

White Room: 02B3

Syllabus for Discussion

In the tradition of *Star Trek*, Roddenberry Entertainment produced *White Room:02B3* with the intent of including philosophical themes, provocative ideas and ethical messages. In the case that you visited our facility with students, or some other group, it may prove educational and/or interesting to lead a discussion about the film short you just watched.

We suggest approaching the film in a similar fashion to that of a poem. By peeling away the cinematic layers, students, teachers and viewers of all kinds can engage in dialogues about morality, community and humanity. A short discussion guide utilizing this approach can be found below.

Note: The goal of this exercise is not to get the answers right but to explore the possibilities.

Questions for Discussion:

Q: What is the point of the characters not having names and only being referred to as numbers?

A1: The fact that no names are given, used, or even available could be seen as an attempt to shed light on the point of view of the characters' captors. To them, each of the six abductees might be nothing more than a nameless number.

A2: Without names, the characters more quickly become accessible to the audience as archetypes of human society – without names they represent the everyman (or woman).

Q: What do you think the gun represents?

A1: The gun can symbolize the evils that man has perpetrated against his fellow man over our long history. It is recognition of the current state of violence in the world, but at the same time asks, "Can we do better?"

A2: The gun also can be seen as a symbol of power. It is what provides leverage on the part of one character over the others.

A3: The gun also can be seen as the temptation. As the characters sit within an unfamiliar environment longing for stability, the gun is placed in front of each of them as a tool to attain comfort, an element of control through force.

Additional Note: Regardless of the interpretation of the gun, the film poses the question, "Is one more powerful with the gun or by choosing to be without it?"

Q: Towards the end of the film, THREE says picks up the gun and says she's "testing a theory." What theory might she be testing?

A: More clear after the test, THREE has hypothesized that simply holding the gun would not be enough to trigger ill fate that befell SIX, FOUR and TWO. She is proven correct in her belief that it is the intent with which someone holds a weapon that makes the difference. Picking up the gun with no intent to use it allows us to assess that it is what is in the heart of a man or woman that really matters.

Q: In the last scene of the film, FIVE reveals herself as a mole and in speaking to the alien being says, "She seems to be open to the truth. But at what cost?" What do you think she means by this?

A: Perhaps FIVE is speaking to the often difficult question of whether the ends justify the means. In this case, "Is the process of testing human beings justified by the need/desire to make sure they are ready for communication and perhaps co-existence with alien life." One might say –No, treating others with such inhumanity is unacceptable. Another might say that without that inhumanity, you are dooming any eventual introduction between humans and aliens to failure and, ultimately, destruction.

Q: What is the film's point of view? What's its message.

A: The intention of violence, hatred and anger towards one's fellow man will never provide us with the future we hope for. To respond to hardships, challenges and fear with a degree of calmness and unity is where survival and prosperity lies. Perhaps the film's message is that humanity has a lot of work to do, but it also has the ability to do that work. After all our finest hours are often seen in the wake of tragedy as unity is often its bi-product.

Interested in exploring *White Room: 02B3's* themes further? We are happy to recommend the following books and films and TV episodes which deal with similar philosophical topics and/or issues.

Films/TV: *District 9* – directed by Neill Blomkamp, *The Mission* – directed by Roland Joffe, *Star Trek: "The Devil in the Dark"* – directed by Gene Coon, *Enemy Mine* – directed by Wolfgang Petersen

Books: *Contact* – written by Carl Sagan, *Mindbridge* – written by Joe Haldeman, *1984* – written by George Orwell, *Lord of the Flies* – written by Sir William Golding

"If man is too survive, he will have learned to take a delight in the essential differences between men and between cultures. He will learn that differences in ideas and attitudes are a delight, part of life's exciting variety, not something to fear."

- Gene Roddenberry