

Hello ! I hope you have enjoyed the trailer of *We Were Soldiers* and that it made you want to watch the film.

In this document you will find the answers to the questions you had to answer.

What do you expect a war film trailer to show ?

A film trailer/preview is supposed to attract the audience/viewers/moviegoers by showing the most representative scenes of the genre, so a war film trailer should show action and fighting. It should also be exciting and suspenseful.

Watch the trailer : is it what you expected ?

The trailer is a typical war film trailer because we can see a lot of fighting and action.. But what is more unusual is that we also see the soldiers in their private / domestic lives. They have to deal with both their duties and their private lives.

The film seems a bit patriotic: we can even see the flag of the USA at the end of the trailer.

Watch the trailer again and note :

- **relevant information (characters, place, action) ;**
- **how soldiers are portrayed ;**
- **how « war » is defined by the characters, images and music.**

Relevant information : This film deals with US soldiers who are sent to Vietnam at the beginning of this conflict. We can see President Lyndon Johnson announcing he'll send US troops to Vietnam. The main character, played by Mel Gibson, is a commanding officer who is married and has a son.

The soldiers are represented/shown/portrayed/depicted as brave/courageous/bold, tough, accepting/uncomplaining but also sensitive, loyal to each other and united. They are shown not only as soldiers but also as men/human beings/as husbands and fathers. They are portrayed as self-sacrificing heroes fighting for a good cause and for their country. They are doing their duty: they are dutiful.

War is defined by the images and the music as a noble duty to your country. There is a lot of imagery linked with the US nation (including a flag waving) and the music is quite dramatic. The focus is also on the relations between the soldiers in the trailer so war may also be seen as an opportunity to experience exceptional brotherhood and unity.

Even though war is fought by soldiers, relatives have a part to play by supporting their husbands or fathers who are in the field.

The character played by Mel Gibson, as a father, gives his son a rather simple definition of war. It might be because he wants his son to understand / accept his going to war, and it is difficult to explain war to a child. Or it can also be a statement about the film itself / perhaps it is a film in which patriotism is stressed, in which US soldiers are seen as defending US values, have no doubts about the righteousness of their duty.

According to you, is this portrayal of war and soldiers typical of most US war films ?

This portrayal of war is different from most US war films because it also focuses on the humanity of soldiers. Soldiers are portrayed as men who have feelings, who have private lives and families, who miss their families. It seems to be a touching/moving film.

This film looks stereotypical and patriotic, even flag-waving, like so many American blockbusters in which the US army always wins. The storyline seems to be very cliché-ridden with stock characters such as the perfect husband and dedicated soldier, the loving and understanding wife, etc. The plot seems very predictable, the US army is probably going to win and the soldiers will be the good guys.

→ vous avez certainement remarqué cette vision très manichéenne du trailer. Les personnages sont tous bons dans tous les rôles qu'ils ont à jouer : bons soldats, loyaux et ayant le sens du devoir et bons pères de famille/maris. Ce sont les « gentils » de l'histoire. Vous avez du remarquer le côté très patriotique du film. On pourrait parler de flag-waving film. Flag-waving = chauvin.

New document : **Talking about war films.**

Read the dialogue and answer the questions:

Two people are talking about war films:

“Oh you know what? I saw a really unusual war movie on TV last night!”

“Unusual? Well, all war films are the same to me. They all glorify violent battles, blood, sweat and tears and men in uniforms...”

“Oh come on... You're stereotyping. There are lots of kinds of war films.”

“ Oh, such as?”

“Well, let's see. You've got the world war two combat films or the korean movies, there are movies that feature real military action...The war genre doesn't have to even portray armed combat. There are prisoner of war films, very popular in the nineteen sixties like *Bridge on the River Kwai* and *Great Escape* and there are films that focus on the military training, well like *Tigerland*, the film I was gonna to tell you about.”

“The one you saw last night?”

“Yeah. It was directed by Joel Schumacher. Have you seen it?”

“Isn't that the one where Colin Farrell plays some rebellious soldier in a training camp?”

“Exactly! That's the one!”

“Well, I havent seen it but my brother has. He didn't like it, precisely because you only see their training but you never see them on the battlefield...”

“That's exactly why I find it so interesting. You can see how the US government trains their soldiers into war machines. That's why *Tigerland* is so great, because it explores all those issues.”

“You seem to love it, sure makes me feel like seeing it... but usually war films scare me...I mean let's be honest...some of them are extremely violent, even gruesome!”

“Well, thats true but I think sometimes they have to be. Especially when they're antiwar movies like *The Thin Red Line* or *Apocalypse Now* or *Depalmas Redacted* which is about Afghanistan actually. I mean to show how horrible war is they have to show the violence to make their point.”

“Well I don't agree, I mean you can make pretty decent non violent war films... Take *Top Gun* for instance.”

“Come on! That's ridiculous! That movie is simplistic, It's not even realistic!”

“Well, what do you know? Besides does it always have to be realistic? I mean cinema is an art, you said so yourself. the point of the filmmmaker is to portray a war and the men who fight it not report on it.”

Identify the speakers' opinions.

Identify the reasons and the examples they give.