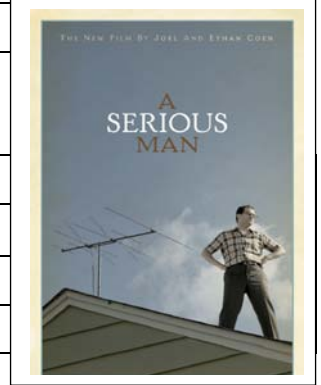


Movies & Languages 2012-2013

A Serious Man

About the movie (subtitled version)

DIRECTOR	Joel and Ethan Coen
YEAR / COUNTRY	2009 / USA
GENRE	Comedy / Drama
ACTORS	Michael Stuhlbarg, Richard Kind, Sara Linnick



PLOT

The story takes place in 1967 and is about Larry Gopnik, a Jewish physics professor in St. Louis Park, Minnesota. Gopnik is a very reasonable man with a very stressful life due to his family and his work situation. His daughter steals from him to finance her future cosmetic surgery; his marijuana smoking son gets stoned at his own bar-mitzvah. His brother, an unwelcome house guest, is unemployed and has problems with the police, and his wife wanting a divorce, forces him to move out of their house.

As Larry's Jewish American middle class life unravels, he starts searching for solutions in his faith, going from rabbi to rabbi. As he and his family find out, God moves in mysterious, and not always pleasant ways.

Although not very successful at the box office, the film was well received by critics and was nominated for best picture at the 2009 Academy Awards.

LANGUAGE

Standard American English, Yiddish, Hebrew

GRAMMAR

QUESTION TAGS

Question tags consist of an auxiliary verb and a personal pronoun. There are a few basic rules:

1. If there is an auxiliary (**do, be, have**) or modal auxiliary verb in the main clause, it is repeated in the question tag. For example:

*He has'nt eaten yet, **has he?***

*She should be in bed by now, **shouldn't she?***

2. If there is an ordinary verb in the main clause, **do** is in the question tag. For example:

*You know how to speak English, **don't you?** (Present)*

*They went to California last year, **didn't they?** (Past)*

*He had a heart attack last year, **didn't he?** (Past – have as ordinary verb)*

3. Normally an affirmative statement has a negative question tag and vice versa. For example:

*You're coming, **aren't you?***

*He doesn't like jazz, **does he?***

4. I am is followed by the question tag **aren't I?** For example: *I'm stupid, **aren't I?***

5. After an imperative, **will you?** or **would you?** are the most common forms. **Will you?** Is the only form possible after a negative imperative. For example:

*Shut the door, **would you?***

*Pay attention, **will you?***

*Don't be late, **will you?***

6. Negative expressions like **no, nothing, nowhere and nobody** in the main clause are followed by an affirmative question tag. For example:

*He takes no interest in his studies, **does he?***

7. **Somebody, someone, everybody/everyone and nobody/no-one** are followed by **they** in a question tag. For example:

*Nobody called, **did they?***

*Everybody was happy, **weren't they?***

8. **Nothing/anything** in the main clause is followed by **it** in a question tag. For example:

*Nothing could be finer, **could it?***

*Anything could happen now, **couldn't it?***

VOCABULARY

Yiddish: high German language, spoken by Jews in Eastern Europe and immigrant Jews, written with the Hebrew alphabet	Nose job: cosmetic surgery on the nose
Shibah: traditional Jewish 7-day period of mourning	"F-troop is fuzzy": television reception is bad
Hanky-panky: questionable or tricky activity	Tenure: permanent status or position granted after a trial period
Pot: marijuana	A bolt from the blue: to come as a surprise
Shul: synagogue	To keep on an even keel: maintain stability
Hush-hush: secret	Brat: an ill mannered, annoying child
Shroedinger's paradox: a paradox in quantum physics involving a dead cat	Goy: a person of a non-Jewish faith