

Task sheets for theme group: Religion

1. Getting started: existential questions and religious symbols

- Explain the meaning of these two symbols (a candle and a cross) in Christianity. What role might they play in the movie?
- In your group, think of existential questions that play a role in religion(s), e.g. "What is the meaning of life?" Discuss what questions and themes you expect to encounter in *Gran Torino*.



2. Watching the movie: References to the Christian faith

- Clint Eastwood's film is full of open and hidden references to the Christian religion. Note down the elements of Christianity that are shown in the movie (in chronological order). Summarize your findings for your group. Compare your results and discuss their significance.

Phrase of film	Elements of Christianity
Beginning	
	1 st official confession in church
	2 nd personal confession to Thao
Ending	

- "Me I have got a light". Discuss the symbolism of light and the Christian cross (crucifix) in the movie.

3. Watching closely: Walt's death

- a. *Closely watch chapter 27 (DVD: 01:39:30 – 01:41:46/YouTube: "Gran Torino Walt Kowalski death scene") and describe the religious allusion in it. (Hint: stop the film when Walt is lying on the ground. Who does he resemble?) Analyze the film techniques used in Walt's final appearance and interpret their effect on the viewer. Focus on color and lighting, camera angle, field size and camera movement.*

	Description	Effect
Colors and lighting		
Camera angle		
Camera movement		
Field size		

- b. *"Walt sacrifices himself to make up (atone) for his sins." Analyze this statement and discuss these sins.*
- c. *Walt does not act according to conventional Christian wisdom – represented by Father Janovich – which teaches repentance ("confession") in Church followed by forgiveness for your sins. In your group discuss the two positions: Should you personally make up for your sins by (if you can) repairing what you have destroyed, or should your sins just be forgiven through Jesus the Savior, after a confession? Are there any other ways of repenting your faults and sins, in your opinion?*

4. Exploring further: Invisible religion

"Films and other media function as "invisible religion", says sociologist Thomas Luckmann. Just like traditional religions, they raise existential questions like: 'What is the meaning of life?', 'Is there a life after death?', 'How can we find forgiveness?' and 'What is good, what is evil?' And they offer answers to those questions to provide guidance and to make sense of our existence."

Discuss this theory, referring to other movies.