

## Foreign Language Film Festival 2010-2011

### *Lions for Lambs*

**About the movie** (subtitled version)

DIRECTOR	Robert Redford
YEAR / COUNTRY	2007/USA
GENRE	Drama/War
ACTORS	Meryl Streep, Robert Redford, Tom Cruise



#### PLOT

Three stories intertwine. Story one: a well-known middle-aged journalist is called to the office of a very popular young Republican senator during the last year of the Bush administration when US failure in the war in Afghanistan is evident and the president is at his lowest point in the polls. The senator is interested in getting the journalist involved in supporting his new more tactical military approach in Afghanistan. Story two: the new tactical military approach is simultaneously being launched and we follow a helicopter with special troops as they go on a mission in the Afghan mountains. Here we focus on two troops on board who are particularly talented individuals. They went to university together and come from poor families. Both friends have enlisted to fight instead of going to graduate school, being good students they were assured of getting into good grad schools. Story three: a professor at a university in California has made an appointment with one his best students. The boy, upper-middle-class, hasn't been coming to class for a while. The professor is nearing retirement and wants to, in some way, influence and direct the lives of his gifted students. The two troops on the mission in Afghanistan were also his students. The professor wants his student to do something of importance. The student understands a lot of what is going on politically and realizes that the country is not in good shape; he argues that he finds himself in the position to have a good comfortable life and that there is little hope of 'trying to do something of importance in life' because the system doesn't work anymore. Story one ends in the journalist questioning her values and in her frustration with the system. Story two ends in the two troops coming to the end of their mission. Story three ends in the student being profoundly shocked by the meeting with his professor and wondering what life is all about.

#### LANGUAGE

In story one the jargon of politics, journalism, and advertising is used. The language remains on a professional level. In story two we follow military orders but also follow the conversations of the two soldiers talking normally about their lives, and doing funny soldier things. In story three, we are in an academic environment where the vocabulary of grades, credits and majors dominate the first part of the story, but as the conversation moves to talk about life's choices more slang is used.

#### GRAMMAR

Very often grammatical structures behave differently from language to language. Take as example the verbs 'to suggest' and to 'recommend'.

*The professor suggests joining the army.*

*The professor recommends getting politically involved in the war.*

or

*The professor suggests that the boy join the army.*

*The professor recommends that the boy get politically involved in the war.*

In the second example of the verbs they are followed by a secondary clause with a subjunctive verb (like 'sia' or 'abbia'). We can see this because the third person (boy) is not followed by a verb in the third person present tense, i.e. a verb that takes an 's'. Instead of 'joins' or 'gets' the subjunctive, which is the same for all persons, is used.

## VOCABULARY

Trick questions: questions that are made so you will probably get them wrong	Tipping point: the point when something begins to change showing consequent decline or rise
Peabody award: award given every year for good journalism	A windsuck: an instrument which inflates with the wind and therefore shows which direction the wind is blowing
The press: magazines, newspapers ( <i>la stampa</i> )	Bald eagle: the white headed eagle that is the symbol of the USA. Bald: with no hair ( <i>calvo</i> )
To widdle down: to gradually reduce a thing or argument in order to arrive at its core or understand the basic idea	On the flip side: on the other side of a coin/ on the other hand
The snow thaws: the snow melts	A draft: rough version ( <i>bozza</i> )
To jockey to do something: to try to get or do something	Step up when you need it or sit back: have the courage to do something which is better for you or resign yourself to a worse position in life
To crawl: to move along the ground on your hands and knees ( <i>camminare a quattro zampe</i> )	To stumble: walking tripping over things ( <i>inciampare</i> )/ not to reach one's aims because of many obstacles
Fear mode: when fear becomes the dominant thing you show and feel	To have stomach: to be courageous
Airan: the name of the black soldier. It is funny because it sounds the same as Aryan, which means someone of white race.	Shrewd: acute, astute ( <i>furbo</i> )
To go for the jugger: in the case of a dog, to try to cut or bite the biggest vein in one's neck; to try to destroy someone physically or mentally	To bank on something: to assume and trust that something is true and good for you
To swallow: gulp down ( <i>inghiottire</i> )	To rant about: to complain about
Awesome: fantastic	A pot hole: a big hole in the road
Turd: shit	Tinsey: miniscule
Doughboy: a simple infantry soldier who is likely to be killed first	If we had bothered to connect the dots: if we had really looked at the evidence and therefore understood the real idea behind something
Pentagonese for bait: pentagon language for 'esca'	To bear with someone: to follow someone while they talk, giving them time to explain themselves.
Righteousness: the quality of being right	To be fickle: to be very indecisive and unsure
Rugged third world: a world that is very difficult, demands strength and courage	Encore: 'bis'
Adrenaline types: one of those people who is always running on adrenaline	Fearlessly willing yourself to the next step: pushing yourself to the next step without fear
Free needles for addicts: syringes that are given to drugs addicts for nothing	To ambush: to attack someone after hiding and waiting for them ( <i>fare un'imboscata</i> )
To kick a hornet's nest: literally to kick a nest where wasps ( <i>vespe</i> ) live/ figuratively to intensify a problem considerably	Utterly capable: absolutely capable