

Full Metal Jacket

Analyse how **CONTRAST** was used to communicate an important idea or message.

(note: **CONTRAST** could be between characters, settings, scenes...)

Celebrated director Stanley Kubrick's critically acclaimed examination of the American involvement in the Vietnam War, "Full Metal Jacket" employs contrast on many levels to communicate the idea that this war, and arguably any war, takes too much of a personal toll on people and destroys them as humans. Amongst other features, Kubrick uses contrast in the film's structure to make this point.

'Full Metal Jacket' is a film that is made in two distinct and contrasting halves (or acts). The first Act is set at the Parris Island Training Facility in the U.S. where raw recruits are sent for 8 weeks of basic training before they become Marines and get shipped over to Vietnam for combat. Kubrick takes great pains to show the audience that the training a soldier gets involves stripping them of their individuality and personality. From the opening shot of the raw recruits getting their hair shorn, through to the ironically named Sergeant Hartman's unrelenting diatribe at his recruits who dare to be different, we can see that training is all about become soldiers who are "killing machines", who follow orders and who do what they're told to do without question. There is no room for humanity in the Marines; though this is arguably fair enough as these men have to kill or be killed, it is also arguable that by becoming killing machines the soldiers are not functional humans either, with no traces of empathy or compassion – two qualities that surely make us what we are.

The film's second act contrasts starkly when juxtapositioned alongside the first; here we are in war-torn Vietnam and the results of an intensive 8 week course in stripping away humanity can be seen clearly. The bulk of the soldiers that we see in this act are mercenary killers and brutes with little regard for the people they are meant to protect. They are racist and antagonistic towards each other. There is an atmosphere of lawlessness and menace that is apparent here and the so called "brotherhood" of the Marines that is proudly talked of by Sergeant Hartman in the first act is clearly just a myth in the second. In this end of the film we watch as the ex-recruits move further away from their former selves and become the "killing machines" they strove to be. It is easy to how these people failed in Vietnam and Kubrick makes it clear that the approach of these soldiers (as a metaphor for the military) as killers and not helpers was one of the main factors in their failure there.

427 words

GOOD ENGLISH TERMS USED:

- Contrast
- Juxtapositioned
- Antagonist
- Metaphor
- Ironical
- Atmosphere

ALSO USED:

- Specific incidents/ideas from film
- Specific characters from film

Answers question in a clear and straight-forward manner.