

Scene - Battle at Do Long Bridge

Koba: The Battle at Do long Bridge is one of the most visually impactful scenes because of the symbolism reflecting the lighting, and how the people react to this hellish environment. It's probably the most confusing yet informative scene featured in the film, representing a battle against yourself and civilization. As the film progresses, each scene illustrates a further level of regression from stable civilization than the last, with this scene being a significant step in that process.

Guy: Here, flames can be seen burning on the surface of the water. Fire is featured heavily throughout the scene and is evocative of a hellscape. This clearly symbolizes not only war as a sort of hell, but also shows how humans on the brink of civilization have a tendency toward destruction and chaos. This is supported by the cries of soldiers in the water, who ask for salvation as though they were souls damned in hell. This is an extreme contrast from the beginning of the movie, where the commanding officers took joy in killing civilians. The soldiers here are seemingly repenting for the sins of their superiors.

Koba: When Willard and Lance exit the patrol boat to find the commanding officer, they pass by a row of lights that have been strung up over the river which give the appearance of a carnival or circus. At the same time, distorted organ music begins playing. This is a clear reference to an earlier quote in Willard's narration, which states that "The war was being run by a bunch of four-star clowns who were gonna end up giving the whole circus away." This reinforces the message that war is just a meaningless spectacle without a beginning or end.

Guy: Another important aspect of this scene is the use of lighting effects as a symbolic device. As Willard and Lance descend into the trench, backlighting gives the characters a thin halo around their shaded silhouettes. This effect gives the viewer a perspective on how war turns soldiers into empty people — shells of what they once were. As film critic Roger Elbert stated, “[This] repeated the words of T.S. Eliot's despairing poem *The Hollow Men*.”

Koba: In addition to this, a constant fluctuation of lighting diegetically caused by searchlights creates a sort of dream-like atmosphere. It could possibly serve to represent confusion with one's own identity and opinions in the context of war.

Guy: Further on in the scene, the fading becomes more and more pronounced. When combined with shot-reverse-shots, this serves to isolate the characters as they interact with one another, adding to the previous symbolism. The extreme contrast in lighting also symbolizes how Willard feels as though he is losing himself in the war, along with many others.

Koba: When the man with the grenade launcher is called into the scene, he is extremely disconnected from reality, yet knows what his job is. I think the fact that the soldiers in this battle don't really know why or who they are fighting or even who's really in charge adds to the idea that war makes you forget who you are, it makes you insane. At the end of the war, most of these people will probably be left forgotten. I think that adds to the thought that war corrupts the person you want to be in a way it turns you into something the complete opposite. Each battle in *Apocalypse Now* gets more and more confusing as the movie progresses into a state of insanity.

Especially in the Do Long Bridge scene, we see a reflection of how losing your mind really looks partially because we don't even see the enemy or the reason to which they are fighting.

(Not included in cut)

Guy: War is a distortion from life in a way where both ends meet at death but how you get there is completely up to you to an extent. War is a reflection of the worst possible things in our world combined to get one side a winning hand but in the end, a world where one person wins and everyone loses isn't something to be a part of.