

The mission movie analysis essay



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The movie *The Mission* (1986) starring Robert DiNiero, is set during the colonial time period and sheds light on the Jesuits and their early missions in Brazil. It shows us a timeline of the behaviors of countries such as Spain and Portugal as well as the Jesuit missions. The movie opens with a focus on an Indian village set on the top of a waterfall. This village is depicted from two separate viewpoints, as the viewer is shown a Jesuit Priest named Father Gabriel (Jeremy Irons) in the beginning steps of attempting to submerge into the Indian culture in hope to eventually convert them to the Jesuit faith.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, men from Spain are shown entering a similar village, capturing as many Indians as possible and bringing them back to Spain to sell to others who will turn them into slaves. Each side continues these behaviors throughout the majority of the movie. Over time, you can see the growth of the relationship between the Jesuit Priests and the Indian villages. In addition to providing them with religion, parts of the Jesuits' successes were achieved in bringing over new world practices to what one would otherwise describe as an uncivilized population.

The implementation of simple things such as teaching the Indians how to build soundly structured buildings, laid the foundation of trust needed to have the Indians convert to the Jesuit faith and eventually build a large church in the center of the village. The Jesuits missions have been very successful thus far. However, political negotiations between Spain and Portugal deviate and the two countries form a treaty outlining an agreement for Spain to concede land to Portugal, which they will use to build their own civilizations and enslave or kill local Indian tribes as well as anyone who stands in their way.

A trial is held to determine if the Spain and Portugal have to authority to destroy the sacred work of the Jesuit missions. The judge takes time to explore all the villages that the Jesuits have converted including their oldest mission known as The Great Mission of Sab Miguel. The judge is treated like royalty at every stop he makes in trying to decide but ultimately decides that the villages can be destroyed to make way for the effectiveness of the Spanish and Portuguese treaty.

This is met with obvious resistance from the Indians who are overcome with feeling of betrayal from not only their God but also these foreign settlers that they let into their lives. When the Portuguese show up, the Indians are prepared for war but in the end, wooden spears are not a fair fight for guns and swords. The Indians' villages are torched and those who were not killed were shackled, enslaved, transported back and sold. I feel that as far as movies go, this one did a very good job when it came to historical accuracies.

The film makes it seem that the Indians would not have been able to survive without the help of the Jesuits and the mission, which simply is not true. The film also fails to point out the lack of freedom that the Indians had within these missions. In fact, the film at times portrays the exact opposite. Lastly, the film paints the Jesuits as innocent and the good guys throughout the film. I feel this is the most egregious inaccuracy. The Jesuits were not simply there to spread Christianity to people, but rather it was a beginning step in taking over the entire culture and land of the Indian people.

I thought the movie was definitely effective. I felt that the film itself was well depicted and gave the viewer a clear understanding of not only the struggle in the area but also the political ripples it caused as it ultimately eluded to the global effect this situation had. I was pleased that things were not disproportionately exaggerated, as is the case all too often in movies; conversely, Roland Joffe does a commendable job of bringing life the words of a history textbook without compromising it's integrity with the help of Robert De Niro and Jeremy Irons.