

## Topic Page: [Bresson, Robert](#)

Summary Article: **Bresson, Robert**

from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

French film director and screenwriter. His insistence on ultra-realistic performances (usually by amateur actors) and his austere, precisely composed black-and-white imagery allow him to concentrate on his central themes of corruption and despair. The influence of the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky was evident in *Pickpocket* (1959) and *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc/The Trial of Joan of Arc* (1961).

Although Bresson made comparatively few films, his work is among the greatest achievements of French cinema. His work shows a fascination with his characters' emotions rather than their actions. *Le Journal d'un curé de campagne/The Diary of a Country Priest* (1950) examines the spiritual torment of a dying curate. *Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé/A Man Escaped* (1956) charts a prisoner's painstaking preparations for an escape bid from a Nazi jail.

**Life** Bresson was born in Bromont-Lamothe, Auvergne, France, trained in art and philosophy, and worked as a painter and photographer before entering films as a scriptwriter in the mid-1930s. He made his debut as a director with the comedy short *Les Affaires publiques* (1934), but he spent much of the next decade writing scripts. Arrested by the Nazis, he was detained in a concentration camp, making the intense religious drama *Les Anges du péché/Angels of the Streets* on his release (1943).

**Work** His second feature, *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1944), with dialogue by Jean Cocteau, has a similarly abstract, mystical quality. *Une Femme douce/A Gentle Creature* (1969) and *Quatre Nuits d'un rêveur/Four Nights of a Dreamer* (1971) were adapted from Dostoevsky stories. After the moving life of a donkey, *Au Hasard, Balthazar* (1965), and the powerful suicide drama *Mouchette* (1967), Bresson worked in colour. *Lancelot du lac* (1974), *Le Diable probablement/The Devil Probably* (1977), and *L'Argent* (1982; best director award at the Cannes Film Festival) completed a body of work that despite its lack of commercial success has been accorded enormous critical respect. He is also regarded as the most Catholic of all film-makers. Bresson published a volume of his reflections on cinema, *Notes sur la cinématographie* (1975).

### quotations

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Bresson, Robert. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bresson\\_robert\\_1907\\_1999](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/bresson_robert_1907_1999)

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## Chicago

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## Harvard

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## MLA

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