

*Inside Darkness* Discussion Guide  
revised 7/15/08

***If you wish to discuss the film as a whole rather than discuss each episode, you might use the questions in bold, followed by the “Questions for Further Discussion.” There are also questions about the alternate ending, deleted scenes, and interviews (“Inside Inside Darkness”).***

*Suggested Guidelines for Fruitful Discussion:*

1. *Have someone be the moderator, but encourage everyone to help with the moderating.*
2. *Stay with a question as long as it is fruitful. There is no need to get through a number of questions.*
3. *Address questions that are of particular interest to the group, whether they are in this guide or not.*
4. *Make your main goal learning from others rather than expressing yourself.*
5. *Resist the temptation to repeat yourself in order to convince others.*
6. *When voicing your ideas, don't feel that you have to respond to the previous person's ideas. Simply address the question at hand.*
7. *Speak as much as possible about your own thoughts and feelings rather than try to make judgments about others' comments.*
8. *Encourage people to speak relatively briefly and to give the others in the group a chance to speak before speaking again.*
9. *Occasionally invite (but don't pressure) quieter individuals to speak.*

Questions for Episode One:

1. **How does each of the characters respond to his or her situation?**
2. **Who do you think put them in the room? Why do you think they are put there? Is someone watching? Watching for what?**
3. Why does Yvette get her Bible out? Why does Patrick make fun of this?
4. How would you respond to finding yourself trapped like this (with your rivals)?

Questions for Episode Two:

1. How does each of the characters react to the discovery of the ear? How would you react? **Why do you think the ear is in the room?**
2. Does Yvette have good reason to resist trying to communicate with their captors? Does Patrick have good reason to think she might be behind this bizarre scenario? Does John have good reason to insist that they all take their clothes off?
3. **Why aren't they able to work together? What gets in the way of you working well with others?**
4. What should they be doing? What would you do if you were there?

Questions for Episode Three:

1. John and Patrick think the walls are moving in, but Yvette tells them they just have claustrophobia. Do you think the walls are really moving in? Do you think she believes the walls are moving in? If so, why would she lie to the others?

2. **What do the (possibly moving) walls symbolize?**
3. Why does Patrick ask if someone in Washington might be behind this? Do you think any of the three might be behind this? What does Yvette mean when she says, "There's a lot you don't know"?
4. Why does John keep pounding on the walls?

Questions for Episode Four:

1. Why do you think Yvette has a nightmare about the debate? Do you think her prayer is sincere, especially when she asks if she's "done right"?
2. Why does Patrick try to communicate with their captors? Is he sincere in what he says? In what ways might his communication be like a prayer?
3. Discuss John's use of his rosary and its significance for him: he prays with it, uses it to scratch at the walls, pulls at it (checking his conscience? deciding if it's strong enough to tie Yvette with?), then finally drops it.
4. Why does John finally give in to Patrick's idea that Yvette is behind this? Why do Patrick and John think they need to subdue Yvette?
5. **Do you think someone needed to take matters into their own hands? What should that person have done?**

Questions for Episode Five:

1. What compels John to take over the interrogation? Why does Patrick try to stop him?
2. Why does Patrick keep kicking John? Why does Yvette tell him to kick him in the head?
3. Why doesn't Patrick fully untie Yvette? Why does he tie up John as well?
4. Why does Patrick put a sock in Yvette's mouth? Why does he slap her and almost punch her? Why doesn't he punch her?
5. **What does Yvette mean when she says "the darkness is inside"? Do you agree?**
6. **Was their experience in the room real? Is there anything they do or don't do that determines the outcome?**
7. Do you have any more ideas about who has trapped them and why? Do you think anyone was watching?

**Questions for Further Discussion:**

1. What images and sounds struck you the most? Why?
2. Which character did you identify with most? Why? Did you change your allegiance? If so, why? Did you find yourself trying to figure out which party they each belonged to? If so, why? Which one of the characters do you think would make the best President? Why? What makes a good leader? What leadership qualities does each character have?
3. Who, if anyone, put them in the room? Is anyone watching them?
4. How do you think the ear might be significant?
5. How is the bible used in the film? What does it mean to the characters, especially Yvette and Patrick?

6. Is it possible or even desirable for people of different political or religious beliefs to work together, or does that lead to ineffective compromise? What are the goals and rules of dialogue?
7. Why do they resort to torture? Do you believe in torture? Regardless of your beliefs, can you imagine any situations in which you would resort to torture?
8. What are some of the possible meanings for the title, *Inside Darkness*?
9. Why do you believe what you believe, religiously, politically, etc.? Why do people you disagree with believe what they believe? Which of your beliefs do you need to reconsider? Is there a dark side to your set of beliefs? How can you stay “in the light”?

Questions for the Alternate Ending:

1. Do you think they end up back at the debate or remain trapped?
2. Why do you think the filmmaker shows them back in the room?
3. Patrick’s quote is from the Bible, the Book of Job, 33:14-17: “For God speaks...but we do not hear it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, he opens our ears, and as a warning, terrifies us, that he may turn us from our purpose and hide pride from us.” Which parts of this quote do you think are true? Which parts untrue? How does God get your attention?
4. Which ending do you prefer? Why? How would you end the film?

Questions for Deleted Scenes:

“Baseball and Hot Dogs”:

What things do they find they have in common?

Why do you think Yvette never had children? How do you think she feels about this?

“Comic Relief”:

1. Why do you think the filmmaker initially created this scene?
2. How does this change your view of Patrick?

“White & Black”:

1. What do you know about the goals of white supremacist groups in the United States?
2. What do you know about their use of the armed services for recruiting and training?

Questions for “Inside *Inside Darkness*: Conversations on the Set”

Part One: Why are you making *Inside Darkness*?

1. Why did you decide to watch *Inside Darkness*?
2. How would you describe the story of the film to others?
3. Do you recommend other people watch it? Who? Why?

Part Two: Which character do you identify with?

1. Which character do you most identify with? Why?
2. Did you change your allegiance? If so, why?

3. Did you find yourself trying to figure out which party they each belonged to? If so, why?
4. Which actor do you most identify with? Why?

Part Three: Who would you vote for?

1. Which of the characters would you vote for? Why?
2. When you vote for local, state, or national candidates, what do you base your decision on?
3. What makes a good leader? Which leadership qualities of the three characters would you like to combine into one leader?

Part Four: How do they use God?

1. How do you think the characters use God and religion?
2. Do you use God and religion in relationship to politics? If so, how?
3. What do you think the relationship between religion and politics should be? Do you think this view is supported by the Constitution?

Part Five: Who would you let out?

1. Who would you let out of the room? Why?
2. Why do you think they're in the room?
3. Would you let yourself out? Why or why not?

Part Six: Has *Inside Darkness* changed you?

1. Has *Inside Darkness* changed you? If so, how?
2. Karen (“Yvette”) talks about how we can keep ourselves in an “echo chamber,” listening only to what supports our views. Do you keep yourself in an “echo chamber”?
3. Specifically, what do you think your political “enemies” have to offer you?

To further discuss *Inside Darkness*, join Mud Puddle Films’ discussion forum or sign up to host or attend a house screening by visiting [www.INSIDEdarkness.com](http://www.INSIDEdarkness.com).

If you have any suggestions for revision to this discussion guide, please email the filmmaker at [dominic@mudpuddlefilms.com](mailto:dominic@mudpuddlefilms.com).

The nonpartisan National Issues Forum ([www.nifi.org](http://www.nifi.org)) offers resources for discussion of specific political issues.