

FILM DISCUSSION GUIDE



Before viewing the film:

1. How do you define 'family'?

2. How does war affect families? Brainstorm at least 5 possibilities.

During the Film:

Identifying Characters

Match the character with the appropriate description:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| ___ Duc e | a) Former Vietminh leader who was a teacher before the war |
| ___ Colonel Dang Ven Viet c | b) Vietnamese revolutionary leader, prime minister and president of North Vietnam |
| ___ Huu Ngoc a | c) Former Vietnamese soldier who was forced to join the war after he'd trained to become a doctor |
| ___ General Christophe Soglo d | d) Captain in war and director of African Affairs |
| ___ Pierre Zocli f | e) The Vietnamese name of Jean-Pierre who is seeking answers about his absent mother in Vietnam |
| ___ Ho Chi Minh b | f) Man who looked after Gen. Soglo's children as a parent figure |

Comprehension Questions

1. What does Jean-Pierre's Vietnamese name mean? How did he learn his name?

2. Jean-Pierre is talking about the effects of the Indochina War on families. What does he say happened to "the children of all different colors" when the war ended?

3. Colonel Dang Van Viet was commander-in-chief of a very important strategic road during the war. What was the goal of the French in maintaining this border? How might it have helped them to win the war?

4. Colonel Dang Van Viet describes the Indochina War as a lightning war. In what way were the Vietnamese fighting tactics like lightning?

5. Why were Africans given permission to adopt children born in Indochina during the war?

6. A father and his adult son were interviewed outside the father's home about the father's decision to bring his son back to Africa. What reason does the father cite for not bringing the mother? What does his son say about never having known his mother?

7. Many veterans are interviewed explaining the idea of soldiers being enlisted, conscripted, or volunteering for the Indochina war. Consolidate the overall message into your own words for a one-sentence explanation.

8. Considering question 7, name at least one circumstance in which soldiers were officially called volunteers.

9. How did the 600 Africans sailing for Marseille deal with the knowledge that they were sailing toward war? Name at least three details.

10. French General De Gaulle gave a long speech in Brazzaville about colonization. After the German defeat in WWII, what did France do regarding the colonies?

11. Name at least two of the three African countries from which African soldiers were mobilized to fight in the Indochina war on behalf of France? Why did they fight for France?

12. One veteran recounts the deaths he witnessed in battle. What does he say was more important to bring back after battles than the wounded and dead soldiers?

13. Several African veterans discuss their role in the war, especially as it came to an end and in retrospect. What was their opinion of the Indochinese and of France having sent them to fight?

14. Huu Ngoc was charged with re-educating captured French and African soldiers. In your own words, describe the purpose and process of this re-education.

15. Ho Chi Minh felt that Vietnamese freedom should be tied with what other freedom?

16. What did the Vietnamese soldiers think of the African soldiers? What kind of propaganda did the Vietnamese share with the African units? What was the result of this propaganda?

17. Did the Africans who attempted to integrate into Vietnamese culture succeed more or less than the Europeans? Why?

18. Jean-Pierre's eldest sister asked to be cremated and that her ashes to be returned to her native land. What land was this? What did this symbolize?

19. Several African veterans are again interviewed about why mothers were left behind and children brought back to Africa. Did the father have to be each child's biological father? What does one man believe would have happened to the African children left in Vietnam?

20. Does Jean-Pierre find his mother? How does he feel about having grown up without a mother?

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions:

1. Colonel Dang Vet Viet describes his military experience as being un-trained and under-funded. He says that in the first battles they had only grenades, sabers and a few rifles with very few bullets. How did the Vietnamese manage to defeat the French time and time again? What is this type of war called? Do you think that this type of warfare will always be more effective than highly funded warfare? Why or why not?
2. The major theme of this film was the absence of mothers from African children's lives as a result of the war. Do you agree with the decision by the French military to encourage soldiers to leave the mothers behind? Why? Even if you don't agree with it, do you understand why that decision was made?
3. The African veterans described the enemy as "those over there who refused to comply, the rebels." What details can you recall about what made the rebels so dangerous, so dangerous that one man said "You could get killed at any moment. Death was everywhere we would go?" Do you think this is a common experience in war? Can you think of other wars wherein the soldiers experienced this same problem?

4. Ho Chi Minh wanted to link Vietnamese freedom to a much larger cause. Why? What do you know about colonized places and the fight for independence? What can be said about the American experience with colonization?
5. Propaganda was used for re-education of captured soldiers in the Indochina War. What has been the purpose of propaganda in other wars, such as WWI and WWII? What form might propaganda come in? Do you think that it's effective?
6. Jean-Pierre says that sometimes his family members and neighbors thought of motherless children as strange people, as if they weren't even part of the family. What impact does the lack of a major parental figure play in a child's life? Think of evidence here in our country as well, as single parenting is not a phenomenon that comes from war alone. Will having only one parent always result in negative emotions for the child?



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