



***Forbidden Games***  
**(France, 1952, 102 minutes)**  
**Director: Rene Clement**  
**Study Guide**

**Synopsis**

*Forbidden Games* is a French film that shows what happens to a child whose world is shattered by combat during World War II. Although the film is over forty years old, it has neither lost its impact nor significance. It reveals the psychological plight children suffer when they are caught in the devastating reality of war. The film follows a young girl, Paulette, who is orphaned and lost in the chaos of battle. She is given shelter by a family of farmers who seems unaffected by the war as they go through their chores and are engaged in the farmer's age-old struggle to survive. While the family gives Paulette a place to live, they seem oblivious to how the war has marked her. Maybe her own experiences, irrespective of how hard they are, give them no understanding that Paulette is seriously troubled. It is only their son, a boy a little older than Paulette, who seems to notice. But he is only a child himself. Few films have as effectively captured the powerlessness that children feel and the disturbing fact that adults can sometimes be completely insensitive to the emotional needs of children.

**Themes in the film**

City vs. rural life

Children in wartime

How children deal with death

How adults deal with death

Religious symbols, rituals and what they mean during wartime

Civilian casualties in war

Neighbors

**Study Questions**

- What were the circumstances of the Nazi occupation of France in WWII?
- Who fled and who stayed?
- Were there casualties?
- What forms did the resistance take?
- In what ways do children deal with the complexities of war and death?
- What role did religion play in France around the time of WWII?

**Discussion Questions**

- What did the crosses mean to the adults in the film?
- What did they mean to the children?

- What role did religion play in the lives of farm people?
- Were any analogies being made with the family feud of the Goards and the Dolles? Explain.
- Was there some correlation being made between the death of the animals in the film and the death of the humans in WWII? Explain.
- Do you notice any hypocrisy in the adults behavior vs. what the children were blamed for?
- Why does everyone in the film seem so detached from their religious rituals, the war and death?