***Liberty Valance*** Discussion Questions

**Briefly record your thoughts as you watch the movie. Keep the question in mind and add to your answer as the movie develops; but also read the next question and record your observations as you continue to watch.**

1. (**Start**)**:** Think of a time in which you’ve gotten to know someone and discovered that he/she didn’t really match your first impression of him/her.
2. **28:52:** What are your first impressions of Tom Doniphon? Try to use specific adjectives and nouns to describe him.
3. **40:36**: What more to Doniphon’s personal character do you see by now?
4. **49:44:** What complexities can you see in Doniphon’s relationship with Ransom Stoddard?

* **1:06:52:** (Additional thoughts)
* **1:38:15:** (Same)
* **1:43:36:** (Same)

1. **1:58:51:** Why did Doniphon just tell Stoddard all of that? Especially…

* “Cold-blooded murder.”
* “I wish I hadn’t.”
* “Give her something to read and write about.”

1. **(End):** In one word, who was Tom Doniphon, in relation to Ransom Stoddard?
2. **(End):** Any significance to the cactus roses?

**Some Old-West Idioms & Historical References**

**Horace Greeley** (1811-72): well-known newspaper editor and political writer of the mid-1800s who famously encouraged Americans to settle the West.

**Jurisdiction**: the area in which an official has authority to enforce the law.

**On the cuff**: (slang) with a promise of being paid later.

**Picketwire**: not a fenced dividing-line—rather, a slang pronunciation of the Purgetoire River in southeastern Colorado, which flows into the Arkansas River.

**Open range**: public land in which farm animals are allowed to roam freely.

**Homesteaders**: settlers who legally claimed and developed land for farming or ranching.

**Debate over territory vs. statehood**: many homesteaders wanted state and federal laws to provide personal safety (Federal Army & state militia) and to protect their claims to own land and natural resources. Many ranchers preferred to allow their animals to roam on the open range; statehood would likely attract more settlers, who would claim ownership of more & more free range land. Others didn’t want to live under the restrictions of law.

**Sodbuster**: (slang) a farmer or homesteader.

**Bushwhack**: (slang) to ambush.

**The whole shebang**: (slang) everything; all of something.

**Buckboard**: an open, four-wheeled, horse-drawn wagon.

**Hash**: chopped meat mixed with potatoes. (Liberty Valance calls Ransom Stoddard a “hash-slinger”—a food waiter, not a gunslinger.)

**“He carries the mark of Cain”**: “He’s a murderer.” In the Book of Genesis, God put a mark on Cain, the son of Adam, after Cain murdered his brother Abel.

**The Court of St. James**: the traditional royal palace of England.

**Spittoon/cuspidor**: a bowl-shaped metallic container for spitting chewing tobacco juice.