

### Some thoughts on watching films

Stories are the stuff of life. They allow us to reflect on all sorts of issues at a safe distance as we engage with the characters, cry with them, laugh with them, get cross with them and generally share their experience. How they deal with the issues they come across may frustrate us, or give us new insights; cause us to laugh or cry; result in us hurling abuse at the screen or willing there to be a happy ending. And through it all we can encounter God in all sorts of unexpected places if only we take time to look.

#### Questions to ask yourself

- ▶ What did you think of the film? What do you like most? Least?
- ▶ Which incidents made you think or feel most strongly? How well did you think the film treated those incidents?
- ▶ What issues did the film raise for you?
- ▶ What character(s) do you most identify with and why?
- ▶ Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values?

#### Some facts about the film

- ▶ Fourteen horses played Joey during the movie. The "main" acting horse in the film, Finder, also portrayed Seabiscuit in the movie about that famous racehorse.
- ▶ Specially designed mud was used to make the battle scenes look authentically filthy.
- ▶ Jeremy Irvine, who plays Albert, contracted trench foot whilst filming the war scenes of the film.
- ▶ About 5800 extras and background artists were used in the making of the film.
- ▶ Steven Spielberg has stated that the only digital effects used in the movie were three shots that lasted three seconds, which were done to ensure the safety of the horse involved, saying: "That's the thing I'm most proud of. Everything you see on screen really happened."
- ▶ Prior to filming, a number of the actors did two months of intensive horse training.
- ▶ A million horses were sent from the UK to the First World War. Only 62,000 returned, the rest dying in the war or being slaughtered in France for meat.



**A chance to watch films together.  
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.  
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

**6th May The Help**  
**10th Jun A Separation**  
**1st Jul The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel**  
**2nd Sep We Need To Talk About Kevin**  
**7th Oct The First Grader**  
**4th Nov War Horse**

**Films start at 5:30pm  
Followed by food, coffee and conversation**

**10 Bletchingdon Road  
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## War Horse

*War Horse* tells the story of Joey, a thoroughbred horse bought at auction in Devon by Albert's father. Albert tends him and trains him until the First World War intervenes and Joey is bought by a cavalry officer and taken to France. The film follows his adventures and those, too, of Albert when he is finally old enough to join up. Will either of them survive the war and will they ever be reunited? This is a moving tale of love, friendship and sacrifice. It is based on a children's book by Michael Morpurgo which, in its turn, was turned into an award winning stage production by the National Theatre. The film itself, made in 2011, was directed by Steven Spielberg and was nominated for six Oscars and five BAFTAs.

### The morality of war

"He refuses to be proud of killing. Think how brave that is", says Rose of her husband. How do you think Albert's father has been shaped by his past experiences of war? What stance, if any, do you think the film takes as a whole on the morality of war?

### Seeing things from all sides

Joey's adventures result in him being cared for by people of various nationalities. What do you think this adds to the story? What impact does it have when we being to identify with all sides of a conflict?

### A miracle horse

"Me and the men, Sir, we have high hopes for him", says Colin. What do you think Joey represents to the different people who encounter him? Why is his survival so significant to Colin and the others? Why do you think Albert calls him "a miracle horse"?

### Loving your enemies

Jesus says: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you". (Matthew 5:44). Why is it so important and so difficult, in any kind of conflict, to see our enemy as a fellow human being?

### Human nature

"What a strange beast you've become", says Colin, contemplating the way that humans have forced Joey to behave in a way that is contrary to his nature. But the soldiers, too, have become "strange beasts", clearly capable of conscience and feeling, even as they fight and kill. Where do you think war and conflict come from? Are they products of human nature or do they go against it? What distinguishes "human nature" from "animal nature"?

The sheer chaos and waste of the First World War add to the story's underlying sense that something has gone horribly wrong with human beings. It is thus difficult to retain a reasonable faith in the goodness of humanity and so *War Horse* portrays Joey as an alternative hero. "I knew when I first saw you that you'd be the best of us, that you had the courage we never had", says Albert. "That you'd be the one who'd save us all." Where does the hope for humanity lie?

## Memorable Quotes

**Rose** [to Ted] I might hate you more, but I'll never love you less.

**Albert** We'll be alright, Joey. We're the lucky ones, you and me. Lucky since the day I met you.

**Michael** The food in Italy is good, yeah?

**Gunther** Yes, very good.

**Michael** And the women?

**Gunther** Not as good as the food.

**Emilie** And you've never done a brave thing in your life?

**G'father** Maybe there are different ways to be brave. Did you know that French have the best carrier pigeons? And this could be the difference in the war - our messages getting through.

**Emilie** I don't want to hear about the birds.

**G'father** They are released at the front and told to go home - this is all they know. But to get there they must fly over war. Can you imagine such a thing? Here you are flying over so much pain and terror - and you know you can never look down. You have to look forward or you'll never get home. I ask you - what could be braver than that?

**Major** Be brave! Be brave!

**Albert** You've got to do it, Joey. The rest of our lives depend on this. So, pull straight and pull hard!

**Albert** You can't. He's mine. I trained him. You can't have him. He's my horse, sir.

**Officer** I'm afraid it's too late. I've just paid 30 guineas for him. ... Now, 30 guineas isn't nearly enough to purchase a horse as fine as your Joey, I know that. But it's all I've got. Will you lease him to me, Albert, to be my own mount? I promise you, man to man, that I will look after him as closely as you've done. And, if I can, I'll return him to your care.

**Colin** [entering *No Man's Land*] The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me lie down in green pastures.

**Colin** You speak good English.

**German** I speak English well.

**Colin** You're a remarkable horse. You are - helping us help you. ... Look at that horse. Look at those muscles. War Horse. There he is. What a strange beast you have become.