**Platoon Questions**

***Platoon***

A film by Oliver Stone

"I believed in our country, believed in the ideals, believed the communists were undermining us everywhere" Oliver Stone, Director of "Platoon". Oliver Stone's film, "Platoon" tells the story of a young soldier who arrives in Vietnam in 1968 with all of the thoughts that Stone himself had as a soldier in the same period in the same war. It is too easy to say that "Platoon" is simply an autobiographical film. What it contains is Stone's view of his experiences nearly twenty years after they happened. The fact that such a long time has passed between the actual events and the film appearing says a lot about both Stone and also about America's desire to face up to what really happened in Vietnam. "Platoon" tells the story of the soldiers who fought the war, not in a glorified way as we might expect from an ordinary war film. There are no real heroics in "Platoon", just discomfort, fear, violence and confusion.

1. Taylor (as narrator) says this as they approach the village scene intended to be reminiscent of My Lai Massacre: “The village, which had stood for maybe a thousand years, didn't know we were coming that day. If they had, they would've run. Barnes was the eye of our rage. And through him, our captain Ahab [reference to the captain from Moby Dick who will not stop, at all costs, to kill the whale who took his leg in the past - nothing will stop him], we would set things right again. That day we loved him."

Why were the men full of rage, and why did Barnes need to “set things right again”? How did Barnes “set things right again”?

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2. How and why did Barnes ultimately deal with Elias?

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3. Name three examples from the film *Platoon*, which illustrate the difficulties faced by soldiers in fighting the Vietnam War.

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4. At the end of the film, Taylor says “The war is over for me now, but it will always be there the rest of my days. As I am sure Elias will be - fighting with Barnes for what Rhah called possession of my soul. There are times since I have felt like the child born of those two fathers." Is this fair – was Taylor influenced by both Barnes and Elias? Give examples.

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5. What do you think Taylor meant by the following quote – the last line of the entire film?

“But be that as it may, those of us who did make it have an obligation to build again. To teach to others what we know, and to try with what's left of our lives to find a goodness and a meaning to this life.”

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6. Who was the enemy?

Was it the villager?

Was it a shadow?

Was it themselves?

If there was no obvious enemy then how could they see themselves as liberators?

What were they defending?

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| --- | --- | --- |
| WHAT IS SHOWN and DESCRIBE | HOW DOES CHRIS TAYLOR REACT | HOW IS THIS SHOWN VISUALLY |
| Arrival in Vietnam: |  |  |
| Incident One |  |  |
| Incident Two |  |  |
| Incident Three |  |  |
| Incident Four |  |  |
| The Clearing |  |  |
| The Ending |  |  |

1.One could say that two attitudes towards the war are represented by the two sergeants, Barnes and Elias, and that Chris reacts to the war from the ways in which he sees them act, both to others and between themselves. **Try to describe each of them and the attitudes that they seem to hold. How are we given this information in the film?**

2.As well as portraying certain ideals or beliefs, these two characters are also important in the way that the story, or narrative develops. If we say that war films normally show the victory of the "good" side over the enemy, then the characters within that film will be used to show how this defeat is obtained. However, in "Platoon", there is no such defeat shown. **Do we even know which is the "good" side and who are the enemy? Explain your answer.**

3.Look back at the chart that you completed about the changes that occurred to Chris.

How important were one or other of the sergeants in each of these episodes?

How did each affect the way in which Chris saw the events happening?

How important was each to the events that were taking place?

4.Because, in a film, we get involved with the characters, we should consider the ways in which both of the sergeants die - the way in which each scene is shot and the effects that each scene has on us, the audience and the effect that we are shown on Chris. Complete the chart below which refers to the death scenes of Elias and Barnes.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Description of Scene | Way in which it was filmed | Effect on Chris |
| Elias |  |  |  |
| Barnes |  |  |  |