

**Thesis:** While *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988) focuses on the immediate effects of World War II through Seita and Setsuko's fight for survival, *Europa* (1991) centers on the lasting impact of the conflict, showcasing its characters' struggle to return to normalcy in its aftermath. Both films grapple with the short and long term impacts the conflict has on the respective societies, and ultimately criticizes war and its horrors.

**Point 1:** Immediate Effects

GotF Supporting Point 1: Takahata's film focuses on the immediate effects of the war

- Loss of life: The mother is burned severely in the firebombing
- Loss of community: Seita and Setsuko are forced to travel to a new town after theirs is destroyed, then are forced out of their Aunt's home, and live in the shelter
- Malnutrition: Food is scarce and Setsuko eventually dies because of it

GotF Supporting Point 2: Loss of community leads to breakdown in moral values

- Seita and Setsuko are left to fend for themselves although they are only children, this leads to Seita stealing food.
- Seita's pride forbids him from using the money to properly take care of Setsuko until it is too late, or going back to the Aunt and asking for help.

GotF Scene 1: Setsuko's severe malnutrition and delirium      Time Stamp: 1:15:45 – 1:18:45

- Focus on technique used in scene and how it contributes to the aforementioned points
  - Setsuko's slow, drawling voice emphasizes her weakness and loss of mental capacity
  - Supine posture and pan down evoke imagery of her prematurely in grave position.

GotF Supporting Point 3: The starting scene where Seita dies shows that he was not able to rebound after the war was over and lived in the train station as a beggar.

**Point 2:** Lasting Impacts

Europa Supporting Point 1: Von Trier's film focuses on the struggle to return to normalcy by displaying three main archetypes of response

- Won't surrender: Kat and the *Werwölfe* wants to continue the war even though Germany has already surrendered
- Can't cope with the past: Max is unable to lie to the Americans about his involvement with shipping Jews to the concentration camps and instead chooses to end his own life in the bathtub scene
- Want to rebuild: Leopold returns to Germany to help rebuild the country, a time when Germany needs some to show it "kindness", Larry and Leo's uncle fit archetype

Europa Scene 1: Max's suicide

Time Stamp: 53:50 – 56:28

- Talk about technique with use of color in this scene
- Max is not only in conflict with his past but also pressured by the other two archetypes
- This is seen with Kat's anonymous letter from the *Werwölfe* threatening him
- Colonel Harris' pressure to sign the letter associated with Americans efforts to rebuild

Europa Supporting Point 2: All three archetypes clearly in conflict with each other, impact seen IRL with German Reunification not happening until 1990's.

**Point 3:** Different coping mechanisms through metaphors

GotF Supporting Point: Fireflies represent hope for Seita and Setsuko to return to their life before the war.

GotF Scene 2: Fireflies scene

Time Stamp: 53:00 - 56:30

- Fireflies bring them light in the dark shelter, just as their imagination takes them back to their past away from their horrific present situation.
- Seita imagines his father in the naval review, seems happy, but then is taken back to the present and can't escape the urgency of his current situation.
- Setsuko much more naïve and fireflies represent another fun activity for her to keep her sheltered from the war, the fireflies bring light to the shelter making it more comfortable and less scary.

Europa Supporting Point: Train represents a vessel for the characters to travel on to find their new place in society after the war.

Europa Scene 2: Leopold struggling to sleep on the train

Time Stamp: 1:11:30 – 1:12:30

- “For the first time you are scared of being on the train, no idea where your journey will end up”
- Once again leans toward the conflicting responses after the war, lack of cohesiveness within the country to rebound quickly and return to regular life.
- Asymmetrical composition of smaller Leopold against larger close-up of Kat's face emphasizes that holding the grudge and continuing the negativity of war is the dominating force that many must overcome to rebuild their country.

Concluding Point: *GotF* emphasizes the responses that children have to war, wanting to just ignore its impacts and return to the life they led without it (sort of “ignorance is bliss”), while the more adult characters in *Europa* understand the war is not something they can just move past and must instead find a new way in life.

**Conclusion:** Emphasize how both directors used different techniques, storylines to come to the same message about how harmful war is.