

great debaters study guide answer key

Great Debaters study guide answer key is an essential resource for students and educators looking to dive deeper into the themes, characters, and arguments presented in the film "The Great Debaters." This film, directed by Denzel Washington, is based on the true story of the Wiley College debate team in the 1930s, which challenged the status quo and fought against racial injustice through the power of words and intellect. This article will provide a comprehensive study guide, including key themes, character analyses, and a detailed answer key to assist in understanding the various components of the film.

Overview of "The Great Debaters"

"The Great Debaters" is a powerful film that not only highlights the importance of debate as a skill but also addresses themes such as civil rights, education, and the struggle against oppression. The story revolves around the Wiley College debate team, led by the passionate professor Melvin B. Tolson, played by Denzel Washington. The team, composed of talented students James Farmer Jr., Henrietta Bell, and Samuel "Sam" Kenney, takes on the challenge of debating against Harvard University, marking a significant moment in history.

Key Themes in "The Great Debaters"

Understanding the themes of "The Great Debaters" enhances the viewer's comprehension of the film's significance. Here are some of the most prominent themes:

1. The Power of Words

Debate is at the heart of the film, showcasing how eloquence and rhetoric can be used to sway opinions and inspire change. The characters demonstrate that words can be as powerful as actions in the fight for justice.

2. Racial Injustice

Set in the Jim Crow era, the film reveals the harsh realities of racism and discrimination. The characters confront these issues head-on, using their debates to challenge societal norms and advocate for equality.

3. Education as Liberation

The film emphasizes the transformative power of education. The Wiley College team represents the idea that knowledge can empower individuals and communities to rise above oppression.

4. Courage and Resilience

The characters in "The Great Debaters" display immense courage in the face of adversity. Their determination to succeed against the odds illustrates the importance of resilience in pursuing one's goals.

Character Analysis

The characters in "The Great Debaters" are richly developed, each contributing to the overarching narrative. Here's a closer look at the main characters:

Melvin B. Tolson

As the debate coach, Tolson is a passionate advocate for civil rights. He inspires his students to think critically and challenge societal norms. His character embodies the struggle for justice and the importance of mentorship.

James Farmer Jr.

James is a gifted debater who grapples with his identity and the expectations placed upon him. His character arc reflects the internal conflict faced by many young people in the fight for equality.

Henrietta Bell

Henrietta is a strong female character who defies traditional gender roles. Her participation in the debate team highlights the importance of women's voices in the struggle for civil rights.

Samuel "Sam" Kenney

Sam represents the everyman who desires to make a difference but is often unsure of how to do so. His journey illustrates the theme of personal growth and the impact of friendship and teamwork.

Study Questions and Answers

To aid in understanding the film, here's a list of study questions along with their answers. These can be used for discussion or as part of a study guide:

1. What role does debate play in the lives of the characters?

Debate serves as a platform for the characters to express their beliefs, challenge societal norms, and assert their identities. It empowers them to confront issues of racial injustice and inequality.

2. How does the film portray the concept of education?

Education is depicted as a vital tool for empowerment and social change. The characters' pursuit of knowledge enables them to articulate their arguments effectively and advocate for civil rights.

3. What is the significance of the final debate against Harvard?

The final debate symbolizes the culmination of the characters' growth and their ability to challenge the status quo. It serves as a pivotal moment in the film, showcasing their hard work, dedication, and the impact of their message.

4. How do the relationships between the characters influence their development?

The relationships among the team members provide support and encouragement, helping them to overcome personal struggles. Their camaraderie is essential for their success in the debates and personal growth.

5. In what ways does "The Great Debaters" reflect historical events?

The film is rooted in the historical context of the 1930s, a time of racial segregation and civil rights struggles. It reflects the real-life challenges faced by African Americans and highlights the importance of activism and debate in advocating for change.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the **Great Debaters study guide answer key** serves as an invaluable resource for those looking to enhance their understanding of the film. By exploring its key themes, character dynamics, and thought-provoking questions, viewers can gain deeper insights into the power of debate and the fight for civil rights. "The Great Debaters" is not just a story about a college debate team; it is a celebration of resilience, courage, and the transformative power of words. Whether used in an educational setting or for personal reflection, this study guide will help illuminate the film's enduring message.

Frequently Asked Questions

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

The primary theme of 'The Great Debaters' revolves around the power of words and education in the fight against injustice, as well as the importance of standing up for one's beliefs.

How does the film depict the role of debate in personal development?

The film illustrates that debate fosters critical thinking, confidence, and public speaking skills, which are essential for personal growth and empowerment.

What historical context does 'The Great Debaters' address?

The film is set in the 1930s and addresses issues such as racial inequality, civil rights, and the impact of the Great Depression on African American communities.

Who are the main characters in 'The Great Debaters' and what roles do they play?

The main characters include Melvin B. Tolson, the passionate debate coach; James Farmer Jr., a talented debater; and Henrietta, who faces personal challenges while supporting her peers. Each character represents different aspects of the struggle for equality.

What is the significance of the debates in the storyline?

The debates serve as a platform for the characters to express their views on social justice and civil rights, highlighting the importance of dialogue and intellectual discourse in enacting change.

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