

Arlington West: A Curriculum Guide

Below you will find:

- I. A segment-by-segment summary of the film, with suggested questions for students
- II. 'Essential questions' to guide students while they view the film
- III. Vocabulary-building activities
- IV. Note-taking strategies to guide students as they record info from the film
- V. Student-centered activities to foster interaction and discussion

Section I: Segment-by-Segment Summary, with suggested questions for students

(each entry is marked with the 'start time' for the segment in question; scene markers refer to the 'chapters' of the film as listed in the menu section)

scene one

- 0:40 speech by mother of son who died in Iraq...what is her message?...what is her solution?
- 1:50 what do we owe the soldiers?
- 2:10 Pentagon directive to not film caskets, funerals or body bags
- 2:38 a young soldier's reasons for joining military...didn't expect to go to war...'scared'
- 3:04 a war veteran discusses the lessons of the military...what does the military teach? what does 'deprogramming' mean?...what is 'post-traumatic stress syndrome'?
- 4:00 Veterans for Peace volunteer and veteran...what is his goal for this memorial?
- 5:08 one soldier's complex views: 'you have to look at it from their point of view' vs. 'we're doing them a service'...what is this soldier saying about empathy and pride?
- 5:45 'we're nothing more than a paragraph and a line number based on our education and schooling'...what does this soldier mean by this statement?
- 6:50 woman veteran, carried bodies and wounded home....What is she talking about when she refers to '1984'?
- 8:30 a soldier's testimony...what is he fighting for? what does he *not* want to fight for?

scene two

- 10:05 'Big Brother': what does this veteran mean by this?
- 10:22 two female Marines...according to them, how do we get peace?...what do they say about sacrifice?
- 11:12 good guys vs. bad guys...why is it difficult to discern between the two?
- 12:35 her son died in his sergeant's (and best friend's) arms....what is she saying about empathy?

- 14:00 a soldier expresses support for Bush's leadership...to him, what makes Pres. Bush a good leader?
- 14:12 a father says, 'it's all about the dollar'...his son, SSG Mike Mitchell, was killed in action in Iraq...why is the father disillusioned?...According to this father, what is ironic about: 1) the work of contractors in Iraq? and 2) U.S. soldiers fighting against Shi'ites?
- 16:00 a young man discusses the importance of voting...what is the connection between voting and this memorial?
- 16:25 A discussion of military recruitment in schools...What is a 'quota,' and how does it relate to this person's statement?...To this person what is hopeful about the Arlington West memorial?
- 17:10 A discussion of the federal No Child Left Behind Act...what is the connection between NCLB and military recruitment in schools?
- 18:23 A female veteran's views
- 19:18 According to this man who are the 'hypocrites?'...why does he use this label?

scene three

- 19:55 A 15yr old girlfriend of Malcolm, 17yrs old and stationed in Iraq...what solution does she pose for the problems facing the U.S. military and their families?
- 20:44 two female veterans...what does she say about empathy? who needs more empathy?
- 21:22 a discussion of unreported casualties...'we'll never leave'...where does this man's hopefulness come from?
- 22:38 two young men's criticisms of the US's treatment of US soldiers killed in battle
- 23:15 an excerpt from Pres. Bush's speech on the deck of the USS *A. Lincoln*, May 1 2003: What is the president's message? Do the film's visuals, shown during this speech, tell a different story?
- 23:46 tragic miscommunication with Iraqis ('stop' vs. 'hello')...according to this twin brother of a soldier killed in Iraq, why are US casualties underreported?
- 25:49 a veteran discusses 'friendly fire'....discussing the danger of depleted uranium released from bombs...one Congress member has a child serving in Iraq: what's the connection to socio-economic class?...a discussion of prison abuse in Iraq: what is the connection between prison abuse and empathy?...this man is a co-founder of Iraq Veterans Against the War...
- 27:27 Iraq veterans, discussing casualties...what is their mood/attitude while discussing this topic?
- 28:18 a US soldier who lost part of his leg in combat in Iraq...what's his mood/attitude about his injury and his life now?
- 29:20 a veteran of the war in Iraq...he discusses witnessing an innocent Iraqi child's death...describe his mood/attitude as he discusses his experience

scene four

- 31:28 the Arlington West exhibit is visited by Marine Corps trainers
- 32:20. testimony by a homeless veteran...what connection does he make between soldiers and economics or 'class?'...what does he say about the quality of healthcare for vets?
- 33:10 testimony from the father of Jesus A. Suarez Del Solar, the first US soldier killed in 'Operation Iraqi Freedom'...he says: 'the gov't lied to me about what happened to my son': what was their lie?...why does this father say, 'I've lost more than 600 sons'...according to this father, what lies are told during military recruitment at schools?
- 34:50 a veteran who joined before 9/11/01...why did he join?
- 35:40 two Marines exchange greetings in Arabic
- 36:20 why did this veteran join the military?...what connection does he make between his religious faith and his military service?
- 36:50 a fourth-generation Marine and a veteran of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, suffering from a permanently injured Knee...describe this veteran's emotions as he shares his story.
- 38:30 a father of three sons who have served in the US military, one of whom was killed in Iraq...to this father, what is a 'pie in the sky?'...describe his emotions....
- 39:43 an Islamic woman...what is her message about religion?
- 40:19 a young soldier honors 12 dead comrades...
- 42:50 a Nisqually (Native American) veteran...what connection does he make between the wars in Iraq, Korea and Vietnam?...What does he think about America?

scene five

- 43:28 a veteran describes the transformation of his patriotism: what transformed him?
- 44:05 to this man, what is a 'sham?'
- 44:49 why is this veteran of war in Iraq disillusioned?
- 45:45 testimony from a female veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom...why does she distrust the military's health care?...Why is she disillusioned?
- 46:40 according to this man, what is the 'back-door draft'...describe his disillusionment....why is the term 'peacekeeping' ironic to this man?
- 47:42 a veteran makes connections between military service and corporate/labor issues...describe the connection

scene six

- 48:00 A woman who lost her dad in the war in Vietnam when she was 8yrs old...lost her son who was killed in Baghdad...is this woman in grief? Is she proud? Explain.

49:34 Why does this veteran say, 'god rest my mother for not signing for me?'...where does his grief come from?...what do you think this veteran is thinking about during the long pauses between his statements?...what is his advice to young people considering military service?

53:00 Is this young woman proud? Is she grieving? Explain.

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Section Two: 'Essential Questions' to Guide Student Discussion

Students benefit from having 'essential questions' posed to them as they watch a film of this magnitude, or engage in research/inquiry into any historical topic. Essential questions (a term championed by the Coalition of Essential Schools) encapsulate the 'big pictures' of students' study of history.

Some possible essential questions to pose to students before, during and after viewings of this film:

- *Is war necessary? If so, when? If not, why not?
- *How do different people experience war?
- *Is war about actions or about feelings?
- *How should we honor those who are killed in war? What is the purpose of a war memorial?
- *How should people protest against war?
- *How can people protest against war *and* also support soldiers?

Questions regarding enlisting into the military:

- *What were the reasons given for enlisting?
- * At what age did the soldiers enlist?
- *In looking back, did the soldiers have regrets, why?
- *What might be considered good reasons/or not good reasons to enlist?
- *Why do you think statistics bear out that 37% of first time enlistees are 17 and 18 year olds?"

Also: the content standards for your grade level and state can be adjusted to create essential questions to guide learning and viewing.

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Section Three: Vocabulary-Building Activities

Glossary of terms:

-**Arlington West**- Arlington National Cemetery is a burial ground for soldiers killed in active duty. Arlington West is a temporary remembrance on the Santa Monica beach put up by the Veterans for Peace, in remembrance of the soldiers killed in Iraq.

-**AWOL** (Absent WithOut Leave) Most often known as desertion from the military after signing the military contract. Soldiers fled the country, and as many as 4,000 in the Vietnam War went to prison.

-**MOS Military Occupational Specialty** as determined by the ASVAB test (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) the admissions and placement test for the US military. Infantry positions in the Army and Marines are engaged in direct combat, and require the lowest scores on the ASVAB.

-**IDE** –Improvised explosive devices are also known as blast mines targeted to personnel or vehicles. It has been estimated that nearly half of all U.S. deaths are the result of roadside bombs.

-Depleted Uranium-the U.S. military uses depleted uranium in some armor-piercing shells and bullets and in tank armor. If depleted uranium enters your system, it can cause permanent damage to your kidneys, or lesions on your bones and liver.

-Anthrax vaccination-Vaccines are part of a preventive regimen before, during and after deployment. Soldiers are vaccinated against several common infectious diseases including anthrax which is a bacterial disease. The Anthrax vaccination is automatically given to soldiers without adequate testing or consideration of side effects or allergic reactions. There are have deaths and severe illnesses associated with this vaccination.

-Friendly fire- death from one's own troops. Friendly fire may have been responsible for as many as 15 percent of all American casualties during the last century.

-Post Traumatic Stress Disorder PTSD, is a psychiatric disorder that can occur if you experience or witness a traumatic event such as a killing. PTSD sufferers often relive the experience through nightmares or flashbacks. They have difficulty sleeping, feel detached or estranged. -Montgomery GI Bill- military recruiters state that the military pays up to \$70,000 for college. The reality is that 57% of those who sign up for the GI Bill do not receive the benefits, and 23% receive only half their maximum benefit. This is because there are many strings attached to eligibility (including a nonrefundable deposit of \$1200 as stated by Mr. Suarez del Solar). Benefits received, don't pay enough to cover costs at even the most inexpensive schools.

-Military Contract-A legally binding document which specifies the laws, regulations and military customs which enlistees cannot change, but which Congress can change at any time. Section C. 9B states, "laws and regulations that govern military personnel may change without notice to me. Such changes may affect my status, pay, allowances, benefits and responsibilities as a member of the Armed Forces REGARDLESS of the provisions of this enlistment/reenlistment document."

-Military Draft- Mandatory enlistment into the military based on age, physical and mental health. Deferments and exemptions have been granted to conscientious objectors in the past, based on moral convictions.

Arlington West can serve as a vocabulary-building exercise. One possibility: students can look for evidence in the film of different emotions felt by the interviewees.

The key emotions (or values) expressed by interviewees include: empathy, pride, sacrifice, grief, disillusionment, fear, loyalty...

After discussing the meanings of these 'emotion/value words,' students could look for evidence of one or more of these emotions/values as they are expressed by interviewees in the film. Students can also look for evidence of peoples' mixed emotions when discussing war.



Section Four: Note-Taking Strategies

How do we help students to organize their impressions of *Arlington West*? Some suggestions:

***A 'words and thoughts' graphic organizer:** Similar to an 'open mind' graphic organizer, students draw an outline of a person's head on their paper. Students should leave space around the outside of this 'open mind' drawing for dialogue bubbles. Students choose one person from the film. In the dialogue bubbles, students write what their chosen character says. Inside the 'open mind' outline of the person's head, students use pictures/words/statements to express what that person could be thinking and feeling.

***An emotions/evidence chart:** Students create a two-column chart. On the left side, students list key emotions felt by the interviewees. In the right column, students record notes (quotes, summaries of interviewees' testimony) that relates to each emotion listed directly to the left.

***An 'essential questions' graphic organizer:** In the middle of their paper, students copy an essential question, and then draw a circle around the question. In bubbles emanating from this

center circle, students record notes that help answer this question (quotes or summaries of testimony).

Or: the class could list several possible answers to the essential question *before* watching the film. Then, each 'bubble' is 'headlined' with a possible answer to the essential question, and students write notes in the bubbles corresponding to that answer to the question. Now, each 'bubble' features an answer to the essential question, along with some evidence from the film that supports that answer....perfect for writing a 'body paragraph.' Several 'bubbles' could be combined to create an essay that answers the essential question from different points of view.



Section Five: Student-Centered Activities Related to *Arlington West*

We know that students learn best when they are challenged to apply their learning in interaction with other learners. Some suggested activities:

***Character dialogues:** Students could select different people shown in *Arlington West* and create a dialogue between their characters. Students, in character, could be asked to answer essential questions from their character's point of view in various configurations: in pairs (out loud or on paper), in small group discussions, in a 'talk show' format where a panel of characters holds a discussion and answers questions from the 'audience,' in a debate format, or from a 'hot seat' where one student is placed in front of the class and asked questions.

***Time machine dialogues:** based on the 'character dialogue' model above, students could be challenged to interact, in character, with people already studied in their history class. This is a great way to make connections between various people and events studied previously, thus serving as a tool for review.

Texts that feature testimony related to war could be incorporated here. An example: *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*, a collection of letters written by soldiers and family members during the war in Vietnam (also made into an award-winning documentary produced by HBO)

***Oral history project:** students could create questions based on their study of *Arlington West* and conduct interviews of soldiers, veterans and family members in their community.

***War memorial project:** students could research, compare and contrast war memorials in the U.S. and around the world.

***Community film viewing and dialogue:** students could host a viewing of *Arlington West* at school, and based on their discussion of the film in class, students could co-facilitate a community discussion of the film.

