut's compassionate treatment of flawed people.

JUMP FORWARD

Bonnie and Clyde (1967)

American filmmakers adopted European freedom of form here, in another story of an unconventional trio that moves from lightness to tragedy.

COMPARE ANOTHER APPROACH

A Man and a Woman (1966)

Another French romance shaped by memory and style, but gentler and more glamorous in outlook.

FULL CAST AND CREW



François Truffaut
DIRECTOR



Jeanne Moreau
ACTOR
as Catherine



Oskar Werner
ACTOR
as Jules



Henri Serre
ACTOR
as Jim



Marie Dubois
ACTOR
as Thérèse



Sabine Haudepin
ACTOR
as Sabine



Georges Delerue
COMPOSER

Draft content generated for Cinespective and subject to review; awards and dates should be verified before being relied upon. This product uses the TMDB API but is not endorsed or certified by TMDB. Streaming availability by JustWatch via TMDB.