

Short movie summaries
of the 101 most important movies described in
ReAction! Chemistry in the Movies

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Chapter 1: The Dramatic Jekyll and Hyde Adaptations

Mary Reilly (1996) Devoted housemaid Mary Reilly (Julia Roberts) is capable of loving the retiring Dr. Henry Jekyll and the evil Mr. Edward Hyde (both by John Malkovich).

Dr. Black, Mr. Hyde (1976) Medical researcher and physician Dr. Henry Pride (Bernie Casey) self-experiments with a liver regeneration serum that he and Dr. Billie Worth (Rosalind Cash) created.

I, Monster (1971) Psychoanalyst Dr. Charles Marlowe (Christopher Lee) self-experiments with a drug that suppresses a person's dominant psychological drive.

Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde (1971) Physician Dr. Henry Jekyll (Ralph Bates) discovers that the "elixir of life" is the "female hormone" that transforms him into Mrs. Hyde (Martine Bestwick)

The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll (1960) Physician Dr. Henry Jekyll (Paul Massie) develops a drug to separate man's two personalities.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1941) Physician Dr. Henry Jekyll (Spencer Tracy) develops a drug to separate man's two personalities.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1931) Physician Dr. Henry Jekyll (Fredric March) develops a drug to separate man's two personalities.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1920) Physician Dr. Henry Jekyll (John Barrymore) develops a drug to separate man's two personalities.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1912) Physician Dr. Henry Jekyll (James Cruze) develops a drug to separate man's two personalities.

Chapter 2: Chemical Invisibility Movies

Hollow Man (2000) Dr. Sebastian Caine (Kevin Bacon) develops a human invisibility compound and convinces his colleagues to test its effect on him.

Now You See Him, Now You Don't (1972) Undergraduate Dexter Riley (Kurt Russell) invents invisibility spray and uses it to save Medfield College from developer Mr. Arno (Cesar Romero).

The Invisible Agent (1942) Frank Raymond (Jon Hall) uses his grandfather's invisibility formula to outwit the Nazis.

The Invisible Woman (1940) Kitty Carroll (Virginia Bruce) uses Professor Gibbs's (John Barrymore) invisibility process to revenge herself against her boss Mr. Growley (Charles Lane).

The Invisible Man Returns (1940) Frank Griffin (John Sutton), Jack's brother, helps his partner Geoffrey Radcliffe (Vincent Price) escape a death sentence and works on the duocaine reversion formula.

The Invisible Man (1933) Assistant food preservation chemist Jack Griffin (Claude Rains) takes monocaine invisibility formula, can't reverse invisibility, goes insane, and kills people.

The Invisible Thief (1909) A young thief uses the recipe in Wells's novel to prepare an invisibility formula.

Chapter 3: Movies about War, Sabotage, Terrorism, and Chemistry

United 93 (2006) Hypothetical reconstruction of the hijacking of United Airlines flight 93 on September 11, 2001.

The Quiet American (2002) London *Times* reporter Thomas Fowler (Michael Caine) vies with American undercover agent Alden Pyle (Brendan Fraser) for Phuong's (Do Thi Hai Yen) affection in 1950s Vietnam.

Spider-Man (2002) Military Industrialist Norman Osborn (Willem Dafoe) takes untested performance enhancement drug and becomes the Green Goblin.

The Sum of All Fears (2002) The source of a terrorist nuclear bomb is discovered by isotope analysis.

The Rock (1996) Rogue marine commandos threaten to use VX gas missiles against San Francisco.

Fat Man and Little Boy (1989) General Leslie Groves (Paul Newman) persuades physicist Robert Oppenheimer (Dwight Schulz) to begin and then to complete the Manhattan Project.

Die Hard (1988) New York Policeman John McClane (Bruce Willis) single-handedly thwarts a group of terrorists in Los Angeles using his wits and their C-4 plastic explosives.

Bell Diamond (1986) Vietnam veteran Jeff (Marshall Gaddis) suffers emotionally after the war, possibly from Agent Orange exposure.

Scanners (1981) ConSec Corporation has created people with telekinetic and telepathic powers, including one who intends to dominate the world and another who intends to stop him.

The Molly Maguires (1970) A group of Irish coal miners calling themselves the Molly Maguires sabotage and terrorize the Pennsylvania coal company that employs them.

Dr. Strangelove; or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964) General Jack D. Ripper (Sterling Hayden) acts on his belief that public water fluoridation is proof the communists have already begun to take control of the United States.

The Incredible Shrinking Man (1957) Scott Carey (Grant Williams) shrinks after exposure to an insecticide and gamma radiation.

Miracle in Harlem (1948) Who swindled Aunt Hattie (Hilda Offley) out of her candy making business, and then killed two men?

Sabotage Agent (aka *Adventures of Tartu*) (1943) Captain Terence Stevenson (Robert Donat) goes undercover as Jan Tartu to destroy a German poison gas factory located in Czechoslovakia.

The Testament of Dr. Mabuse (1933) Berlin Police Inspector Karl Lohmann (Otto Wernicke) traces crimes to mastermind Dr. Mabuse (Rudolf Klein-Rogge), who is locked in an asylum.

Chapter 4: Movies About Bad Chemical Companies

The Constant Gardener (2005) After activist Tessa Quayle (Rachel Weisz) is murdered in Kenya, diplomat husband Justin (Ralph Fiennes) searches for the reason.

Bhopal Express (2001) Events on the night of the 1984 Union Carbide factory explosion that released methyl isocyanate and hydrogen cyanide gases into the city of Bhopal, India.

Erin Brockovich (2000) Amateur lawyer Erin Brockovich (Julia Roberts) develops chromium case against Pacific Gas & Electric and wins.

Kids in the Hall: Brain Candy (1996) Roritor Pharmaceutical chemist Chris Connor (Kevin McDonald) develops antidepressant Gleemonex and company releases it before sufficient testing.

Safe (1995) Carol White (Julianne Moore) acquires multiple chemical sensitivity

I Love Trouble (1994) Rival news reporters Peter Brackett (Nick Nolte) and Sabrina Peterson (Julia Roberts) compete for a story about a corrupt chemical company producing a carcinogen.

Silkwood (1983) Biography of whistleblower Karen Silkwood (Meryl Streep) set in 1974, the year that she died or was killed on her way to meet a journalist about workplace safety violations.

The Incredible Shrinking Woman (1981) Suburban housewife Pat Kramer (Lily Tomlin) starts shrinking after exposure to a mixture of “Sexpot” perfume and a new detergent.

One Man (1977) TV news reporter Jason Brady (Len Cariou) investigates Konrads Ltd., which is making deadly biacetylplumbane (BAP).

Soylent Green (1973) Ecodisaster dystopia about New York City Police Detective Robert Thorn (Charlton Heston), who investigates the murder of Soylent Corporation director William R. Simonson (Joseph Cotten).

Riders of the Whistling Pines (1949) Gene Autry (Gene Autry) supervises DDT spraying to prevent tussock moth forest infestation and then stockmen blame him for animal deaths.

Chapter 5: Movies Emphasizing Chemical Aspects of Addictive Drugs

Thank You for Smoking (2005) Academy of Tobacco Studies Vice President Nick Naylor (Aaron Eckhart) spins support for cigarette smoking.

The Salton Sea (2002) Tom Van Allen (Val Kilmer) enters the meth world as Danny Parker seeking revenge against the masked men who killed his innocent wife.

Formula 51 (2001) Los Angeles bootleg chemist Elmo McElroy (Samuel L. Jackson) heads to Liverpool to sell his latest product, the most powerful drug ever created.

Trainspotting (1995) Mark Renton (Ewan McGregor) is an Edinburgh heroin addict whose parents force him to quit; after the misery of withdrawal is over, he leaves for London to get away from junkie friends but they find him anyway.

Altered States (1980) Consciousness researcher Eddie Jessup (William Hurt) engages in self-experimentation with hallucinogens and a sensory deprivation tank.

All That Jazz (1979) Joe Gideon (Roy Scheider) pops pep pills to maintain his creative flow until he meets the angel of death.

THX-1138 (1970) LUH 3417 (Maggie McOmie) disrupts THX 1138's (Robert Duvall) depressant SP5 intake.

Easy Rider (1969) Wyatt (Peter Fonda) and Billy (Dennis Hopper) score big on a drug deal and then travel from Los Angeles to New Orleans in search of America, picking up George Hanson (Jack Nicholson) along the way.

The Valley of the Dolls (1967) Three young women enter different parts of show business, begin using drugs, rise to the top, and then fall.

The Trip (1967) Television advertisement director Paul Groves (Peter Fonda) is divorcing wife Sally (Susan Strasberg) so he takes LSD to get in touch with his feelings.

Seconds (1966) Investment Banker Arthur Hamilton (John Randolph) is transformed into painter Tony Wilson (Rock Hudson), who finally learns what life is all about but then drinks too much.

Chapter 6: Inventor Chemist Movies

Who Killed the Electric Car? (2006) In this documentary, Stan and Iris Ovshinsky's nickel metal hydride battery is the only suspect not guilty of killing the electric car.

Flubber (1997) Professor Phillip Brainard (Robin Williams) creates a flying rubber called flubber.

Romy and Michele's High School Reunion (1995) Romy White (Mira Sorvino) and Michele Weinberger (Lisa Kudrow) claim to have invented Post-it Notes.

Back to the Future (1985) At 1:20 a.m. on Saturday, October 26, 1985, Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) travels back 30 years in Dr. Emmett L. Brown's (Christopher Lloyd) plutonium-powered DeLorean DMC-12 automobile time machine.

Caprice (1966) Double agent Patricia Fowler's (Doris Day) search for the water-repellent hairspray formula leads her to inventor Madame Piasco (Lilia Scala).

Lover Come Back (1961) Dr. Linus Tyler (Jack Kruschen) develops the alcoholic mint named VIP while advertising executives Carol Templeton (Doris Day) and Jerry Webster (Rock Hudson) compete for new accounts while engaging in a battle of the sexes.

The Absent-Minded Professor (1961) Professor Ned Brainard (Fred MacMurray) creates a flying rubber called flubber.

The Man in the White Suit (1951) Chemist Sidney Stratton (Alec Guinness) develops a fabric that can't be stained, get dirty, or wear out.

Yellow Cab Man (1950) Accident-prone Augustus "Red" Purdy (Red Skelton) invents an unbreakable elastic glass.

Edison, the Man (1940) Biography of Thomas Edison (Spencer Tracy) that builds up to the invention of the light bulb.

Beauty for the Asking (1939) After Jean Russell (Lucille Ball) loses her boyfriend and job, she decides to market the face cream she invented.

Mr. Edison at Work in His Chemical Laboratory (1897) The camera is fixed in one position as Thomas Edison moves from one side of the screen to the other in this 20-second reality short. He weighs something, adds it to a flask, and pours the solution into another flask.

Chapter 7: Chemical Detection Movies

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (2003) Characters from late Victorian fiction unite to defeat the evil Fantom in 1899; the former nurse Mrs. Harker (Peta Wilson) uses inorganic qualitative analysis to identify the traitor.

Merci pour le Chocolat (2000) Jeanne Pollet's (Anna Mouglais) quest for her parentage uncovers murder and the date rape drug Rohypnol.

The Bone Collector (1999) Quadriplegic New York City police detective and true crime book author Lincoln Rhyme (Denzel Washington) leads the investigation against a serial killer who leaves clues about the next murder site.

Backdraft (1991) Arson detectives Donald "Shadow" Rimgale (Robert DeNiro) and Brian McCaffrey (William Baldwin) investigate a series of arson/murders involving magnesium and a liquid called trychlichlorate.

- Batman* (1989) Thug Jack Napier (Jack Nicholson) is disfigured in a vat of chemicals, so he uses cosmetics to cover his face; he creates a poison named Smile that forms when certain personal care products are mixed.
- The Name of the Rose* (1986) Brother William of Baskerville (Sean Connery) investigates mysterious deaths in a Benedictine abbey while the monks are convinced the apocalypse is coming.
- Moonraker* (1979) Industrialist Hugo Drax (Michael Lonsdale) alters a South American orchid to produce a hypertoxic molecule.
- The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (1976) Dr. John Watson (Robert Duvall) tricks Sherlock Holmes (Nicol Williamson) into meeting with Sigmund Freud (Alan Arkin) in Vienna to confront his cocaine addiction.
- The Andromeda Strain* (1971) A small team of experts determines the biology and chemistry of deadly alien material; elemental analysis determines the composition of its two parts.
- Our Man Flint* (1966) Chemical analysis of a deadly poison dart shows traces of ingredients for bouillabaisse, so Derek Flint (James Coburn) searches for the perpetrator in the restaurants of Marseilles.
- D.O.A.* (1949) Accountant Frank Bigelow (Edmond O'Brien) has been poisoned with a deadly dose of luminous toxin; he has only a short time to find out why because there is no antidote.
- Kid Glove Killer* (1942) Police chemists Jane Mitchell (Marsha Hunt) and Gordon McKay (Van Heflin) use a spectrograph to discover traces of vanadium in a bomb's gunpowder residue.
- The Exploits of Elaine* (1914) Elaine Dodge (Pearl White) and Craig Kennedy (Arnold Daly) fight the Clutching Hand, who killed Elaine's father.

Chapter 8: Classroom Chemistry Movies

- The Prince and Me* (2004) University of Wisconsin premedical student Paige Morgan (Julia Stiles) meets undercover Danish Prince Edvard (Luke Mably) and falls in love.
- Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002) Someone has petrified muggle-born students and the cat Mrs. Norris; mandrake root juice restores them.
- Tortilla Soup* (2001) Martin Naranjo (Hector Elizondo) is retired master chef who prepares magnificent weekend meals for his three grown daughters, one of whom is chemistry teacher Leticia (Elizabeth Peña).
- October Sky* (1999) Homer Hickman (Jake Gyllenhaal) develops rocket fuels after learning about *Sputnik*; based on a true story.
- The Saint* (1997) Simon Templar (Val Kilmer) is hired to steal a cold fusion formula from Oxford University electrochemist Dr. Emma Russell (Elisabeth Shue) but then falls in love with her.
- The Nutty Professor* (1996) Overweight genetics professor Sherman Klump (Eddie Murphy) creates a quinone compound that transforms him into thin, aggressive Buddy Love; Klump takes it because he's in love with chemistry professor Carla Purty (Jada Pinkett Smith).
- The Nutty Professor* (1963) Nerdy Arizona State Chemistry Professor Julius Kelp (Jerry Lewis) creates an elixir that transforms him into chauvinist swinger Buddy Love.

The Affairs of Dobie Gillis (1953) Pansy Hammer (Debbie Reynolds) and Dobie Gillis (Bobby Van) attend Grainbelt University; she loves to mix chemicals together until they cause an explosion.

It Happens Every Spring (1949) Chemistry Professor Vernon Simpson (Ray Milland) discovers a nitrocyclohexane compound that causes objects to avoid wood, and then uses it to become a major league pitcher.

Madame Curie (1943) Biography of Marie Sklodowska Curie (Greer Garson), who discovered radium with the help of her husband Pierre (Walter Pidgeon).

The Chemist (1936) Duncemore College chemistry student Elmer Triple (Buster Keaton) invents four things, including a noiseless explosive.

Chapter 9: Research Chemists Solving Problems in the Movies

Me & Isaac Newton (1999) Documentary asks seven scientists, including Nobel prize-winning pharmaceutical chemist Gertrude Elion, why they do what they do.

Medicine Man (1992) Ethnobotanist Robert Campbell (Sean Connery) and biochemist Rae Crane (Lorraine Bracco) use a gas chromatograph to find a cancer-fighting drug in the Amazon forest.

Lorenzo's Oil (1992) When Lorenzo Odone (Zack O'Malley) develops a strange disease at age 7, his parents Michaela and Augusto (Susan Sarandon and Nick Nolte) learn everything they can about it and then develop a dietary cure that slows the disease; based on a true story.

The Serpent and the Rainbow (1988) Ethnobiologist Dr. Dennis Alan (Bill Pullman) searches for the molecule that causes zombinism in Haiti.

Clambake (1967) Petroleum chemist Scott Heyward (Elvis Presley) creates a superhard, super-fast-drying varnish that allows him to win the boat race, the heart of the girl he loves (Shelley Fabares), and his father's respect (James Gregory).

Forever, Darling (1956) Susan Vega's (Lucille Ball) guardian angel (James Mason) convinces her to join her husband Lorenzo (Dezi Arnaz) on his insecticide 383 field test to save her marriage.

Monkey Business (1952) Chemist Barnaby Fulton (Cary Grant) self-experiments with a youth formula he created.

Strange Impersonation (1946) Pharmaceutical chemist Nora Goodrich (Brenda Marshall) develops new anesthetic, self-experiments, and then her life goes *noir*.

The Great Moment (1944) Bemused biography of Boston dentist William T. G. Morgan (Joel McCrea), who discovered the first anesthetic—sulfuric ether.

Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet (1940) Biography of Paul Ehrlich (Edward G. Robinson), who discovered a chemical cure for syphilis and gave birth to modern drug discovery.

The Love Test (1935) When Mary Lee (Judy Gunn) becomes chief chemist, the other chemists scheme to make her fall in love so she will neglect her job and fail.

The Schemers (1922) Research chemist Paul Jackson (G. Edward Brown) develops gasoline substitute, is kidnapped, and then thwarts criminals with the help of his girlfriend Isobel Benton (Edna Morton).