

# VIEWING GUIDE TO *OUTBREAK*

The film, *Outbreak*, portrays the efforts of an army virologist, Sam Daniels, to prevent a global biological disaster. A rare killer virus from the African jungle has started an epidemic in a small northern California community. The virus has a 100% mortality rate. The film follows the scientists and army officers as they trace the epidemic and seek to contain it. The story in the film is fictional. Could something like this really happen?

The questions in Part 1 are listed for you to think about. They follow, in order, the events of the film. You may wish to take notes as you watch the tape.

Part 2, which can be done after you view the tape, is a list of things that happen during the story. Some of them seem to be minor incidents, but each one has importance in advancing the plot. Your job is to tell how each event is important to the story.

## PART 1

1. Why was the mercenary camp in the Motaba River Valley of Zaire bombed in 1967?

2. In the film, we see a progression of laboratory safety levels at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick, Maryland. Below is a description of each level. As one progresses from level to level, describe the differences shown and the procedures and safety methods observed.

Biosafety level 1 (BS1) - Minimum biohazard; study of low risk infectious agents: Pneumococcus, *Salmonella*

Biosafety Level 2 (BS2) - Moderate biohazard; infectious agents: hepatitis, Lyme Disease, influenza

Biosafety Level 3 (BS3) – High biohazard; multiple vaccinations required; infectious agents: anthrax, typhus, HIV

Biosafety Level 4 (BS4) – Extreme biohazard; maximum security; highly virulent; no known cures or vaccines; infectious agents: Ebola, Lassa, Hanta viruses

3. Why were Sam Daniels and his crew sent to the Motaba Valley, Zaire?

4. What are the conditions in the Motaba Valley?
5. How did the mystery disease get to the Motaba Valley?
6. What is the tribesman's explanation of why the disease was affecting the tribe? Do you feel that there could be any truth to the explanation?
7. What are the characteristics of the mystery disease?
8. Why was it said that the virus was contained?
9. Why did Casey show so much concern about the small tear in Daniels' suit as they were about to enter the BS4 area of the lab?
10. What did the electron microscope show about the Motaba virus in kidney cells?
11. One of the staff describes the name "Motaba virus" as sounding like the name of a perfume..."one drop and you'll feel so different, your lover will melt in your arms." How did these words have a prophetic significance?
12. Why did the generals want Daniels off the case? What did they want him to do? What is Daniels' reaction?
13. What measures were taken in Cedar Creek to contain the outbreak?
14. What was **Operation Clean Sweep**? Why did many officials think it was necessary?
15. What was the reason that the E-1101 antiserum against Motaba virus was kept secret?
16. Why was Daniels so intent on capturing the monkey in Palisades, California?
17. Why did General McClintock want to get rid of Daniels?

18. After capturing the monkey, what were Daniels and his team able to do?

19. How did Daniels prevent the success of **Operation Clean Sweep**?

**PART 2** - Each of these incidents from the film has some significance to the story. Describe how each one is important either in the spread of the epidemic or in efforts to trace and contain it.

1. The disease affects many people at the mercenary camp on Motaba Valley, Zaire.

2. The camp in Zaire is firebombed.

3. Daniels receives a telephone call as he is bathing the dogs.

4. The new man on the team is briefed before leaving for Zaire.

5. The monkey is trapped in the Motaba Valley.

6. A phone call is made by Jimbo Scott from the animal holding facility in San Jose, California.

7. The monkey scratches Rudy Alvarez at the pet shop.

8. Jimbo Scott releases the monkey into the woods in California.

9. Henry Seward, hospital laboratory technician, is accidentally sprayed with Rudy Alvarez' blood from a tube in the centrifuge.

10. Jimbo Scott kisses Allison at Logan Airport in Boston.

11. Henry Seward coughs during a movie in a crowded theater.

12. A patient is discovered at Cedar Creek Hospital who has the disease but has had no contact with others who are sick.

13. Two different strains of the Motaba virus are discovered in Cedar Creek.

14. Casey becomes ill.

15. Robbie is stuck with a needle that she was injecting into Casey.
16. The dead man is found on the ship and a picture of a monkey is found above his bunk.
17. Mrs. Jeffries sees a picture of the monkey on television.
18. Daniels' helicopter blocks the path of the airplane carrying the firebomb.

#### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

1. Describe how the virologists determined the identity of the virus causing the disease, how they tracked the epidemic and how they eventually conquered the virus.

2. At the beginning of the film is a quote by Nobel Prize Winner Joshua Lederberg.

**"The single biggest threat to man's continued dominance on this planet is the virus."**

Discuss this quote. Do you agree with it? Why or why not? What evidence from this film supports Lederberg's view? What evidence from other sources that you have read or viewed lends support? What do you feel is significant about Lederberg's statement in light of recent news regarding bioterrorism? What do you feel will be the future of human dominance on earth? Support your views with facts and logical thought.

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