

## Feedback for La Llorona

A really interesting film that I continued to think about afterwards. There seemed to be a hidden story in that I wanted to know more about the doctor's daughter who stayed with her parents despite her doubts about their actions - and the disappearance of her husband.

Very thought-provoking film, which took some understanding to unravel to get the whole picture. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Disturbing, atmospheric, powerfully told. I would like to see more films from this director.

The perseverance to get this film to Twickenham was absolutely worthwhile. Best film of the season for me. Having watched the trailer, I was expecting more 'jump out of your seat' spooky moments, yet the lack of those actually made it a much enjoyable and believable film. Thank you.

Credit to the Committee members who got it to the screen although they do seem keen on good films with rather depressing themes! We found the story interesting and the family dynamics fascinating but it was a bit heavy on the supernatural for our taste.

I was blown away by its artistic use of folk lore and the supernatural to confront this terrible episode in the country's history. The general's crimes haunt him in the form of a crying woman but he dies without repenting. His family have to sit and hear the evidence at his trial and the film shows how his wife has to gradually come to terms with the testimony against him by the Mayan women. Although acquitted at the trial, his home becomes his prison surrounded by victims and protesters. A mysterious woman arrives and his granddaughter develops a fixation with trying to survive under water. She steals his oxygen flask and there is a sudden infestation of amphibious frogs. It turns out the children of the woman have been drowned by the General in the attempt to force information out of her. But the film eschews revenge, the woman forms a friendship with the grandchild instead of harming her. In an echo of the start of the film where the general's wife joins in Catholic prayers for her husband's release having vented her anger on him, she joins in a Mayan chant with her native servants asking for forgiveness. Thank you for the effort gone to show this film - much appreciated.

A good choice but a challenging watch. Well-acted, well filmed but I didn't always know what was happening!

Excellent to see such an interesting film from Guatemala. I thought it was a sensitive and thoughtful exploration of the way that such atrocities inevitably affect the perpetrators, their family and wider society. It also showed clearly how the intermingling of cultures is central to life in Guatemala. A great choice.

A real treat of a movie. Beautiful from the very first frame, with a haunting soundtrack, which ratchets up the tension. It is an effective ghost story but an even more effective political thriller. The genocidal violence of death squads in places like Guatemala is sadly only too real. This film dramatises this in a claustrophobic and largely house-bound drama, with past crimes touching both the guilty and the innocent, whilst outside we hear the constant drum beat of righteous protest. More films like this one, please. It was well worth the effort of getting it certified!

What a dark and haunting movie. The story was so tragic but beautifully told and suspenseful right to the end.

Atmospheric but too slow and somewhat obscure.

Great sense of claustrophobia in the house.

Bit slow in places but an interesting insight into the politics and folklore.

The programme notes were very helpful. The alternating use of Spanish and (less) Ixil illustrated how Guatemala's situation, like that of many other countries, is still largely influenced by past colonialism. The slow increase in the tension was achieved by a range of means: night scenes; the siege of the family; the slowly emerging significance of water. A major topic was the suffering of women and children in any military conflict. I did not hear a single audience laugh. Those desiring more comedy were again disappointed.

Great claustrophobia portrayed in the house.

An interesting film. The blurred relationship between real and remembered events slowly became apparent. A very difficult subject was explored through some wonderful photography with imagination and insight.

This is a terrible film! The acting, the plot, the whole thing is not good at all and the worst film I have seen at The Exchange. Oh well!

It would have helped if I'd found out some background information about the Llorona being a vengeful ghost, associated with drowning, before watching the film, though I think I (mostly) got there in the end. I quite often like slow, intense films but this was too slow and too full of expectant pauses, which did not resolve themselves, to entirely hold my attention. I did find it atmospheric and thought provoking however and have been dwelling on it post viewing.

We're giving *La Llorona* an OK, Poor and Dreadful. Not just one category. OK, as overall it held everyone's attention in spite of itself. Poor, as we thought it was unnecessary to tell this terrible story of a decent ageing wife confronting the reality that her husband was a mass murderer, through the prism of a folkloric tale of a murdered girl/mother returning from the dead to invoke revenge. Dreadful, as there were disjointed scenes: the seance at the start; water rising from the drains in the gents loo at the end; and overlong and slow scenes of nothing much happening. In all it was a rather wretched experience. [Ed, given and Poor with comment in the table]

Oh dear. I found this film really dull. I wanted to like it but there was little drama, tension or horror. It was just unpleasant. I really didn't enjoy it and if I'd been at home I wouldn't have made it to the end.

I found the court scene and the testimony of the Mayan woman riveting. The film avoided the tropes of horror and was really a slow-burn political and family drama with some elements of the supernatural. The Guatemalan government continue to deny the existence of the 1980s genocide, in which an estimated one-third of the Mayan population were murdered in order to seize control of their land. After the screening, I read that the government placed huge pressure on the director and his team to drop the project. Explicit threats were made and eventually, the film was shot mostly inside the Guatemala City residence of the French ambassador. The government ordered the latter to stop the production and threatened to expel him from the country. To his immense credit, the French ambassador remained defiant and by September 2019, the film was screening at international festivals.

Strange intense film. It didn't grab me as others have.

Not a huge fan of magical realism so was always going to be sceptical about this film. That said I thought the theme of "I love my parents but God what are they like" was interesting and it was the daughter character and actress that carried the film, even if the striking images were "imaginary".

Yes, well-acted with scrupulous direction if a bit long. Beautifully lit and designed.

I was interested if not gripped (despite this being a shortish film some scenes, especially in the dark, did drag). What lost me was the mumbo jumbo at the end. As a boring old rationalist, I left with a deep sense of disappointment if not quite outrage. There are no magical solutions to vile politics.

An aimlessly long preamble to a too subtle conclusion.

Military juntas in South and Central America come and go and their atrocities are a well-known theme. I felt quite removed from the film and failed to feel anything for the characters, other than intrigue for the spirit character. The female roles were flat and one dimensional, the general himself once again lacking in nuance. Certainly, a just end for the general.

Fascinating film about the important topic of the exercise of geopolitics by the USA in what it deemed its sphere of influence. I found it's soundscape compelling and its atmospheric powerful.

A very unsettling film covering an issue of genocide I knew nothing about. Somewhat confusing about what was real and what was a dream. Obviously, water played a significant role, though not exactly clear. Overall, a good film, well worth seeing.

If only I'd googled the myth of 'La Llorona' before I'd seen the film I would have enjoyed it so much more, the drowned twins, the distant wailing in the night, the floods of water, the mysterious maid. Instead of being a puzzling distraction they hold the story together and make sense of the wife's disillusionment and murder of her bloody husband. I was going to give it Poor but upgraded to Good.

Very atmospheric and an interesting theme, but not as impactful as I expected. I am sure there were some terrible atrocities carried out by the Guatemalan regime for which the perpetrators should be execrably haunted.

While I cannot say that I 'enjoyed' *La Llorona*, I was definitely gripped. I know something of the horrendous events that happened given the military takeover of state affairs in South America but to see it portrayed on screen was painful and yet needed to be said. The script was intriguing by keeping us guessing as to the fates of the disappeared, children and adults and I for one was struck by the very high quality of the performers. So thank you for bringing that to our notice.

Not enthralled. Found it very slow and quite convoluted.

I was enthralled. It wasn't perfect and it was a bit long and perhaps some of the tension was lost because it was so drawn out. I also think that the character development of the mother and daughter particularly, through the growing awareness of the general's crimes was lacking. It was a bit of a cardboard response. However overall, I thought it was a very good film.

I felt the characterisation was poor and the film was very slow. Perhaps if I knew more (anything) about Guatemalan politics I would have understood it more. Many thanks to the committee for all you do for us.

Excellent filming, lighting used so well to enhance the drama.

Neither a great thriller, spine chiller thriller nor political thriller but overall OK.

This was atmospheric and spooky and quite compelling but we didn't fully understand the plot until we read more about it and discovered what a Llorona is and the connection to water. It really needed a little more clarity. There also seemed to be plot threads that were never resolved - who was Sara's father? Was Valerian the General's daughter? What happened to the bodyguard with the gun? Leotona who was wandering the house at the end of the film but never reappeared? Was the house haunted before Alma turned up? If not, why the seance at the beginning? Lots of unanswered questions for us.

Brave film.

A very atmospheric, thought-provoking film.

An interesting film but a very slow burn to the final denouement. Definitely didn't think it was a horror film.

A complex narrative mixing the oppressive darkness in the house of general Monteverde, a documentary about the rebellion against genocide and a deep submersion in the mythology of La Llorona. The characters take you to a Guatemalan society unknown in these shores and for that the film keeps you interested. The profound change of the women in the family of the dictator is the main plot of the film before reality and indigenous mythology fuse into a confusing ending. Not a great movie but the novelty of it all justified the persistence of the committee to get the license.

A mesmerising and thought-provoking film. Thank you to all for the efforts you made to obtain the film for us to see.

While actually watching the film I found it a little slow and irritatingly dark, everyone walking around in the dark! But the after effect of the film was quite profound. Images and specific events spontaneously recalled in great detail and with emotional content for some days.

A real find. A gripping story, filmed with smart spare style, full of tension. Atmospheric and unsettling.

This film was difficult to watch but terrifying and brilliant.

I think I should be more appreciative given the enormous amount of time and effort described to get hold of the film but in the end I was disappointed. It began well with the women praying and then the crowded court-room scenes but it really failed to grab my attention much after that and I found the plot and story confusing and sometimes plain incomprehensible. I think the Guatemalan genocide deserved something better than this.

Very good but not quite top draw. So, knowing the efforts gone to to obtain it I was slightly disappointed. Another tale of genocide that has been painted out.

The film has stayed with me as it raised so many issues. It would be an excellent choice for a discussion group. It made me look at the history of Guatemala which reflected so much of central and South America- military regimes, persecution of indigenous people. For me it was about power in relationships at all levels. I liked the use of magical realism to give power to the Mayan victims.

The contrast between the disturbed domestic life in the house and the tumult outside was skilfully presented, while the presence of the spooky young woman and the flashbacks to the horrors of the past added an extra dimension. I was sometimes confused but mostly fascinated.

A clever film, which used dark and light to good effect. Engaging and intriguing.

I know very little about Guatemalan history, or indeed about La Llorona, so this was definitely an education. I found it very haunting, claustrophobic and thought-provoking.

The content was well timed and at times, beautifully shot but the narrative was entirely predictable, even including the 'disappeared.' A good, well made, film but not engaging for a Western audience, I think. I wondered why you had both worked so hard in order to obtain a copy. I would have thought there were many movies that your audience would prefer to this.

A powerful take on a shockingly brutal time. Still so relevant.

Once again, an interesting selection, which gives a valuable insight into a completely different culture and political history with genocidal properties, national trauma, machismo and corruption. The characters were believable and overall the film was extremely solid. However, I am not a fan of magic realism and the supernatural qualities of the film came across as far-fetched.

A well-made film, with very good performances but the content somewhat harrowing.