



This film focuses on the role of the Jesuits in South America and highlights the injustices that were committed against the indigenous people. The film provides insight into the greed of the Spanish and the attempt by some to spare the indigenous people.

Beginning of the Movie: Prologue

The film opens with a written text to establish where we are geographically and historically. The next scene is with Cardinal Altamirano who is writing to the Pope. The following scene is a Jesuit priest being martyred.

1. How was Altamirano initially going to start his letter and suggest why he then changes it?
2. How is human's relative insignificance emphasised in the beginning of the movie?

Rodrigo Mendoza (Robert De Niro) Introduction

3. How is Rodrigo Mendoza (Robert De Niro) introduced? What is his job?
4. How are the indigenous people brought into the village? What does this suggest about the way they were treated?
5. Why does the director use a close-up to show the exchange of money?
6. Why is Don Cabeza annoyed at the presence of Jesuits above the falls?
7. The brothers say a few words before they duel. What does it reveal about their characters?
8. Does Rodrigo show remorse after the duel?
9. Why do you think that Rodrigo chooses a physical penance?
10. What is significant about what he carries?
11. Why does Rodrigo accept the fact that the Guarani cut him loose when he did not accept this from Brother John?

The Creation of the Mission

12. How does the director show the acceptance of Rodrigo by the Guarani?
13. At what point does it become clear that Rodrigo has accepted himself for who he is?

The Hearing

Cardinal Altamirano arrives in Asuncion to make a decision regarding the mission territories. Should the Cardinal rule that the territories remain under the control of the church the indigenous people will be safe from slave traders. However, if the land is given to the Spanish or Portuguese, the Indians will once again be free to be enslaved by the Spanish and Portuguese settlers.

14. The physical discomfort of the occupants of the carriage and Don Cabeza tell us something about the settlers. What is it?
15. What does Senor Hontar's conversation with the Cardinal tell us about him?
16. What does Rodrigo mean when he says, "My cloth protects you"?
17. How does Don Cabeza show his prejudices?
18. Are there any reasons that make you think that Altamirano is non-sympathetic or sympathetic towards the Jesuits?

The Mission at San Miguel

19. What does Cardinal Altamirano mean when he says "the beauty and the power of the limb I had come here to sever?"
20. Why, do you think Cabeza is so hostile towards the Jesuits and their missionary work?
21. What do you think Cardinal Altamirano means when he says that the indigenous people might have preferred that "the sea and wind had not brought us."

Cardinal Altamirano Makes a Decision

22. Explain how the Cardinal's argument is in direct opposition to what the work of the missionaries was supposed to have been.

The Massacre

23. Comment on the transition from the scene in San Carlos to the scene in San Miguel. Note the tragic irony in Gabriel's firm conviction that "God is love".
24. How do Gabriel and Rodrigo explain their positions that they adopt in the situation?
25. Why does Gabriel not bless Rodrigo?
26. Comment on the fact that one of the soldiers crosses himself just before the mission is destroyed. In what ways does the movie convey a sense of cynicism of religion into the scene?
27. What is each man doing as he is shot? Does this have any meaning in terms of each man's principles?

Post Massacre

The scene where Cardinal Altamirano is reading a report of the destruction of the missions.

28. "We must work in the world and the world is thus," says Hontar. How right is in the context of the film?
29. How correct is the Cardinal in his reply?

Conclusion

30. Why do you think the girl retrieves the violin in preference to the gilded cross?
31. Comment on what the Cardinal says and what is printed on the screen with reference to the relevance of both today.
32. In about 100 words give your personal response to the film as a whole. What did you like? What didn't you like?