Harold Lloyd

Safety Last (1923)
Harold Lloyd - Beginnings

- Born in Burchard, Nebraska in 1893
- Moved around a lot
- Always loved theater
- Starred in school productions
- Led him to stock theatrical productions
- Ended up in San Diego when Edison Film Company came looking for extras
  - Decided to pursue a career in movies after being filmed for 4 seconds dressed as an Indian
Harold Lloyd - in the movies!

- Snuck onto Universal lot by blending in with extras coming in and out during lunch and got a job that way.
- Left Universal to work with Hal Roach
- Portrayed characters that were very similar to Charlie Chaplin’s “Tramp”
- Career took hold when his characters transformed into a version of himself
  - An average guy, the boy-next-door, an everyman
  - Costumes became his own everyday clothes and a simple pair of horn-rimmed glasses
- Experienced humor in everyday life
- Was most profitable of the silent film comedians
Background on *Safety Last* (1923)

- *Safety Last* was another turning point in his career. It brought his “thrill” comedies to a whole new level.
- Got the idea when he watched Bill Strothers (the Human Spider) scale the walls of a high office building in Los Angeles.
  - Made Lloyd jumpy and nervous
  - Wanted to provide this thrill in a motion picture
- *Safety Last* is the story of a man who climbed a skyscraper to win his girl
- Completed all stunts by himself
- No fake backgrounds, only a mattress three stories below to catch him if he fell
- Movie opened on April Fool’s Day
Watch Safety Last
Analyze Safety Last

1. In what ways is this similar to Charlie Chaplin’s style?
2. In what ways is it different from Chaplin?
3. What techniques are used in the film to evoke a particular response?
4. What is the benefit of having Lloyd play the average guy?
5. Why do you think the scene with the clock is so iconic?