

1. How does the film’s opening montage offer historical insight into colonial America?
2. What are some character motivations for fighting? What are the experiences of frontier settlers?
3. How do feelings and allegiances change? How are terms such as loyalty and sedition defined?
4. How does the film’s dialogue hint at the forthcoming tensions between Britain and its colonists?
5. What is the nature of siege warfare as depicted in the fight for Fort William Henry?
6. Compare and contrast the differences between European-style war and frontier-style war.
7. How do Native Americans figure their own interests and allegiances with the British? French?
8. How does this movie rely on or disrupt long-standing visual conventions or Indian stereotypes?
9. What is the historical significance of the film’s final scene? What does it foretell?
10. Why do you think there are so few films covering topics of colonial America?


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Accompanying primary resource:

***British After-Action Report from "Journal of the Attack made on Fort William Henry by the French and Indians”***

March the 19th 1757.

Saturday Morning between the Hours of three and four o'Clock was Alarmd by the Centries firing at a Party of French Indians, who approached very near the Fort, at which the Signal Guns were fired; the Rangers were sent for to come into the Fort, a Centry that was posted at the Lake Side espied a Party of the French coming towards the Sloop with Faggotts, fuse & other Combustibles to Set them on fire, but in vain at that time, for by the firing of a 32 pounder, the Enemy wee put into Confusion; as you may judge by their leaving behind a great Number of Scaling Ladders, Tommihawks, Scalping Knives &ca &ca.

Major Eyre order'd all the Officers & Men to their proper Posts. About 5o'Clock we Spied the Ennemy apearing on the Ice very Numerous about four Miles form our Fort near Sloop Island, about Six o'Clock the French divided themselves in Small parties each side of the Lake, those on the East Side came on the Side of the Hill, where Genl. Johnson fought them last Year, & as they came in Parties, the Major Saluted them with Some \_\_\_ Grapes from a 32 Pounder which made them Hoop and Yelp.

From Seven in the Morning until Eight at Night, the French kept Continually firing with Small Arms into the Fort. N.B. The French thought no less than to take the Fort by Storm, they had 300 Scaling Ladders with them as we learn Since.

About 9 at Night the French ceased firing, and Sent a Party who set one of our Sloops on Fire, & a Pile of Wood. It being very dark we could not see them.

About 2 o'Clock Sunday Morning the Sloop was all in as Blaze & gave such light we could see for about half a Mile round the Fort. The Wind turn'd the Force of the Fire form us, And the Fire gave us an opportunity to Discover where the Enemy Intended to Storm, or Scale the Fort, that our Cannon Scatter'd them form their Quarters and killed some, which we could see by their Draggin the Dead away to the Ice which they broke holes, and put them in. During all this time we had not One Man kill'd and but five or Six Slightly Wounded.

About five or Six o'Clock Sunday Morning the French were drawed up on the Ice at Sloop Island where they Appeared very Numerous. Whether it was to let us See their Number or Consulting what was best to be done we could not tell, but the result was that they sent an Officer with a Red Flag, had four Men along with him Armed with a Covering Party consisting of 12 Men Armed, who March'd after him at the distance of Two or Three Hundred Yards, and as the Officer Advanced waved the Flag. The Major seeing that Sent Lieut. Drummond with the Same Number of Men The French Officer had, they had some Conference for a Considerable time, at length the Officer delivered Lieut. Drummond a Letter Unsealed which he dispatched to the Major. The French Officer & Lieut Drummond talk'd together for a while, until the Major sent back an Answer by Mr Williamson, Engineer who Conducted the Officer into our Fort blindfolded.

Lieut. Drummond Stayed out with the French untill the Return of the French Officer who entitled himself Captn of the Train as we hear'd since (and had been at the taking of Oswego). But what pass'd between the Major and the French Captn we cannot tell, The French Officer came out & the Major came out on the Bastions (it being then about two o'Clock in the Afternoon) Order'd Sand Baggs to be fill'd and to be laid round on the Ramparts & Swivles to be Erected on the same in order to make ourselves as Strong as possible, expecting to be Attack'd more fierce than ever. Accordingly he was Surrounded on every side by the French, who began to Fire upon us like Hail.

The Major went round the Bastions telling the Men, that the French would give no Quarter. The Men were not in the least Daunted nor dismay'd but laughed at the Frenchs firing, and it is to be remarked here that a great many of the Men who lay sick for two or three Weeks before came out on the Bastions with their Arms willing to partake the smae Fate with their brethren before the Fort should be deliver'd or Surrender'd to the French like that of Oswego.

The Major dispatched two Rangers to Fort Edward to Acquaint the Commanding Officer there of the present Condition of Affairs here, the Night Coming on the French continued firing on every side very hott untill 10 o"Clock, at which time a Party of the French Approach'd one of our Sloops but found very hot Quarters there. Our Men watching their Motions, sent Some of them out of the Land of the Living. However Watchfull as our Men were, the French took an Opportunity of Setting a Second Sloop on fire (bad as it was in some Shapes) it afforded a light that the Enemy could not Nigh to do us any damage without being discovered at a great distance off. It was fortunate that the Wind turnd that very Minute the Sloop was in a Blaze, otherwise it would have Set the Baker's house on Fire, and that the Fort.

This Night the French were resolved to have the Fort but were disappointed, nothing extraordinary happend until Morning where it began to Snow very fast which ceased the Ennemy's firing. The Rangers behavd with a great deal of Courage & would have rushd out against the Enemy, but the Major thought it Prudent to keep them in the Fort, as we were but a Handfull in proportion to the French. It Snowed all Day on Thuesday. About Seven at Night we discovered the French coming towards the Sloop Loudoun to Set it on fire also, but they found it difficult at that time. Our Men from the East Bastion playd so well with their small Arms that the French turnd Tail between 10 & 11 they made a Second Attempt, which they had put in Execution.

A Pile of Wood which stood close by the Sloop was a great Safe guard to the French, that they hid themselves behind it. We Could not see them until they had put the Sloop on Fire between 12 & 1 the Sloop was in a Flame, & gave us such light that we could see a Party Coming towards the Wood pile, it being an Officers Command as we heared Since, we fired among them very Smartly, and kill'd some but as their Custom is to take as good Care of the Dead as of the Living, we can't tell what Number we had killed but their loss must be considerable. We could here one Miserable Fellow who was Mortally wounded groan all Night. Wednesday Morning Lieut. Brewer brought in a Prisoner & one of the Rangers brought in another a Third was brought but died in two Hours after brought into the Fort. This Morning the French thought it a Folly to Attempt any further, turn'd taill & went home in a Miserable Condition, One third of them frost bitten, half Starvd lost many of their Arms &ca.

The Prisoners being Examin'd says at their first Setting out they were 2000 Strong & had been out 10 days their Provisions were out some days before, & wre oblidg'd to kill an Old Horse & eat him, we have found one Frenchman Since under the Snow with his Scalp off."