

the great debaters viewing guide

answer key

The great debaters viewing guide answer key is an essential tool for educators and students alike when studying the film "The Great Debaters." This film, directed by Denzel Washington and inspired by true events, chronicles the journey of the debate team from Wiley College in Texas during the 1930s. The story not only highlights the importance of debate and rhetoric but also delves into significant themes such as civil rights, social justice, and the power of education. This article serves as a comprehensive viewing guide, providing insights, discussion questions, and an answer key that can enhance the understanding of the film's central themes and messages.

Overview of "The Great Debaters"

"The Great Debaters" follows the story of Melvin B. Tolson, a passionate professor who inspires his students to fight for justice through the art of debate. The film features notable performances by Denzel Whitaker, Nate Parker, and Jurnee Smollett. Set against the backdrop of the Jim Crow South, the characters face numerous challenges as they strive to prove that they can compete with the best universities in the nation.

Key Themes in the Film

The film touches on several critical themes, which can be explored through the viewing guide:

1. **The Power of Education:** The film emphasizes how education can empower individuals and communities. Tolson's dedication to teaching his students reflects the belief that knowledge is a tool for change.
2. **Social Justice and Civil Rights:** The characters confront the harsh realities of racism and discrimination. Their journey serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for equality and justice.
3. **The Art of Debate:** Debate is portrayed as a means of persuasion and an essential skill for advocating one's beliefs. The film showcases the importance of eloquence, logic, and critical thinking.
4. **Courage and Resilience:** The debaters face both personal and external obstacles, highlighting their determination to overcome adversity.

Viewing Guide Questions

As students watch "The Great Debaters," they can engage with the following questions to deepen their understanding of the film:

Character Development

1. How does Melvin B. Tolson influence his students?
2. In what ways do the characters evolve throughout the film?
3. What personal challenges do each of the main characters face?

Thematic Exploration

4. How does the film portray the importance of debate in effecting social change?
5. In what ways does the film address the issues of racism and discrimination?
6. What role does education play in the lives of the characters?

Historical Context

7. How does the film reflect the historical context of the 1930s?
8. What impact did the Wiley College debate team have on the civil rights movement?

Answer Key for Viewing Guide Questions

Below is an answer key to the questions posed in the viewing guide. This will help educators and students discuss the film more effectively.

Character Development

1. Melvin B. Tolson: Tolson motivates his students to embrace their potential and become advocates for change, demonstrating the power of mentorship.
2. Character Evolution: Each character undergoes significant growth; for instance, James Farmer Jr. evolves from a shy, unsure young man into a confident debater who stands up for his beliefs.
3. Personal Challenges: The characters face familial expectations, societal prejudices, and personal doubts, which they must confront to succeed.

Thematic Exploration

4. Importance of Debate: The film illustrates that debate is not just about

winning arguments but about expressing ideas, challenging injustices, and inspiring change.

5. Racism and Discrimination: The film showcases the harsh realities of Jim Crow laws and the pervasive racism of the time, highlighting the characters' struggles against these injustices.

6. Role of Education: Education is portrayed as a pathway to empowerment, with the characters' academic pursuits enabling them to challenge societal norms.

Historical Context

7. Reflection of the 1930s: The film accurately depicts the racial tensions and social struggles of the era, providing a backdrop for the characters' experiences.

8. Impact on Civil Rights: The Wiley College debate team symbolizes the fight for civil rights, inspiring future generations to advocate for equality and justice.

Discussion Topics for Further Exploration

After viewing "The Great Debaters," educators can facilitate discussions on the following topics:

- The Role of Argumentation: How does effective argumentation contribute to social movements? Students can analyze historical examples of debates that led to significant changes.

- Cultural Significance of Rhetoric: Discuss the cultural implications of rhetoric in both historical and contemporary contexts. How does the use of language influence public opinion?

- Personal Reflection: Encourage students to reflect on their own experiences with debate and public speaking. How have these experiences shaped their views on social issues?

Conclusion

Using the **great debaters viewing guide answer key** can significantly enhance the educational experience associated with the film. By engaging with the questions and themes presented, students can develop a deeper understanding of the historical context, character motivations, and the vital role of debate in advocating for change. "The Great Debaters" serves as an inspiring reminder of the power of words and the importance of standing up for one's beliefs in the pursuit of justice and equality. Whether in the classroom or for personal reflection, this film offers valuable lessons that resonate both in the past and the present.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'The Great Debaters'?

The main theme of 'The Great Debaters' is the power of words and ideas to inspire social change and the importance of standing up for one's beliefs in the face of adversity.

Who are the main characters in 'The Great Debaters'?

The main characters include Melvin B. Tolson, a passionate debate coach, James Farmer Jr., a determined student, and Samantha Boone, the first female member of the debate team.

What historical context does 'The Great Debaters' address?

The film addresses the historical context of racial inequality and the civil rights movement in the 1930s, highlighting the struggles faced by African Americans.

How does the film depict the role of education?

The film depicts education as a vital tool for empowerment, showcasing how debate and critical thinking can help individuals challenge injustice and articulate their views.

What is the significance of the debates in the film?

The debates serve as a platform for the characters to express their ideas, confront societal issues, and demonstrate the effectiveness of logical argumentation in advocating for justice.

What message does 'The Great Debaters' convey about resilience?

The film conveys a message of resilience, illustrating that through determination, teamwork, and intellectual rigor, individuals can overcome obstacles and effect change.

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