

## Private Pyle Leonard Lawrence



Private Leonard Lawrence is, in literary terms, a **TRAGIC CHARACTER**. As an audience it is very hard not to feel sympathy for this person who is almost immediately stripped of his identity when Gunnery Sergeant Hartman renames him the **DEROGATORY** 'Private Pyle'. Private Pyle does not initially fit the mould for a Marine – he is overweight, unable to complete many physical training activities and gives his personality away during his first encounter with Hartman when he is unable to refrain from smiling. This character is essentially a very human one – arguably too human, too nice.

It might be easy for an audience to immediately single out Pyle and dismiss him as an inferior trainee when he is **JUXTAPOSITIONED** alongside his peers, but that would be too simplistic; Private Pyle's lonely descent into madness and ultimately suicide is sad, but essential for the film's narrative drive. He is a **COMPLEX** character and also one of the first act's major **PROTAGONISTS**, along with Joker, who grows during the course of his time within the film, in doing so he serves three purposes:

- to illustrate the **BASE** cruelty of his surroundings,
- to allow the audience to observe the steady breakdown of his relationship with his peers and in doing so let his isolation **CONTRAST** with the growing brotherhood of the others – highlighting their increasing lack of care and humanity towards Pyle. Survival of the fittest applies here.
- To show us what a living metaphor for the 'Marine way of life' can create. (a dysfunctional monster) This point continues beyond the Pyle character into the film's second act.

Hartman's unrelenting bullying of Pyle is initially amusing (as is the character of Hartman), but before not long it goes beyond a joke and an audience's sympathy begins to grow for him. Pyle may not be an ideal candidate for a U.S. Marine (that is, until he loses his mind – ha!) but there is no reason to pick on him as Hartman does. Pyle's earnest but ultimately unsuccessful attempts at drills and his visible distress at being assaulted, both verbally and physically by his Drill Sergeant creates a distinct and clear sense of **PATHOS** with us, the audience. **PATHOS** is the term applied to characters whose actions create a feeling of sympathy or pity in an audience.

Pyle's sad demise is thanks to the U.S. army – Hartman and those recruits who become U.S. Marines. He was too human to handle the dehumanisation of training. **PARADOXICALLY**, he became a model soldier only after losing his mind. One of Kubrick's points perhaps?