

## Video Guide

### ***Rain Man***

1988, Best Picture of the Year, video

#### I. The Story

“Relationships -- a phenomenon that humans cannot live without. And yet, we so often take them for granted, not realizing just how much time and effort it really takes to make a relationship work. Imagine discovering one day that you had a sibling that you had never met. How do you start a relationship as an adult that should have begun in infancy? . . .

“The film . . . concerns the relationship between two long-separated brothers, Charlie and Raymond Babbitt. Tom Cruise plays Charlie, a young wheeler-dealer who was unaware of his brother’s existence until their wealthy father died -- and left his entire estate to Raymond, portrayed by **Dustin Hoffman**, a developmentally disabled man confined to an institution for over twenty years. Charlie’s efforts to regain his “lost” inheritance by manipulating his older brother leads to an unexpected journey of discovery for both men that is the heart and soul of ***Rain Man***.

“Charlie Babbitt, in his mid-20’s, is an ambitious Los Angeles importer of expensive European sports cars who puts profit ahead of ethics. Money and power are important to Charlie, although he’s been estranged from his wealthy but rigid father since leaving home at sixteen. Upon word of his father’s death, Charlie returns to his family’s Cincinnati estate for the funeral. His girlfriend, Susanna, who has returned with him, is surprised at the elegance of Charlie’s background, and he explains the reasons for the rift between father and son, which resulted from Charlie’s unauthorized driving of a prized 1949 Buick.

“Upon the reading of the will, Charlie is amazed to discover that virtually all of the \$3 million Babbitt estate -- except for the classic Buick and the father’s perfect rosebushes, which go to Charlie -- has been left to an unnamed beneficiary. Stunned, Charlie is nevertheless determined to track down the mysterious heir, and he does -- to the Wallbrook Home for the Developmentally Disabled, whose director, Dr. Bruner, is trustee for the estate. Despite Bruner’s efforts to conceal the beneficiary’s identity, Charlie learns the truth: he has a brother -- Raymond -- of whom he has no memory.

“Raymond Babbitt, Bruner explains, is about sixteen years older than Charlie, and is autistic. He has lived at the Wallbrook home since he was eighteen, when his mother died and Charlie was still an infant. Although shocked upon meeting the brother he never knew he had, Charlie is still determined to gain control of the estate; after all, he reasons, what good is \$3 million to an autistic man confined to an institution? Free to visit Raymond, Charlie and Susanna take him from the home for a night. Although Susanna doesn’t realize it, Charlie intends to keep Raymond, take him back to L. A. and attempt to control the estate; upon learning Charlie’s plans, she leaves him to care for Raymond alone.

“After learning that Raymond was never really committed -- he could have left the home if he chose to -- Charlie leaves Cincinnati with Raymond, and begins to discover what his brother’s condition is really like. Raymond is considered an autistic savant; he possesses amazing powers of memory and mathematical skill, but cannot deal with unfamiliar stimuli. Disruptions of his routine or attempts at intimacy -- especially touching or hugging -- cause Raymond to withdraw from reality and take refuge in behaviors like whispering, making continuous lists, pretending to be a baseball pitcher on the mound or -- occasionally -- hitting or biting himself. Initially treating his brother like a child, Charlie gradually learns how to deal with Raymond’s behavior somewhat effectively.

“The brothers journey from Cincinnati to L.A. in the Buick -- since Raymond will not fly -- and a bond begins to form between the two. Charlie, intrigued by Raymond’s brilliance with mathematics and memory, teaches him how to play -- and win big with -- cards. They head for Las Vegas, and a new, frightening but still exciting world opens up to Raymond. Charlie has him made over in appearance, and they storm into Las Vegas and win a bundle. Through it all, Raymond experiences much -- although still unable to understand most of what he sees -- and slowly begins to trust Charlie.

“By the time the Babbitt brothers reach Los Angeles -- where Charlie has arranged a custody hearing, originally intended to help him win control of Raymond’s money -- Charlie is no longer certain if the money is, after all, what he really wants. He has learned much about life from Raymond, and has come to truly love and care for his brother. If he fights for custody, it will now be out of concern rather than greed, and Charlie’s change in attitude also gives him another chance with Susanna. Although the final decision of Raymond’s custody is left up to doctors and lawyers, Charlie finds that with or without the money, he has acquired more than he could have imagined -- the love and trust of a brother. ”

## II. Raymond and Charlie

A. Raymond is autistic. How would you describe him? Physically? Psychologically? What is unusual about him in terms of his autism?

Example : he gets upset when his routine is changed

B. Does Raymond change during the film? How?

C. Raymond is also called a savant. Savants have unusual abilities. What unusual abilities does he have?

Example : he counted 246 toothpicks in a few seconds which had fallen onto the floor.

D. Charlie

How would you describe Charlie at the start of the film? Cite examples.

E. Does he change during the film? If yes, how does he change?

F. How does Charlie treat Raymond?

III. Watch for these

- A. Who is on first? Who is on first?
- B. Where does the title come from?
- C. How did the father relate differently to the two sons?
- D. Raymond's notebook.
- E. Raymond's emotional outbursts.
- F. Raymond's problem-solving abilities.
- G. Charlie and TV.
- H. A wet kiss.
- I. How does Raymond relate to people?

IV. **Learning Objectives**

Be able to answer the questions in Parts II & III.