

Grave of the Fireflies Notes

How does the film portray the human cost of war, particularly through the lens of children?

The human cost of war is portrayed brutally. It isn't overdramatized, it just happens. One scene, Japan looks fine, but a few scenes later, the place is in ruins and mass graves are being erected.

Through the lens of children, we don't just see the unnecessary death toll of war, we see the intense shock of losing family at a young age.

The possibility of losing your family isn't a terribly common thought to a young child, so to experience it without warning or preparation is life-changing.

Consider the film's emotional tone, use of historical context, and its treatment of national trauma.

How does it contribute to Japan's postwar narrative of victimhood? Do you find any social criticism?

The film contributes to postwar Japan's victimhood narrative by showing wartime events through the perspective of a non-combatant.

While one could argue that soldiers (voluntary soldiers, at least) know what they're signing up for, the citizens didn't sign up for anything.

Potential social criticism can be seen through Seita and Setsuko's aunt. They're orphans, and Seita had recently mentioned that his school burned down,

and his workplace was destroyed. Regardless, he's given worse food and berated for loafing around despite the fact that the rice being used was bought through the sale of his dead mother's clothing.