

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
Rachel Linn Shields, Ph.D.

## ***Mad Max 2* (1981)**

George Miller

### OVERVIEW

**Director** George Miller was born in 1945 in Chinchilla, Queensland, Australia. From an early age, Miller was interested in both film and medicine: he practiced for several years as a medical doctor while simultaneously making short films with producer Byron Kennedy. Miller and Kennedy achieved huge international success with *Mad Max*, Miller's feature film debut. Kennedy Miller Productions went on to produce the *Mad Max* sequels and films by other Australian directors such as John Duigan and Phillip Noyce. Miller then directed high-profile and internationally acclaimed films including *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987), *Lorenzo's Oil* (1992), *Babe: Pig in the City* (1998), and *Happy Feet* (2006), for which he won an Oscar. Miller returned to *Mad Max* in 2015 with *Mad Max: Fury Road*, which earned widespread praise and prompted the writing of two additional sequels.

**Film** *Mad Max 2* (released in the United States as *The Road Warrior*), like the other films in Miller's *Mad Max* franchise, takes place in a post-apocalyptic world in which groups of survivors must fight each other to protect their dwindling resources. The circumstances in *MM2* are much more extreme than those of the first film—society has collapsed completely into lawlessness and the environment is now a vast wasteland. Max wanders this wasteland by himself while other survivors have, for the most part, established small communities. These communities regularly clash violently with each other. One such group, which has created a fortification around an oil well, asks for Max's help to escape with their fuel reserves to a better place. After the loss of his wife and child, dramatized in the first film, Max has shut himself off from other human beings and is hesitant to get involved. This second film in the series takes its story (a lone warrior arrives in town and the locals ask him for protection) even more directly from American Westerns and Japanese Samurai films than Miller's first installment in the series. The setting, as well, in a dusty desert, and the chase sequences, are reminiscent of daring train robberies and gunfighters or swordfighters on horseback from those genres of film.

**Background** *Mad Max 2* has more in common with the later films, including the most recent two installments (which feature the character Furiosa), than the first film in the series. That being said, *MM2* continues to utilize many elements from *Mad Max*, including violent road races, warring subcultures, and a reluctant central hero (again played by Mel Gibson). Additionally, *MM2* establishes new franchise tropes that continue in the following films, such as a plot structure based on the story of a disaffected loner (Max or Furiosa) who experiences a change of heart and then decides to help others at great personal risk. *MM2* is also notable for setting the visual aesthetic of the later films, from the flamboyant costumes to sandy desert wastelands. Miller has stated that he was not able to fully realize his vision in the first film and saw the second film in the series as an opportunity that would allow him to better accomplish what he had set out to do in the first. *MM2* is set farther into the future than *MM* and the second film's production design and costumes are more imaginative than the original film, developed after extensive research on a variety of world cultures (which was also intended to increase the international audience). Additionally, the film is often described as hyper-masculine, but it also has obviously queer elements, including two men who share the same motorcycle and are chained to each other (until one of them dies, leaving the other to search for vengeance). Thus, it is not surprising that films such as *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, directed by Stephan Elliott (1994)—about three LGBTQ characters on a road trip in the Outback—reveal the influence of Miller's *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* in their own production designs.

### CHARACTERS

*Max Rockatansky* – a lone man wandering the post-apocalyptic wasteland searching for fuel

*The Gyro Captain* – a man who owns a makeshift flying machine

*Pappagallo* – the leader of a group of people within a fortification that protects their fuel supply  
*The Feral Kid* – a rugged child with a boomerang who lives with the people within the fuel fort  
*The Humungus* – the masked leader of the marauders  
*The Toadie* – the righthand man of the Humungus, who sometimes speaks for his leader  
*Wez* – a marauder with a red mohawk  
*Golden Youth* – Wez's companion

## SYNOPSIS

The decline of civilization of the first *Mad Max* film has intensified significantly in the second. There are no longer any recognizable authorities other than the leaders of the small bands of survivors of the apocalypse. Max is alone, having lost his wife and child (his wife was severely injured in the first film and does not appear in the second film—she seems to have died in the intervening time). Max no longer has his police officer companions either, and the introductory sequence of the film shows images of mass destruction, implying that everything and everyone else he knew and loved is gone.

Max and the other survivors attempt to defend themselves from each other and find the essential resources that they need in a desert that contains little to support human life. A roving band of armed marauders is trying to take a fuel supply from a small, fortified village. The marauders are nearly all adult men while the people within the fortification are a more gender-balanced group and there are children amongst them. One of these children, the Feral Kid, is the narrator of the film, who is remembering events of his childhood from an adult perspective.

Max is initially only willing to help the residents of the fort in exchange for fuel of his own. However, he starts to become attached to the Feral Kid and others in the group, and when his vehicle is destroyed and his dog killed by the marauders, he decides to help them without any kind of payment or exchange. In the final action sequence of the film, Max draws away the marauders while the villagers escape with their fuel and their lives. Narrator states that the people really do escape and find a better place to live. The Feral Kid is now an old man who has lived out his life and become a leader for the group.

## THEMES

### SOCIETY

**Myth** Max was once a police officer and family man. In *MM2*, as well as the following films, he is a loner, unattached, who appears only briefly to solve intractable problems and save innocent people before disappearing again into the desert, never to be seen again. The framing of this film, by a narrator who was a child when he met Max but is now an old man, contributes to the mythic tone. According to the elderly narrator, Max simply appeared out of nowhere, saved the child's community, and then disappeared—more like a demigod or a character from a tall tale than a regular human being.

*Illustrative moment:* At the end of the film, the narrator reveals himself to be the Feral Kid and explains that while he and his people found a better place to live (and he eventually became their leader), Max never reappeared. The film ends with the image of Max alone on the road, like some kind of supernatural hero doomed to roam forever helping those in need—never to find safety or community for himself.

**Subcultures** In some ways, the apocalyptic world of this film has no mass culture left, only warring subcultures. One group is more representative of the lost civilization, the other of those who seek to continue to destroy it. The “civilized” group contains families and, on a basic level, has the variety of people and skills necessary to rebuild society. This group's clothing reveals handmade craftsmanship, including the use of techniques that are traditionally associated with women (e.g., knitted accessories) and the colors are lighter, often white or tan. The other group is mostly bent on anarchy and getting their individual needs met. Their clothes are creative as well, but often appear to be assembled out of preexisting parts rather than made from scratch. Their attire emphasizes aggressive details, like metal spikes and chains, and is predominantly darker in color.

*Illustrative moment:* The Warrior Woman who lives inside the fort represents the subculture that wants to rebuild society. Though she is a strong fighter and fierce human being, like Wez and other marauders, her loyalty remains with her more civilized comrades. For example, though she is dressed in gear from contact sports (including a breastplate and protective pads that float above her shoulders), her entire outfit is white or off-white, like the rest of the people in her subculture, and her shirt is made of knitted fabric—it almost looks like chainmail but is really just soft-looking yarn. Her attire represents her group's fierceness when it comes to protecting the community from the marauders combined with their softer side (for example, they care for children and older people). She is handy with crossbows and knives, but she only uses them when she needs to and only against people who threaten her community.

**Technology** *Mad Max 2* features a highly creative range of clothing and vehicles made from recycled and reconstructed materials from the civilization that has been lost. Most of the vehicles look like Frankenstein creatures made from harvested parts. Although society seems to have lost most means of production, the remaining human beings are extremely inventive and skilled with their hands and continue to create new technology even with the minimal tools and supplies that they have.

*Illustrative moment:* Before Max sets out in the tanker, the people from the fort do many modifications to it to make it more defensible. They add a massive shovel-like front to the truck, which make it easier to ram marauders off the road, as well as two spiked guard towers on top of the tank, which are manned by the Warrior Woman and the Mechanic during the ensuing chase scene.

## POLITICS

**Conflict** The two subcultures of *Mad Max 2* are in constant conflict. The root of the conflict between them is that one group is looking to rebuild society while the other simply wants to continue to tear it down. The group within the fort is looking for a home where they can be safe and make a new life. They value women and children, feel a sense of responsibility towards each other, and only use violence when they need to. The marauders, on the other hand, revel in destruction. They seem to spend their days stealing and destroying everything they encounter and have little respect for anyone's life, including each other's.

*Illustrative moment:* During the final chase sequence of the film, Pappagallo suddenly appears out of the desert and drives alongside the tanker trying to rescue the Feral Kid. It is a scene of intense violence and suspense that demonstrates why the conflict between the groups persists: the members of Humungus's subculture focus on their own selfish needs while Pappagallo's group prioritizes the survival of the community. Pappagallo could have simply abandoned the people on the tanker and driven away, but instead he comes back to try to save a child. This act of altruism causes Pappagallo's death—however, his manner of dying shows how important it is to him that he preserve the values of his community and refuse to allow the constant conflict to destroy his community.

**Violence** In *Mad Max 2*, it seems that many human beings have learned almost nothing from the catastrophic destruction of their world. They continue destroy everything they can get their hands on, including each other. The main difference between the two communities is that the marauders seem, for the most part, indifferent to the loss of members of their own group (and very quick to use violence against their own community members), while the people inside the fort seek to protect each other and show a willingness to risk themselves for the benefit of the community. However, neither side is immune to using violent means to get what they need—this seems to be unavoidable in the new world order of *MM2*.

*Illustrative moment:* The Feral Kid uses his boomerang as a weapon against the marauders during what is supposed to be a peaceful negotiation, killing the Golden Youth and cutting off some of the Toadie's fingers. It seems unlikely that this act of violence influences the inevitable outcome—the marauders probably would not have spared the people in the fort no matter what they promised and no matter how peaceably the negotiation was completed. In other words, the Kid is probably right to distrust them and try to defend his community. The scene demonstrates how even the most innocent members of this post-apocalyptic society are capable of deadly violence. They need to be if they want to survive.

**Loyalty** *Mad Max 2* depicts Max's life on his own after the loss of his family. Nearly everyone else in the movie is part of a community, with the exception of the Gyro Captain, who is quick to try to join up with others (including Max) when the opportunity arises. Although in many ways Max's solitary existence and stoicism are glorified in the film, it is also clear that there are many benefits to having loyal companions. Even Max he has a dog and his dog often saves his life or helps him in other ways. For example, when his car is run off the road and Max is injured, his dog protects him long enough for him to escape the marauders who want to finish him off.

*Illustrative moment:* When the Gyro Captain tries to get one of the women in the fort to run away with him, she refuses. She clearly likes him and they are shown together at the end of the film, nonetheless, she is not willing to leave her larger community behind right when they need her the most. She tells him that they are all the family she has. Her loyalty pays off because her community does find a better place at the end of the film and she is still with them take part in their success.

**Loss** Max is fueled by the nightmarish loss of his family, but he is not the only person in this society who has lost someone, and, in part, the film is about differing responses to grief, particularly how it brings some people together and pushes others apart. The people within the fort community are brought closer together by their losses. Ultimately—after some disagreements about what to do—they choose to protect each other and refuse to abandon their found-family even when their future looks bleak as the marauders repeatedly attack and threaten them. During an argument, their leader tells Max that he is not the only person who has suffered.

*Illustrative moment:* When Wez's companion on his motorcycle, the Golden Youth is killed by the Feral Kid's boomerang, Wez screams in rage and pain, his face contorting. He stands over the body and insists that his companions attack the fort. They refuse and restrain him—they decide to chain him up release him only when they are ready to attack. In some ways, the death of the Golden Youth is similar to the death of Max's wife in the first film. Max's response was similar, he showed his grief very intensely and vowed revenge. Max's loss has since led him to withdraw from society and avoid attachments to other human beings. Wez becomes even more murderous than Max as well as careless about his own life.

## ETHICS

**Selflessness** Max initially resists helping people or demands something in exchange for his help. Nonetheless, it is clear early on that he cannot quite resist stepping in when someone seems like they are in danger, even if there is no benefit to him personally. He continually tries to fight against his own selflessness before eventually giving into his better nature and putting himself at great risk to help others.

*Illustrative moment:* As Max and the gyro captain watch the community with fuel from afar, intending to get some for themselves, Max sees a couple being attacked by the punk marauders. Max sneaks down and starts providing medical care to the man, who is still alive, as best he can. The man offers Max fuel if Max will return him to his community. In going to the site of the accident, Max is probably motivated by his own interest in recovering fuel (he has done this once already in the film). However, he cannot help himself from attempting to save the man even before the man offers him something in return.

## FLAWS

**Greed** In the world of *Mad Max 2*, there are those who take only what they need to survive and those who want to take as much as they can regardless of their actual need. The people in the fort share their supplies with each other and do not have possessions and resources beyond what they need. The marauders seem to want to steal the fuel so that they can burn it up road racing and stealing more from other they encounter. The greedier members of this society also delight in destruction. They often wreck what they take, even if this means that they can no longer have it themselves.

*Illustrative moment:* When the marauders attack the man and woman who leave the fort as Max watches from afar, they rape the woman and kill her. They do not need to kill her—she seems to pose no particular

threat to them at that moment. In fact, it seems wasteful for them to do so. Now that she is dead, they will no longer be able to take anything else from her and, if they simply kill all the women, their society will have no future. The greed these men have leads them to use up everything around them. It is a continuation of the human greed that turned the world into a wasteland in the first place.

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**Max Rockatansky** is a loner who wanders the post-apocalyptic wastelands with only a dog as his companion. He is skilled at many things, from fixing his vehicle to emergency first aid to inventing weapons, fighting off marauders, and surviving car crashes. He acts like he doesn't care about other people but always ends up coming to their rescue no matter how difficult the situation is.

*Disillusioned* Max struggles to become attached to other human beings or feel hopeful about the future because of the loss of his family. When others express hope or an interest in improving their situation, Max often acts as if they are deluding themselves—though, in the end, he always ends up helping them and trying to improve their circumstances for them.

*Persistent* In spite of his grief and lack of hope, Max keeps on living. He cannot seem to really, truly give up even though he acts like he has nothing left to live for. He repeatedly survives in physically demanding situations as well, even when he has been gravely injured. When, for example, his car overturns and his dog is killed, he returns to the fort severely injured and offers to drive the tanker and fight the marauders. He survives that, too.

*Altruistic* Max tries to resist the urge to help others. He says that all he wants is some fuel so he can be on his way but he gets distracted from this purpose whenever someone is injured or needs his protection. Although he denies that he cares, Max always comes through eventually.

**The Gyro Captain**, like Max, is alone at the beginning of the film. Unlike Max, he is clearly in search of a community and quickly tries to join up with other humans he encounters, acting friendly towards them even when they seem dangerous. He is an inventive individual who often shows creative thinking when his friends need his help.

*Friendly* In spite of the fact that the Gyro Captain guards his flying vehicle with a deadly poisonous snake, he is very social and always looking for an opportunity to find a comrade. He immediately tries to make friends with Max even though Max acts unfriendly and chains him up, leaving him when he goes to look for fuel and then making him carry the fuel that he has found by himself. When the Gyro Captain meets the people in the fort, he immediately falls for one of the women and tries to get her to run away with him. He is really too friendly for the post-apocalyptic society that he inhabits.

*Inventive* The Gyro Captain is the only character with a flying vehicle, making him stand out for his special set of skills and his creative thinking about how to get around post-apocalypse. His use of a snake to guard his vehicle is also unique. When Max is trying to fight off the marauders, the Captain uses his gyrocopter to make surprise attacks from their air, including tossing the snake, as well as homemade firebombs, at them.

**Wez** is a marauder with a distinctive red mohawk and a very expressive face that clearly reveals his passionate emotions, including intense grief and anger. He shares his motorcycle with the Golden Youth, whose death sets Wez on a path of vengeance against the community within the fort, bringing out his fiercest fighting skills as he tries to destroy those who killed his companion.

*Passionate* Wez's grief when the Golden Youth dies is second only to Max's own when his family is attacked in the first film. Wez screams and grimaces and threatens violence. This is a man who is not afraid to show his feelings.

*Fierce* Wez is an intimidatingly large man with a punk sense of style, including his leather outfit and tall red mohawk. He is not afraid to enter the fort and fight even when he is outnumbered. He fearlessly

attacks the tanker at the end of the film, throwing himself at the vehicle time and time again to try to thwart Max's plan.

**The Feral Kid** lives with the people at the fort but he seems to mostly operate independently. He snarls and does not speak words and seems to dress and care for himself. Sometimes, he still acts very childlike—he is delighted by the music box that Max gives him. At the end of the film, the narrator reveals that he was once the Feral Kid.

**Tough** The Feral Kid shows his toughness at many points in the film, but most impressively in the final sequence, when he helps Max fight off marauders during the chase involving the tanker. He attacks grown men and crawls down the hood of the racing truck to retrieve shell casings for Max. He is a brave kid.

**Independent** The Feral Kid is part of the community at the fort, but he comes and goes as he pleases and seems to be mostly fending for himself. His clothing is different than everyone else's (he looks a bit like a cave man) and it is possible that he made it himself. When he attacks the marauders with his boomerang, he seems to be acting alone without the approval of his community.

## SCENES

**History: "A time of chaos"** Voiceover of an older man saying that he remembers "a time of chaos" as the viewer sees a man standing on the middle of the road on the yellow line with red sky above and smoke floating around him. The narrator explains that this man is the "road warrior" called "Max." The narration continues during a black and white montage of images of fuel production, explosions, then war, rioting, and so on. After this (mostly) archival footage, scenes from the first Mad Max film play to recap the story so far.



**Mad Max's first confrontation with the marauder gang** Return to color and the present. A scene in which cars, four-wheelers, motorcycles, and other vehicles are racing on a road in the desert, dodging burning car crashes and each other. Max drives a car and has a dog as passenger. He's running out of gas. Two men riding on one motorcycle threaten Max, trying to attack his car and yelling. They drive off after one of them is injured. Max examines a crashed truck in search of fuel, finding bodies and the music-making gears of a music box. The sun begins to go down.



**The gyrocopter** Cut to daylight. Max sees a homemade-looking flying contraption parked by the side of the road and stops to investigate. The gyrocopter is guarded by a snake. When Max grabs the snake, a man climbs out of the sand and holds Max at arrowpoint. The man with the gyrocopter wants to steal fuel from Max. Max says that his tanks are boobytrapped. Will the help of his dog, Max overpowers the man, who then argues that they should try to steal a tanker of gasoline together.



**Reconnaissance mission** Max's dog holds the gyrocopter pilot at gunpoint by tugging on a bone attached to the trigger while they drive off to find the fuel. Together, Max and the pilot size up the fortifications around the oil well. They watch the people inside continually fighting back marauders who are attempting to get inside. Max leaves the pilot manacled to a log while he continues to watch the oil well and tanker.



**Dog food dinner** Max dines on a can of dog food, which he shares with his dog but not the other man. Later on, the men hear an alarm and see many vehicles driving around the oil well in the dark, including ones with flashing lights and sirens that appear to be chasing the marauders away from the fortification.



**Marauder attack** The next day, there appears to be more fighting and chasing around the facility and Max and the gyro captain witness an attack on a vehicle that was driving away from the fortification, seemingly trying to outrun the marauders. Two people are pulled from the car and Max and the pilot see the woman being raped by marauders while the man with her lies injured by their vehicle, unable to help. The marauders shoot the woman to death with arrows. The pilot seems distressed to witness this scene.



**Fuel in exchange for life** Meanwhile, Max drives his car down the hill to the scene of the attack. Max gets out of his car and knocks out one of the marauders. Max tells the injured man, "I'm just here for the gasoline." The man says Max can have as much gasoline as he wants as long as he takes him back to the facility. Max removes an arrow from the man's arm.

**Max enters the fort** Max takes the man back to the gas facility. The feral child watches them arrive and follows them inside. Max gives the man back to his people, who are dressed in white outfits with knitted accessories, in contrast to the mostly black, studded gear of the marauders. Max tries to negotiate with the people for gas; however, the man he rescued, who promised him gas, is dead. The leader of the group tells Max that there is no deal since the man he made the deal with has died.



**Marauders attack the fort** A warrior woman with a knife to Max's neck leads Max back outside the gate to his car. Max's dog comes to defend him and Max starts to fight, but then the marauders appear and everyone quickly sounds the alarm, closes the gate, and prepares for battle. They handcuff Max to the fence and get ready to defend their fort from the marauders, who approach with some of the people from the fort, some dead and some still alive, attached to fronts of their vehicles. The Toadie shouts to the people inside the fort, introducing Lord Humungus, the leaders of the marauders, who then stands to address the people of the fort. He is wearing a round metal mask with a pattern of squares on it and two holes for his eyes. He threatens the people of the fort verbally while his minions beat up the captives attached to their vehicles.



**Boomerang attack** The feral child attacks the marauders with a shiny silver boomerang. The child's boomerang kills one invader (the blonde who was riding along with the man with the red mohawk earlier in the film) and chops off the fingers of another who tries to catch it. The man with the red mohawk sees that his companion is dead and demands that they attack the fort right away, but the masked leader subdues him and promises safe passage to the people inside if they abandon their fort and fuel to the marauders.



**Stay or go?** The marauders drive away into the wasteland, leaving the people inside the fort to debate whether they want to trust the marauders and abandon their home and tanker or try to stay and continue to defend their fort. Their leader wants them to stay, others want to leave. The feral child shows Max his bloody boomerang and Max plays the music box for him while the child smiles. Max gives the child the music maker.





**Max's plan** A few moments later, Max interrupts an argument to suggest that he return to the crashed truck that he found at the beginning of the film and retrieve it so they can use it to haul their tanker. He tells them that all he needs to do this is as much fuel as he can carry. The people from the fort send Max off into the night to retrieve the truck with the fuel he needs, which he carries over his shoulders. The feral kid helps him mislead the guards at the marauder's camp by howling to mask Max's noise while Max sneaks past in the dark. Max and his dog get away.



**Reunited with the Gyro Captain** Max and his dog catch up with the gyrocopter pilot, who is still changed to a log but has been dragging it behind him since Max left him. They walk together back to the dead forest where the gyro is parked. The pilot's snake has killed someone and Max raids the dead man's pockets for bullets (the pilot realizes with anger that Max's weapon was never loaded). Max and the captain fly away in the gyrocopter. They find the truck, Max gets it running again, and Max tosses the captain the key to his handcuffs and drives away, leaving the other man, who protests that they are partners now.



**Max returns to the fort** Max drives back toward the fort. The marauders attack and Max races his truck down the road while trying to fight them off. Marauders jump onto the truck from their vehicles and the Humungus loads his gun. The pilot helps Max by flying overhead and throwing a snake down on Max's attackers, who then accidentally shoot at each other.



**Inside the fort** Max makes it to the fort while the people within set fire to the cars chasing him and fight off the marauders who got inside before the gate closed. The man with the red mohawk, Wez, makes it inside the fort and starts attacking people. The leader of the fort people, Pappagallo, gets shot with an arrow. Max helps with the fight and the pilot lands inside the fort. Finding himself outnumbered, the Wez escapes to his gang.



**Marauders attack the fort** The people begin repairing the truck that Max brought them as their injured leader tells them to get ready to leave. The warrior woman tells Max that she was wrong to distrust him. Max is given additional bullets by the people of the fort, who want him to drive the truck during their escape. He tells them that he is leaving. As night falls, the marauder gang circles the fort, threatening the people inside. Lord Humungus shouts that "nobody will get out alive."



**Max's mission** The fort people prepare to leave by fixing the truck and gathering their belongings. The gyro captain almost talks one of the women into flying away with him and abandoning the others but she ultimately refuses, telling him that they are her family and she must stay with them. The people try again to convince Max to help them. Their leader tells Max that he doesn't have "a future" and one of the others shows Max a battered vacation brochure for a place 2,000 miles away that they want to escape to.



**Max and Pappagallo argue** When Max refuses to help, Pappagallo accuses him of being merely a drifter, "a scavenger, a maggot." Max punches him in the face and walks away. The leader says, "Do you think you're the only one who's suffered?" The feral child hides himself in Max's car with the music box. Max finds him and makes him leave, throwing his belongings after him. Max begins to drive his car toward the gate. The leader says that he will drive the tanker himself. The pilot also tries to talk Max into staying but Max refuses again.





**Max crashes** Max drives out of the fort, drawing off some of the marauders. Night turns to day as they try to catch up with him. Finally, the Wez knocks Max off the road using a pipe, and his car turns over multiple times. The marauders run to steal Max's gas and finish him off, but he hides from them behind a rock. When one of the marauders discovers Max, Max's dog jumps up to defend him and is killed by an arrow. Then, Max's car blows up, killing some of the men who were attacking him.



**Gyro rescue** The captain sees the smoke from the explosion and decides to rescue Max. Max is dragging himself along the ground, too injured to walk. The pilot picks Max up in his gyro and takes the injured man back inside the fort.



**Max volunteers to help** The people in the fort continue to plan their escape and argue about how best to do it. Max, his leg in a brace and arm in a sling, finally volunteers to drive the tanker, this time without getting anything in return. He tells the leader, "I'm the best chance you've got." The leader gives him more bullets.



**Leaving the fort** Everyone gets into their vehicles, with Max driving the tanker truck and the pilot starting up his gyrocopter. The Humungus and his marauders also prepare. Wez is chained up, with Humungus holding the ends of his chain. Humungus shoots at the tankers as the pilot drops fire on the marauders from above. The gates to the fort are opened and some of the marauders come inside—and then the entire place blows up on them. All the people from the fort drive away in a convoy in one direction while Max continues to draw off the marauders by driving the tanker in a different direction.



**Tanker defense** Some of the people from the fort drive along with him to help defend the tanker. The feral child has snuck aboard the tanker. The Humungus releases Wez so that he can attack the tanker. The marauders use grappling hooks to pull away parts of the tanker as well as kill some of the people from the fort who have ridden along with Max to defend it. Multiple people from both sides are killed by arrows or because their vehicles crash and explode. The warrior woman shoots arrows from the top of the tanker until she, herself, is hit. Her comrade on the top of the tanker, the mechanic, is set on fire. Both fall from the tanker to their deaths under the wheels of the marauders. Max runs many marauders off the road, destroying their vehicles.



**Final battle** Eventually all the defenders of the tanker are killed except for Max and the feral child. Max gets hit in the leg by an arrow from a marauder who has climbed on top of the tanker. Max continues to drive and nearly uses up his bullets taking out his attackers. His remaining shells fall onto the hood of the truck. The feral child helps him by biting and hitting marauders. The leader of the fort people drives up alongside, trying to rescue the child, but he is shot by one of the marauders and his car drives off the road. Meanwhile, the gyrocopter captain firebombs marauders from the sky. His gyro gets hit by arrows and he crashes.



**Death of Wez and Humungus** Max continues to knock his attackers off the road. As more of his tires are destroyed, he turns the tanker around and starts driving back to where he started. The kid tries to retrieve shells from the hood of the truck for Max as Wez climbs up the hood from below. At the same time, the Humungus is rapidly approaching them head-on in his own vehicle. Humungus runs right into the front of the tanker, killing Wez. Humungus's vehicle is slammed off the road by the tanker. The tanker also crashes and lands on its side.



**Marauders give up** The remnants of the marauder gang look out over the scene and then leave. Max crawls out of the overturned tanker carrying the feral child. Sand and dirt pour out of the truck. It never carried fuel and was only being used as a decoy to allow the others to escape. From the expression on Max's face as he watches, it seems like he might not have known this before. The captain drives up in his gyro—he has survived.



**Max sets off alone** The gyro captain and the feral child join the caravan of survivors from the fort and the voiceover informs us that they eventually reach a better, safer place and that the captain becomes the new leader. The narrator reveals that he is the feral child and that he became the group's leader when he got older. He says that none of them ever saw the road warrior again. The last shot is of Max standing in the middle of the road at dawn or dusk. The narrator says, "He lives now, only in my memories."



### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In *Mad Max2*, what are the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to a community? How does belonging both endanger and protect you? Make you vulnerable as well as stronger?
2. What makes a good or ethical person in the post-apocalyptic world of *Mad Max 2*? What are the morals and values of this society? What makes a good leader?
3. What do the costumes and vehicles reveal about the characteristics and cultures of each community within the film? And about Max?
4. Is Max a hero or an anti-hero? Should he be admired and venerated or is he too flawed to be truly heroic? What are his underlying motivations and how can you tell?