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TOMORROW WHEN THE WAR BEGAN

THEMES

- What are the key questions the film asks?
- Does the film ask the same questions as the book?
- Does it answer these questions in the same way?

Watch John Marsden on the ABC program Q and A: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrHFuKT2OMY

- What does he consider to be the central themes of Tomorrow When the War Began?

YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

- Have you ever heard people say that young Australian people lack independence and initiative?
- Why do some people argue that this is the case?
- Do you think this is true? Why? Why not?
- In what ways are young people in the twenty-first century tested and challenged?

SELF-DISCOVERY

- Is it true that a person’s true self emerges in times of extremity? Or do you think people just discover a different side of themselves?
- Is it possible to separate yourself and what you believe from your actions?
- Is the desire to protect yourself and the people you care about an excuse for violence?
- Is it important for individuals and societies to face tough challenges so that they can find out what they are capable of?

CHANGE

- Do some characters change more than others?
- Describe each of the characters and how they change.
- What do the characters gain and what do they lose as a result of their experiences?
- How do the relationships between the characters change?

LEARNING TO COOPERATE

- Choose a scene in the book and the film where the characters are shown learning to work together as a group.
- Describe some of the moments where tensions rise.
SETTING

In the film version of *Tomorrow When the War Began* the beauty of the Australian landscape adds to the ‘look’ of the film.

- In what other ways does the portrayal of the natural landscape add to the film’s story: Think about the contrast between the scenes in ‘Hell’ and the images set in town after the invasion.
- How else does the story’s Australian setting add to the drama?
- If the events had taken place in another country, what difference would it have made to the story and its themes?
- How important is it that the invasion takes place on Australia Day?

THE INVASION

- Why do you think Ellie is shown looking at a mural representing the British invasion of Australia over 200 years ago? What do you think is going on in her head at this moment?
- In the book, the identity of the invaders isn’t specified. However, in the film, the soldiers are clearly Asian. How does this affect the story?
- How different would it have been if the invaders had been European or American?


- Do you agree with Conley that creating fictional stories about an Asian invasion contributes to Australia’s failure to connect with our closest neighbours? In considering this idea you might like to go back to the discussion about *Tomorrow When the War Began* on Q and A: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrHFuKT2OMY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrHFuKT2OMY)

John Marsden recognises, understands but refutes criticisms about his treatment of the invasion of Australia. In contrast, filmmaker Stuart Beattie, the director and scriptwriter of the film version of *Tomorrow When the War Began* dismisses concerns that he has made the enemy Asian and that this feeds into present-day fears about national safety: ‘It's mass entertainment. It's a fictional story. It's meant to be a fun two hours at the movies.’

- What do you think of this response to concerns about the view of the world offered by the film?

NARRATIVE

Narrative is word to describe the story and the way it is told.

- What are some of the obvious and basic differences between telling a story in the form of a novel and in a film?

The writer and director of *Tomorrow When the War Began*, Stuart Beattie, has observed that Marsden’s book is ‘cinematic’ – that it lends itself to being filmed.
In what ways is Marsden’s book cinematic? Explain.
Do you think the action sequences are more exciting in the film or in the book?

Choose a moment in the film of *Tomorrow When the War Began* in which humour and action are mixed. Compare it to a similar scene in the book.

Which works more successfully? Why?

Think about the challenges for a filmmaker of adapting a book in which the story is told through the eyes of a particular character and in first person?

How does the loss of Ellie’s voice change the story and our understanding of it?