

### **“Ballad of a Soldier” starring Soviet actors, 1959, NR, 88 minutes**

#### **Major themes:**

- War
- Generosity
- Friendship
- Love
- Devotion
- Resourcefulness
- Loss
- Integrity
- Hope

#### **Major characters:**

- Private Alyosha Skvortsov
- Shura
- Alyosha’s mother
- The General
- Vasya (the invalid)
- Gavrilkin (the train sentry)

## Movie Nights for Thinkers and Seekers

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### Background info:

- The tagline for this film is, *"From the very pages of life itself!"*
- The military action shown in this film occurred on the Eastern Front, with fighting primarily between Soviet and Nazi German troops. Of the estimated 70 million deaths attributed to World War II, approximately 30 million (many of them civilian) occurred on the Eastern Front. The human losses were staggering. The U.S. lost 420,000 (0.32% of the pre-war population); the Soviet Union's losses were close to 30 million (14.2% of the pre-war population).
- The two lead actors, Vladimir Ivashov and Zhanna Prokhorenko, were just nineteen years old, with little prior acting experience, when they were hired after the initially chosen leads were fired. This was the first major role for both Ivashov and Prokhorenko, and both went on to long film careers.
- The film won several awards, including the 1962 BAFTA Award for Best Film from any Source and the special jury prize at the 1960 Cannes Film Festival.
- This film was hailed as an instant classic by Soviet and American critics, with the New York Times offering it iconic status.
- In one scene we see a group of dispossessed Ukrainians (in national dress) en route to factory work in the Urals.

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### Scriptures:

Psalms 39:4 – 7 (NLT) – *“LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered—how fleeting my life is. You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath. We are merely moving shadows, and all our busy rushing ends in nothing. We heap up wealth, not knowing who will spend it. And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you.”*

Acts 20:36 – 37 (ESV) – *“And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again.”*

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 8 (The Message) – *“There’s an opportune time to do things, a right time for everything on the earth . . . A right time to wage war and another to make peace.”*

Proverbs 11:25 (NLT) – *“The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.”*

Proverbs 11:3 (The Message) – *“The integrity of the honest keeps them on track; the deviousness of crooks brings them to ruin.”*

2 Corinthians 1:3 – 7 (NLT) – *“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us.”*

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### Discussion points:

1. War is often associated with tremendous loss (e.g. loss of life, loss of relationships, loss of peace, loss of homeland, loss of property). Is it possible to compare one nation's level of loss with another's? one person's level of loss with another's? one kind of loss with another?
2. What kinds of love do we see in this film?
3. Even during the horrors of war, life goes on. What examples of daily life did you notice in this film?
4. Which of Alyosha's interactions did you like the best? Why?
5. Why was it so important for Alyosha to get back to the front so quickly after visiting his mother?
6. Discuss the love and the truth of Alyosha's interaction with Pavlov's father.
7. The film's opening includes this quote, "*We will tell his story, a story not everyone knows -- not even her, his mother.*" How does this film help us to see that each individual is priceless, even in times of great trouble?