

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What were your thoughts after viewing the invasion scenes at Omaha Beach? Was this consistent with your earlier images of war as depicted in the movies? If they were different, please explain?
- What were the soldiers thinking when they finally had a moment to reflect on the ordeal of storming the beach and completing their mission?
- What leadership characteristics did you see in Captain Miller? How do you think his occupation back home contributed to his leadership abilities? How would you describe his effectiveness as a leader?
- One of the motivational factors for the soldiers in the film was this idea of "service to your country." How and why has this thought changed since the 1940s? What events in our history have contributed to this change?
- What do you think about the decision to send a company of men into hostile territory to save one man? What do think about the rationale used by the General who gave the order? What do you think about the rationale used by Captain Miller to help keep his troops focused on the mission?
- Why do you feel Captain Miller guarded his personal life from his men? Why was it so important for his men to know his past? Why did Captain Miller decide to share his personal life with his men? Was it the right thing to do at the time? Why?
- Why do you believe Captain Miller would not allow his men to see him having private moments of fun or grief? Why was he trying to hide the spasms in his right hand? What were his men thinking when they saw the spasms?
- What were your reactions to some of the religious connections made in the film? Examples: the American sniper who always prayed to God before he shot someone; the Jewish soldier who taunted the German POWs; or the quote, "If God be for us, who could be against us?"
- Was Captain Miller concerned more for his men or the mission to save Private Ryan? Why?
- Why were some of the soldiers resentful of Private Ryan? When they finally found Private Ryan did their opinions change? Why?
- How did you feel about Captain Miller's decision to stop and storm the radar tower and bunker? Do you feel he would have done things differently if he had known the outcome?
- Why did Miller decide to let the German soldier go free? Was this a good decision?
- What did you think of Private Ryan's reaction when he was told of the mission and when he announced he was staying? Would you have decided to leave Ryan or stay? Why?
- When Miller and Ryan were sharing a private moment, why did Miller want to keep the memory of his wife and the rose bushes to himself?
- Which of these characters went through the most changes in the movie and why?  
Captain Miller                      Private Ryan                      The cowardly corporal  
The soldier from New York who resented Ryan
- Which of these characters was the true hero in the film?  
Captain Miller                      Private Ryan                      The General who assigned the mission  
The female supervisor who first recognized that James was the last surviving brother
- Throughout the film, Captain Miller tried to rationalize for himself and his men the reasons for their various missions and the war. At the end of the film, do you believe Private Ryan grasped Captain Miller's meaning for saving "one man?"
- If you were in command, what would you have done differently? Why?
- What are your thoughts to these quotes from the movie?  
"Just know, every man I kill the further away from home I feel."  
"Duty is to follow orders."  
"Gripes go up, they don't go down."  
"I am willing to lay down my life and the lives of my men to ease her (Mrs. Ryan) suffering."  
"I have always believed that the mission comes before the man, and this time the mission is the man."