

1917 Movie Review - Summative Assessment

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World War I, often referred to as The Great War, was a conflict that occurred between 1914-1918 (mostly between European powers and the United States/allies). The film “1917”, written and produced by Sam Mendes, seeks to shine a light on the true horrors of war and combat that occurred in the early days of the twentieth century. The 2019 blockbuster movie starred some of the most well-known names in Hollywood, including George MacKay, Dean-Charles Chapman, Mark Strong, and Andrew Scott. The film occurs in 1917 (three years into World War I) in the Western Front of the war (specifically, France). Its genre is staged to represent a war drama type of film where the events of *The Great War* are dramatized and represented (to a certain, attainable extent) by a plot revolving around a particular moment in the war. Essentially, the entire point of this film (and what makes it so appealing to the global audience) is the fact that it details the horrors of combat in a way that is engaging and truly fascinating to look at. The entire thematic, as said previously, seeks to illuminate these aspects utilizing a proper story in the process.

The film begins in April 1917. The war has already been going on for an insufferable three years, and both sides are ready to end it. The general mood on both sides is full of boredom, confusion, anger, and perhaps longing for the entire conflict to be over. This, however, doesn't stop the Germans from luring the allies to a deadly trap: they act as if they were retreating from their positions in the Western Front (France). On the 6th of April, Corporals Tom Blake and Will Schofield from the British army are imposed with a perilous task: they must cross nine miles over what is referred to as “no man's land” (land between enemy trenches). This is no ordinary task, however, as the lives of 1,600 fellow British soldiers are on the line, making it all-the-more imperative for the two potential heroes to deliver on the task at hand. Not only must they avoid certain death, but they must also deliver their message on time to the 2nd Devons before it's too late. *Can they make it? Do they have what it takes? To what extent can an entire battalion/squadron rely on just two men's bravery?*

Besides the intrinsically deep, inspiring, and insightful thematic of the story behind the movie, one of the most interesting and visually stimulating aspects of the film that truly add to its value as a Hollywood blockbuster that truly conveys/acts as a funnel for the stories that have resulted from *The Great War* is the fact that it is recorded in one shot. This is not only one of the most impressive features of film engineering in history, but it stands as a totally unique and diverse aspect that makes this film genuinely stand out from the rest. In fact, to further illustrate this point, according to the production notes provided in the film, the scenes were shot “in a series of extended, uncut takes that could be connected seamlessly to look and feel as if it is one continuous shot”. In any movie or film, one looks for both ingenuity and impeccable execution, and this film had both in prevalence. In regards to the way the actual content of the movie

connects to the real-life connotative and denotative events of World War 1, *it is mixed*. On one hand, a lot of the historical details were represented throughout the plot and scene of the film by using clever cinematography and tactics. On the other, however, there were a lot of areas that were apparent in the fact that they did not (at least to the fullest of extents) convey and properly funnel the true aspects of World War 1 (particularly, the terrible tragedies that occurred). In order to better understand this counterargument of this potential downside of the film, it's important to look at similar productions; in this case, the film "*They Shall Not Grow Old*", an illustrious and immersive documentary that uses century-old (modified) World War 1 footage to truly depict the war as a primary source. By using this retouched video (with newly added audio, colors, graphics, etc.), the true horrors and aspects of daily life for soldiers and other related members of the Army (including civilians), we gain a first-hand insight at how things were actually like. This, however, is in stark contrast to "*1917*", which acts as a secondary source and only aims to *retell and relive* the events that shook the course of human history over a century ago. This, although it allows for storytelling and drama, takes away from the historical accuracy and transparency a film like "*They Shall Not Grow Old*" provides. Everything from the eating & living conditions to the traumatic and often deadly charges into "no man's land" to enemy territory and the horrible conditions in the trenches is covered and accurately (naturally, as the footage is real) represented in such film whilst "*1917*" is missing that sort of aspect quite severely. This, however, does not take away from the fact that the drama, overall thematic, and details were still immaculate and hard to beat in this film as well (simply in a different way from "*They Shall Not Grow Old*").

The film "*1917*", at least in my opinion as a dignified movie critic, is quite honestly fascinating and *truly electrifying*. Not only are the producers & writers able to create and capture the scenes that truly bring this movie to life, but they are able to do so in a way that is unique and intriguing for viewers even if it's the tenth time they are watching it. There will always be a glorious element that one misses in this masterpiece of cinematography and art; whether that be an action by one of the characters or an incredible background effect, there will always be an element of surprise and true squirmish that makes this movie the blockbuster and box-office hit it has become since its premiere in the United Kingdom in December of 2019. In fact, so successful was this film that in just over 5 weekends of being live in theaters it generated over \$200 million in revenue. Quite honestly, personally speaking, it is truly incredible the way one is sucked into this vortex of drama, hope, heroism, and tragedy all at once. It is truly remarkable. I would recommend this film to anybody who wishes to gain new perspectives on what occurred in World War 1. More specifically, however, on the personal stories and people that fought in the war. Way too often these days it is easy to forget that actual people are behind all of the stories we hear about in history-altering scenarios like *The Great War*. By remembering the human aspect, we are able to properly sympathize and reflect upon the actions of our past in order to create a better tomorrow. I truly believe "*1917*" transmits and conveys this message to all who sit at the edge of their seats in excitement and anguish as they watch it..

