

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Breaker Morant (1980)

Bruce Beresford (1940-)

OVERVIEW

Director Bruce Beresford was born and raised in New South Wales, Australia, mostly in a suburb of Sydney. His early films *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972), *Don's Party* (1976), *The Getting of Wisdom* (1977), and *Breaker Morant* (1980) are considered foundational films of the Australian New Wave. Beresford then went to Hollywood, where he directed many films including *Tender Mercies* (1983) and *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), which won four Oscars. He has continued to direct films all over the world, and also several operas. He has been nominated for two Academy Awards and won four Australian Film Institute awards, out of 10 nominations.

Film *Breaker Morant* is based on a play of the same name by Kenneth G. Ross. Like the play, it is about the court-martial of three lieutenants in the British army during the second Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902). Harry Harbord Morant (known as "breaker" for his horse-breaking skills) was born in England but lived for many years in Australia and joined the British army in an Australian company. He and two Australian lieutenants are tried by the British army for war crimes. The film is structured around the court-martial, with several flashback scenes dramatizing witness testimony.

Background Almost immediately after the play "Breaker Morant" appeared in 1978, Bruce Beresford co-wrote the screenplay for the film with Jonathan Hardy and David Stevens. The film was an Australian production, shot in Australia and largely financed by Australian companies. It was very well received, and it won ten Australian Film Institute awards, including Best Film and Best Director for Beresford. It also received some wins and nominations at the Cannes Film Festival and the Academy Awards. Beresford and actor Jack Thompson, who played Major Thomas, were launched to stardom by the film.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Lieutenant Harry Harbord "Breaker" Morant – British army lieutenant, horse-breaker

Lieutenant Peter Handcock – Australian British army lieutenant

Lieutenant George Witton – Australian British army lieutenant

Lord Kitchener – leader of British forces in South Africa

Colonel Hamilton – second-in-command to Lord Kitchener

Major Bolton – prosecuting attorney in the court-martial

Major J. F. Thomas – defending attorney in court-martial

Captain Hunt – friend and future brother-in-law of Breaker Morant

Captain Taylor – intelligence officer attached to Breaker Morant's company

Christiaan Botha – Boer man who works with Breaker Morant's company

SYNOPSIS

During the Boer War in South Africa in 1901, three lieutenants from an Australian branch of the British army—Harry Harbord "Breaker" Morant, Peter Handcock, and George Witton—are in an army prison and told that they are going to be court-martialed for killing several Boer prisoners and a German missionary. Lord Kitchener, the leader of the British forces, assigns Major Bolton to prosecute the case, explaining to him that Germany is angry about these deaths and that the British do not want to give them an excuse to enter the war on the Boer side; the accused men are only "colonials," so the British government is willing to make an example of them. Major J. F. Thomas is assigned to defend the soldiers, who are all from a company called the Bushveldt Carbineers. Major Thomas comes to see the three men

and learn the details of the case; he is given the assignment six weeks later than Major Bolton so has very little time to prepare.

As soon as the court-martial begins, it is clear that the five judges are on the side of the prosecution. Various people testify, mostly soldiers who also served with the Bushveldt Carbineers. In several flashbacks, we see the events for which the three men are being prosecuted. Morant was in charge of the company along with Captain Hunt, who was killed when they got bad intelligence about a Boer farmhouse. In revenge, Morant got the company to pursue the Boers who killed Hunt and to shoot all the Boers they could catch. The German missionary, Reverend Hesse, Morant suspected of providing the bad intelligence. Across the testimony of several witnesses, a central issue arises: apparently Lord Kitchener issued verbal orders for the British to shoot Boer prisoners instead of keeping them imprisoned, as would usually be customary in warfare. If this is the case, then the Bushveldt Carbineers were only carrying out orders. However, the judges refuse to acknowledge the orders, and there is no concrete evidence that they were issued. Ultimately, all three men are convicted and sentenced to death, though Witton's sentence is commuted to penal servitude for life. Morant and Handcock are executed the next morning.

SCENES

Boer War – In South Africa in 1901, a military band plays as a mixed black and white crowd looks on. A Union Jack flies. Inside, three men sit at a table opposite three other men at another table. All are dressed in soldiers' uniforms. One man asks whether the accused men wish to say anything. One of them stands up and introduces himself as Harry Harbord Morant. He gives a brief summary of his professional life leading up to "the events at Fort Edward." Among other things, we learn that he was born in England but lived in Australia for many years before joining the military there.



Poor intelligence – A group of soldiers stands in the twilight looking at a house in the distance. They debate whether their intelligence is correct, but ultimately a line of soldiers advances toward the house. They are ambushed; several are shot. The company retreats. They to a sort of military camp, many of them injured. "Get the Breaker!" someone says, and the man who previously introduced himself as Harry Morant appears. The men explain to him what happened with the ambush. "They must have known we were coming," they conclude.



Court-martial – Back in the present, the three accused soldiers are told that they will have to undergo a military court-martial. Meanwhile, another soldier walks into a fancy house, introducing himself as Major Bolton here to see Lord Kitchener. Lord Kitchener explains to Major Bolton that the German government is angry about the death of the Boers and the German missionary who was with them, and that the British do not want to give the Germans an excuse to enter the war. Particularly given that the Bushveldt Carbineers are "colonials—Australians," they want to make an example of them. They want Major Bolton to prosecute.



Major Thomas – Breaker Morant and the other two accused men, Lt. Peter Handcock and Lt. George Witton, discuss their situation. The youngest one, Witton, says that he joined up because he believes in the British Empire, along with all his family back in Australia. A man comes in and introduces himself as Major J.F. Thomas, their defending officer. It comes out that Major Thomas has never tried a case in court, as he was a solicitor, not a barrister, in pre-military life. It also comes out that Major Thomas was given the preliminary report only the day before, even though the trial starts the day after. He explains that the charges include murder, and that the penalty is death. The men are shocked.



Dinner party – Major Thomas joins a dinner party attended by Major Bolton, several high-ranking English military officers, and two Boer women. They discuss the case. Major Thomas explains that Breaker Morant is a writer, and that he is called 'Breaker' because he is a good horse-breaker.



Court-martial begins – Major Thomas comes to the prison and greets the three men as they leave their cells to walk to the court-martial. He verifies several details with them as they walk. As the court-martial begins, Major Thomas makes a couple of attempts to argue that it cannot proceed. He first asks for an adjournment given that the prosecution has had six weeks to prepare and he has had one day. When this is refused, he argues that the men should be tried in Australia because they are Australian subjects. This too is refused. The charges are read and the men plead not guilty.



First witness – Major Bolton calls to the witness stand Captain Robertson, who used to be in charge of the Bushveldt Carbineers before Breaker Morant and Captain Hunt replaced him. He testifies that the Australians were undisciplined. One example he gives is that Lt. Handcock began a new method of transporting prisoners: putting them in the train cars right in front of the engines in order to deter the Boers from blowing up the trains. In cross-examination, Major Thomas gets him to admit that this tactic worked, and that previously the British dealt with prisoners by shooting them. Captain Robertson's testimony also establishes that the Bushveldt Carbineers were formed in order to adopt unusual tactics because the Boers themselves were fighting in unusual ways. Throughout this witness testimony, the judges show a marked preference for the prosecution.



Visser's killing described – Sgt Major Drummond, a member of Morant's company, next takes the stand. He describes the company's return to the farmhouse under Morant's command after Morant sees the mutilation of Captain Hunt's body. These events are dramatized as he speaks. The Boers have left the farmhouse; the British/Australian company pursues them until they find them where they have set up camp. They shoot at them; many escape. They find one Boer, named Visser, who is wearing Captain Hunt's khaki uniform. Morant is extremely angry, saying that he must have killed Captain Hunt because he is wearing his uniform, even though the Boer man denies it. Morant calls for an eight-man firing squad. Several of the soldiers (including Lt. Witton) are uncomfortable with this development, not wanting to execute him summarily. Botha, the Boer interpreter, says he wants to be part of the firing squad. Morant's orders are carried out. Back in the courtroom, Sgt. Drummond testifies that he did not think the treatment of Visser was fair. In cross-examination, Major Thomas establishes that Lord Kitchener had given orders for Boers in khaki to be shot.



Botha's lie – Botha takes the stand. He testifies that no one wanted to go on the firing party. Major Thomas tries to get him to tell the truth in cross-examination but he will not.



Morant testifies – Morant takes the stand. He explains that he was engaged to Captain Hunt's sister in England. Bolton forces him to admit that he did not see Captain Hunt's death so does not know for sure that Visser was involved. But Morant insists angrily that it is customary during war to shoot as many of the enemy as possible.



Night at the prison – That night, Major Thomas visits the three men and warns them not to lose their tempers during the court-martial. They discuss the witnesses for the defense that will appear the following day—a small number, given that most people sympathetic to the accused have been sent to India. At Handcock's urging, Morant reads the poem he has been writing; it is about horseback riding. "I don't want to die," Witton says when he is done.

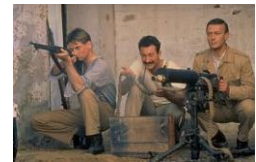
Taylor's testimony – While a military band plays, Botha is shot. Captain Taylor takes the stand, explaining that he was not exactly a member of Morant's company but was with them as an intelligence officer. He is asked whether he knew of any orders to shoot Boer prisoners. He says that there was an "understanding." In a flashback, we see a scene prior to Captain Hunt's death in which Morant comes back to camp with several Boer prisoners, and Hunt explains that they are supposed to shoot prisoners now instead of keeping them. Morant does not want to but goes along with it. Back in the court-martial, Bolton protests that no one can substantiate these verbal orders. The judge asserts that this material is irrelevant, rousing the ire of Major Thomas.



Memories – Trying to sleep at night, all three of the accused men remember their lives before joining the army. Witton was toasted by his father. Handcock stood beside his wife and young child, saying that he is not much of a letter-writer. Morant sang at a formal gathering, smiling at Captain Hunt and at a young woman.



Boer attack – In the wee hours of the morning, a Boer contingent ambushes the camp where the court-martial is taking place. A Boer woman is with a British soldier; she runs away before the Boers arrive. Morant, Handcock, and Witton are released from their cells and given guns so that they can fight. The attacking Boers include women. Eventually the Boers who have not been killed ride off.



Boer prisoners killed – Major Thomas argues that the three men should be pardoned because of their fighting, citing the Duke of Wellington. The argument is rejected. In a flashback, we see Morant making the decision to execute all the remaining Boers they took prisoner after the killing of Captain Hunt. He tells Witton to get a firing squad together; Witton goes to Handcock and protests, but Handcock says they should just follow orders. A minister named Reverend Hesse drives by in a small horse-drawn conveyance. Morant sighs. Hesse requests water; Morant asks him not to speak to the prisoners. Hesse ignores this instruction, saying they wanted him to pray with them. Morant chastises him as he rides off. Once he leaves, the firing squad executes the Boer prisoners; one of the Boers makes a run for it and attacks Witton, who shoots him in self-defense.



Lord Kitchener requested – Major Thomas makes a formal request that Lord Kitchener attend the court-martial to clear up the question of whether he ordered issues to shoot prisoners. The judges are shocked, saying he is impertinent to ask such an important man to come.



Bolton approaches Thomas – Major Bolton comes up to Major Thomas sitting at a table at a pub. He tells him that the Australian government itself is eager for a conviction in this case, in order to establish that Australia is a civilized, independent country. He tries to convince Thomas to withdraw the request for Kitchener to appear.



Kitchener's decision – Colonel Hamilton and Lord Kitchener confer about Major Thomas's request. Hamilton says that Thomas is putting up an unexpectedly good defense, and that some of the judges are expressing some sympathy for the Australians. Lord Kitchener insists that he is trying to put an end to this "useless war" and that sacrificing these Australians is the way to show the Boers that they are trying to be fair. Lord Kitchener tells Colonel Hamilton to go to Pietersburg in his place to testify in the court-martial.



Colonel Hamilton testifies – In court, Major Thomas asks Colonel Hamilton to confirm that he had a conversation with Captain Hunt several months earlier, at Lord Kitchener's house, about shooting prisoners. Colonel Hamilton says he does not recall the conversation.



Sentry's testimony – The next person to take the stand is Corporal Sharp, who was the sentry at Morant's camp the day Hesse died. He testifies that he saw Hesse leave the camp that day and that about half an hour later he saw Lieutenant Hancock leave.

Hancock's confession – That night, Major Thomas comes to Lieutenant Hancock's cell to try to get him to tell what really happened when he left Fort Edward. Finally, he agrees, reluctantly. The next morning, Hancock testifies that when he left Fort Edward, he went to visit the Shiels and Vanderberg houses, specifically the women. Major Thomas produces signed depositions from both women corroborating Hancock's statement. Later, in the prison, Hancock confesses to Witton that he did kill the missionary, on the way to visit the ladies. Witton is upset, saying that thus far they have always told the truth in the court-martial.



Closing arguments – Major Thomas makes his closing argument, saying that the defense has never denied the basic facts of the deaths in question. He says that Witton should be acquitted because he is a junior officer who only followed orders and defended himself. He goes on to argue that this is an unorthodox war and that what Hancock and Morant did was in keeping with their superiors' instructions.



Possible acquittal – That night, Hancock, Morant, and Witton drink. Taylor and Thomas come in and say it looks like they will be acquitted. But Captain Taylor pulls Morant aside and says he shouldn't be too certain of this verdict. He offers to help Morant escape, but Morant does not take him up on this offer.



Death sentences – In the morning, the verdicts are revealed: George Witton is found guilty and sentenced to death, but Lord Kitchener commutes the sentence to penal servitude for life. Both Peter Hancock and Breaker Morant are found guilty and sentenced to be shot the following morning.



Major Thomas's efforts – Major Thomas goes to Lord Kitchener's establishment to try to plead for clemency. Colonel Hamilton says that there is nothing he can do, and that Lord Kitchener is away on the veldt for a few days and un-contactable. He adds that there is hope of a peace conference in a couple of months.



Execution – That night, Hancock writes a letter to his wife. He says that she and their son have been the source of his greatest joy. Meanwhile, Morant writes a final poem. At daybreak, Hancock and Morant are taken out to a hillside and shot by a firing squad. At the last minute, Morant says, "Shoot straight, you bastards! Don't make a mess of it!"



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Major J. F. Thomas

An Australian attorney serving in the British army, Major Thomas fights his case with determination and passion. He really cares about the men he is defending. His intelligence is key to his nearly-successful performance.

Determined – Major Thomas pleads his case with determination, despite seeing that the judges are obviously against him. He works hard to establish the facts of the case in a very short time, and after the guilty verdict, he tries to go to Lord Kitchener to get a pardon.

Passionate – Major Thomas is not only doing his duty; he is clearly passionate about defending Morant, Handcock, and Witton. He often raises his voice, and he sometimes refers to the difficulties of soldiering as a predicament he shares with the men he is defending.

Intelligent – As Colonel Hamilton says to Lord Kitchener, Major Thomas puts up a better defense than anyone expected. He is very intelligent, grasping the facts of the case quickly and thinking on his feet to argue many points persuasively despite the judges' bias against him.

Breaker Morant

Lt. Morant was a literary man before joining the army and continues to read and write poetry to the end. He is passionate about the difficulty of what soldiers need to do in war, but he is also worn out by this point in his life.

Passionate – Like Major Thomas, Morant is passionate about defending his actions and those of his fellow soldiers. He speaks in forceful terms and sometimes raises his voice during the court-martial. He is also passionate about those he loves; his care for Captain Hunt leads to the vengeful actions the court-martial is prosecuting.

Literary – Before joining the military, Morant wrote for a paper. Even after joining, he continues to write poetry in his spare time. On more than one occasion, he also quotes poetry by more famous poets, such as Byron.

Weary – Morant is no longer a young man when the court-martial begins, and his weariness seems to increase as it goes on. When he is not having a passionate outburst, he tends to sit somewhat lethargically. By the time Captain Taylor offers to help him escape, saying he could change his identity and see the world, Morant shakes his head, replying, "I've seen it."

Peter Handcock

Lieutenant Peter Handcock is an impetuous man who speaks out of turn and chases women he shouldn't. However, he is also very loyal to Lt. Morant and goes out of his way to help him.

Impetuous – Sharing the passion of Major Thomas and Lt. Morant, Lt. Handcock goes so far as to interrupt the court-martial with several outbursts, directed sometimes at the judges and sometimes at the witnesses. He is reprimanded by the judges and by his attorney.

Loyal – Handcock is very loyal to Morant. In the flashbacks and in the present, he always supports Morant's efforts, even when he does not entirely agree with them. It is he who kills Reverend Hesse, without Morant even needing to order him directly to do so.

Womanizing – Though married, Handcock carries on with other women whenever he can. He is having affairs with at least two Boer women near Fort Edward, and he speaks of having spent Sundays in Australia "chasing tarts." Facing death, he says that the worst part will be "no more girls."

George Witton

George Witton is a young Australian man fighting for the British Empire; he has strong morals and is still a bit naïve when the film begins. Still, his loyalty to his commanding officers proves to be his defining characteristic.

Naïve – Witton is the youngest of the three accused men, and he has a naïveté to match his age. He tells Handcock and Morant that he joined the army because he and his family in Australia believe in the British Empire and want to keep it together. He is also shocked at the idea of killing prisoners.

Moral – On two occasions, Witton tries to protest when Morant issues orders to kill Boer prisoners. There is also no indication that Witton shares Handcock's womanizing tendencies. Finally, he protests any lying in the court-martial.

Loyal – Although he disagrees with Morant's decisions to kill prisoners, Witton remains loyal to Morant. His protests are quiet and subtle, and he ultimately carries out Morant's orders. Once they are on trial, Witton does not at any time blame Morant.

THEMES

POLITICS

Colonialism This is a major theme of the film. The three accused men are Australian subjects (though one of them was born in England) who are fighting for the British army but are deemed expendable when the British high command have a larger agenda. Culturally, *Breaker Morant* has become known as a rallying cry about the unfair treatment of imperial subjects. From the beginning of the film, it is clear that Lord Kitchener has selected these men as scapegoats because they are Australian. Meanwhile, this is not just any war—it is a war over South Africa, another (partial and precarious) outpost of the British Empire. Thus, some imperial subjects are thus sent to South Africa to oppress and kill *other* imperial subjects. In a crowning irony, George Witton, an Australian and thus a native of a country established as a penal colony for Britain—is sentenced to penal servitude. Witton says early in the film that he believes in the British Empire and signed up to fight in order to help keep the empire together. By the end of the film, Breaker Morant is shouting that they have become the scapegoats of empire.

Illustrative moment: Early in the film, Lord Kitchener meets with Major Bolton to explain the case to him and ask him to prosecute it. He tells him that the British are eager to avoid giving Germany a reason to enter the war on the side of the Boers, and that the Germans would ultimately only want the gold and diamonds of South Africa. "They lack our altruism," Major Bolton comments, causing Lord Kitchener to pause in surprise and then reply, "Quite." The viewer of the film is of course expected to be shocked at Bolton's naïveté about the British government's own motives for maintaining an empire.

War The foremost theme in *Breaker Morant* is war. The film explores how war affects people, how it changes people, and how poorly it is often managed by those in power. Almost every frame of the film depicts a war-related setting, be it a battlefield, a camp, Lord Kitchener's headquarters, or the room in which the court-martial is conducted. For the most part, the trial does not debate whether the three lieutenants committed the actions of which they are accused; rather, it debates the extent to which their actions were in keeping with the orders they were given to fight the war. It comes up several times during the trial that the Boer War is an unusual war, in which the enemy is not in uniform and employs guerilla tactics; in flashbacks, we see those in power stating that the British army must respond in kind rather than following their usual rules of war. While the film foregrounds the hypocrisy of those directing the war, it also demonstrates that Breaker Morant *did* do extreme things to the Boers out of grief and anger over their killing of his friend Captain Hunt. His experience in war turns him from a gentle poet hesitant to shoot prisoners to a vengeful commander ordering the killing of a missionary.

Illustrative moment: While arguing his case at the court-martial, Major J. F. Thomas heatedly describes what the accused men and he himself have been ordered to do in fighting this war—actions including burning farmhouses and herding women and children into disease-ridden refugee camps. He bemoans the unfairness of giving soldiers orders to do such things and then reprimanding or even prosecuting them when they do.

Discrimination A major argument of the defense attorney and of the film in general is that the three men put on trial are being discriminated against by the British because they are Australian (or sort of

Australian, in the case of Breaker Morant). For the most part, the argument is not that Morant, Handcock, and Witton did not commit the actions they are accused of; it is that many other men in the British army did the same things (under the orders of the high command, no less), so the Australians are being unfairly singled out. The irony is that they are fighting to control South Africa, which has its own layers of discrimination at play: the British discriminate against the white Dutch Boers, who in their turn discriminate against native black Africans. These layers are subtly hinted at in the film; black people are occasionally visible in a crowd scene or shown in close-up. The court reporter in the court-martial is a silent, well-dressed black man who is shown in close-up just once during the film. Overall, discrimination is portrayed as entrenched, and as larger than any of the individuals involved.

Illustrative moment: When describing the case to Major Bolton, Lord Kitchener explicitly states that because the men in question are “colonials—Australians,” as opposed to Englishmen, he is not so worried about prosecuting them. Major Bolton does not question this statement.

JUSTICE

Justice A large part of the film takes place at the court-martial, and the whole film is connected to the case at hand. The military justice system, then, is under a microscope. A central debate concerns the distinction between the letter of British military law and the lived practice of fighting this particular war. The defendants insist that they carried out the orders to shoot Boer prisoners that were verbally conveyed from Lord Kitchener and Colonel Hamilton to Captain Hunt. Captain Taylor corroborates this assertion. But the judges are easily able to dismiss these statements as “unsubstantiated” because there is no paper trail. Instead, the prosecution quotes the statement in the official British military laws about how to deal with prisoners, and the judges take this to be the rule that the defendants broke. Meanwhile, another question arises: does the fact that so many others committed the same actions relieve the defendants of culpability? The film does not suggest that the killings of the Boers were justified, but rather that it is unfair to prosecute only some people—specifically Australians, deemed less valuable than Englishmen—for carrying them out.

Illustrative moment: After the three accused men help defend the fort against a Boer attack while they are imprisoned there, Major Thomas argues that they should be pardoned. He cites the Duke of Wellington as the originator of this policy. The head judge asks what bearing the Duke of Wellington has on British military law; Major Thomas replies that the Duke of Wellington established a great deal of British military law. But his argument is rejected nevertheless, because ultimately the judge can decide whatever he wants.

Revenge Although the film makes clear that Lord Kitchener did issue verbal orders to shoot Boer prisoners, it is also clear that Breaker Morant’s actions are motivated less by the orders than by revenge. When the orders are first issued and shared by Captain Hunt, Morant is visibly uncomfortable about them and hesitates to follow them. After Captain Hunt is killed and Morant sees the terrible shape his body is in, Morant becomes enraged and changes his tune entirely. He gets his company to pursue the Boers who killed Morant, and he orders as many of them killed as possible. Later, he kills another group of Boer prisoners. Finally, Reverend Hesse comes by Fort Edward, and Morant comments to Handcock that he thinks Hesse must have been the one who gave them the bad intelligence that led to Captain Hunt’s death. He subtly encourages Handcock to pursue and kill Hesse when he leaves Fort Edward. All of this is about revenge, even though it happens to be compatible with Lord Kitchener’s orders.

Illustrative moment: When they pursue the Boers who killed Captain Hunt, someone in the company finds a Boer man wearing Hunt’s khaki uniform. Morant sees this and is furious; he seizes the man by the collar and shouts, asking him if he killed Captain Hunt. The man says he did not, but he insists with a raised voice that he did. Without further ado, Morant orders his men to assemble a firing squad and kill the man.

Violence The film explores not only war in the abstract but also violence in particular. There are many action sequences in the film portraying men (and occasionally Boer women) on horseback or on foot shooting at each other. In addition to traditional battle scenes like this, there are also instances of other types of violence. At one point we see a surprise Boer attack on a British establishment which involves

throwing explosives as well as shooting. Then, of course, there are several scenes in which Boer prisoners are shot. The film does not focus on the visceral reality of this violence but rather on its social consequences and its effects on the people involved. These effects, of course, are corrosive. Men become desensitized to the violence. In addition, violence begets further violence; Morant becomes a much more violent person after seeing the mutilation of his friend Hunt's dead body.

Illustrative moment: The end of the film is a final act of violence: the execution of Handcock and Morant by firing squad. The men sit on chairs on a hillside and a squad of ten men with rifles faces them. The shooting is portrayed in slow motion, as the men's chests become covered with spreading blood and they fall off their chairs. This is the bloodiest moment in the film.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Bruce Beresford apparently expressed surprise that *Breaker Morant* has become known as a film about Australians being mistreated by the English, given that he intended it to portray the way normal people can come to commit atrocities during war. Which of these readings was more prominent for you as you watched the film? Or did you view it another way?
2. Where did your sympathies lie? Did this change over the course of the film?
3. Discuss the portrayal of Boer women in the film.
4. Discuss the portrayal of the lawyers in the film.
5. The film focuses almost exclusively on the court-martial and the events the men are being prosecuted for. Did you want more backstory, or did you feel like you had enough information about the characters?