

Full Metal Jacket

Analyse how the ENDING of the text helped you understand the purpose of the text more clearly.

The ending of celebrated director Stanley Kubrick's critically acclaimed examination of the American involvement in the Vietnam War, "Full Metal Jacket" helps the audience to understand one of Kubrick's main messages: that by training people to be killers, there is no way that you can help others, something that the U.S. discovered during the course of this war.

The conclusion of FMJ sees the film's protagonist and narrator, Private Joker assigned to a unit that finds itself under fire from a hidden sniper who succeeds at killing many U.S. soldiers. During the course of this film, Joker is presented as an intelligent and self-aware character, someone who looks to have retained much of his individuality during a harsh basic training regime that takes up the film's first act. In Vietnam, Joker sets himself apart from his fellow soldiers as he questions many of the things that he sees, from the request from superior officers that he and fellow journalists create statistics for stories, to the non-committal response he gets from a soldier who jokes about the fact that he sometimes kills Vietnamese women and children. Joker contrasts with the other characters thanks to this trait: his retention of his personality that the Marines tried so hard to get rid of during his basic training.

Joker is distinctive because of his humanity, but it's the film's dramatic conclusion where we see this fade away as Joker becomes a metaphor for the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The destructive sniper is finally caught and shot. Both young and female (a contrast when juxtapositioned alongside the U.S. Marines) the sniper is left to die in pain. Joker refuses to let this happen, and makes the decision to kill her in a twisted form of humanity. Here the idea that the U.S. was involved in Vietnam to help the Vietnamese and in doing so destroyed much of the country, becomes apparent. Joker has become one of those that he questioned throughout the film, a killer soldier.

The film's final shot, of silhouetted soldiers, including Joker, marching alongside burning buildings is significant as Kubrick is helping to convey the idea that these people are shadows of their former selves. The fact that they are all singing the theme to the 'Mickey Mouse Show' is also important, perhaps summing up Kubrick's, and many other's view that the U.S. involvement in Vietnam was a Mickey Mouse affair from the start.

400 words

GOOD ENGLISH TERMS USED:

- Protagonist
- Narrator
- Metaphor
- Contrast/juxtapositioned

ALSO USED:

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

Answers question in a clear and straight-forward manner.