

STUDY GUIDE



MACHUCA

A film by ANDRÉS WOOD
CHILE / 2004 / 120 MIN
Spanish with English Subtitles



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BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before watching a foreign film, it is important to know the current events and history of the country where that film comes from.

Find two or three articles on the Military Dictatorship in Chile from 1973-1990 led by Pinochet. Write a brief summary concentrating on the coup's prelude and soon after. Please use reliable sources.

INTRODUCING THE FILM

A **film synopsis** is a piece of text designed to summarize the film's narrative, genre, style, and key participants in a way that appeals to a wide audience. The synopsis is part of the film marketing process and tends to follow a traditional format. Read this official synopsis for *Machuca*:

In 1973 in Santiago, Chile, Father McEnroe, the director of a private school, decides to integrate underprivileged native children into his classes. Pedro, whose family lives in shantytown, forms a friendship with Gonzalo, a middle class boy. Despite the differences in their family's situations, the two eleven-year-old kids become inseparable. Gonzalo even experiences his first feelings of love for Silvana, Pedro's teenage cousin.

But the city is shaken by political demonstrations opposing the partisans of the socialist regime, which has been in power for the past two years. The stormy atmosphere winds up having an effect on Gonzalo and Pedro's friendship.



- ☐ From the film synopsis, can you imagine the genre and tone of the film? From this same text, try to identify the main elements from the film's plot and the socio-political background to the film.
- ☐ How do the trailer, poster, and still images encourage you to watch the film?
- ☐ Can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about just from the marketing materials (i.e. trailer, poster, and still images)?
- ☐ What sort of problems do you think these kids are going to be facing: at school, with their families, with friends, and in 1970s Chilean society?

AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

CINEMATIC ART/TECHNIQUES

- ❑ How would you describe the color palette of the film? Are the colors dull, bright, vibrant? How might the colors reflect the film's themes? How does this change throughout the course of the film? What do you think these changes mean in terms of the narrative and themes?
- ❑ How does the film's set design set you in the time and place of Chile in 1973? Think specifically about the props and the costumes.
- ❑ How does the director choose to show the passage of time throughout the film? Give a few specific mis-en-scene examples.
- ❑ Think about the scenes including TV announcements. How do these scenes build tension and suspense in the audience?
- ❑ Whose point of view is this film shot from? Why do you think the director chose this character's viewpoint?
- ❑ What film techniques does the director use during the scene in the slum at the end (camera movement, color palette, setting, costume)? How does that influence the way we feel as the viewer? How does it reflect what is happening on screen?
- ❑ Why do you think there are so many close ups in this film? Give an example when you thought a close up worked particularly well.



NARRATIVE

- ❑ Describe the two main characters - Machuca and Gonzalo. Give a few examples about the way they dress, the neighborhoods and houses they live in, where they meet and what they want to be when they grow up.
- ❑ What does the first television scene tell us about the relationship between Chile and the Soviet Union?
- ❑ Do you empathize or identify with Gonzalo? Do you agree with him throughout the course of the film? Why or why not?
- ❑ How would you characterize Gonzalo's relationship to his mother? What about his father, sister, and friends? How does his relationship to these characters change over the course of the film?
- ❑ Describe the relationship between Gonzalo and Machuca. What draws them to each other? Why do you think the director chose *The Lone Ranger* for Gonzalo to be reading? Explain why you think *The Lone Ranger* was hinting at something bigger in the film. How does it relate to the relationship between Gonzalo and Machuca?
- ❑ Who does Machuca and the bully represent? What personalities did these two display to make them similar to those they represent?
- ❑ How are the social and political tensions present at this time in Chile transferred into the school atmosphere?
- ❑ What is the significance of Father X's departure from the school? Analyze these scenes from their beginning to end.
- ❑ What was the significance of the ending scenes for Machuca, Silvana, and Gonzalo? Who do you agree with? What would you have done?



THEMES

- ❑ What role does the Catholic Church play in the narrative, specifically in a school setting? How does this speak of the Church's influence on society and its role in politics during this time period? How does this portrayal of the Church compete with traditional depictions of Catholicism?
- ❑ Think about the U.S. during this time period. What similarities/differences do you find between Chile at that time, from economic, social, and political background as well as the role of the Church in society?
- ❑ While the film is titled Machuca, the story is centered on Gonzalo and it is his coming of age story. Why do you think the director chose to tell the narrative through Gonzalo's eyes? Why do you think the filmmaker chose to call the film Machuca and not Gonzalo?
- ❑ What do the marginalized children protagonists of the film represent in the larger context of 1970s Chilean society?
- ❑ What is the director's viewpoint in terms of the 1973 Chilean dictatorship: is there a clear distinction between right and wrong? Does he opt in favor of any particular political stance? Analyze his intentions using key scenes throughout the film.
- ❑ There is a lot of moral ambiguity in the film. Can you provide and analyze a few examples?
- ❑ Gonzalo and Machuca's families are dealing with crises of their own; yet they are intrinsically connected to the political, economic, and social turmoil that were ongoing in Chile at the time. Connect the theme of familial crisis in the film to the events leading up to the dictatorship using specific scenes demonstrating the family dynamics in both households.

