

FILM NEWS

HISTORICAL DRAMA

Thirteen Days

New movie looks back at the dramatic events of the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962



(Photo: Buena Vista International)

Kevin Costner as Kennedy advisor Kenny O'Donnell in the movie 'Thirteen Days'. During the crisis Kennedy was being pushed in two directions – the military wanted to launch an attack on Cuba but the young President chose to create a blockade of Cuba instead



FOR thirteen days in October 1962, the world stood on the brink of catastrophe. Across the globe, people awaited the outcome of a dangerous military confrontation. This confrontation brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

It became known as the Cuban Missile Crisis. During October 1962 the danger of nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union was real. The effects of such a war would have been horrendous. Hundreds of millions of people would have been killed and the

Northern Hemisphere would have been affected by radioactive contamination. In fact, the Cuban Missile Crisis posed a deadly threat to every man, woman and child on Earth.

On October 16th, Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy presented to President

John F. Kennedy a series of U-2 spy plane photos. These photos revealed that the Soviets had installed ballistic missiles on the island of Cuba – missiles that could hit major US cities with nuclear weapons in a matter of minutes.

Kennedy and his advisers were stunned. But on October 22 the President spoke to the nation on national television. He described to the American people what was happening in Cuba. Within hours, supermarkets in the US ran out of everyday supplies of food and drinking water. And churches were filled as people prayed for peace.

That is the plot behind the new movie *Thirteen Days* starring Kevin Costner and directed by Roger Donaldson. Although he was just a boy of 16 in Australia at the time, Donaldson actually remembers October 1962 in detail. 'I kept a diary during those times', he says. 'And I have a whole page about the missile crisis, basically about whether or not there was going to be a tomorrow, whether or not I should even bother to do my homework ... it had a huge impact on me, this feeling that maybe the world could end.'

And so, when Donaldson saw the film script for *Thirteen Days* he jumped at the idea. But how do you recapture those days?

How do you tell the story of the men and women ***continued on page 11***

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whose actions probably saved the world from nuclear catastrophe? That was the challenge facing the production team.

It was not going to be possible to recreate every important moment of those two weeks in a two-hour film. So screen-writer David Self studied all the information he could find on the Cuban Missile Crisis. He read books, he examined the newspapers from that time, he even read some of the CIA documents.

But most importantly Self spent hours listening to the Kennedy 'White House tapes'. These were recordings that were made at the time. The tapes revealed just how hard some advisors pushed the President towards a military attack — an attack which could have led to all-out nuclear war with the Soviets.

As we now know Kennedy stood firm and war was avoided. A secret deal was made with the Soviets. Less than a year later America, Britain and Russia began working towards a nuclear-free world.

But not everyone in the US agreed with Kennedy. Strong forces opposed him. On November 22, 1963 he was shot by hidden gunmen in Dallas, Texas.

Shortly afterwards America became deeply involved in war — the Vietnam war. Today, almost 40 years later Americans are still



War or peace? The US military was ready to move. If the President had given the go-ahead the Russian missile sites on Cuba would have been attacked. But Kennedy knew that such an attack could signal the start of a world war that no one could win. It was later revealed that the US actually had nuclear missiles on the Soviet border in Turkey — before the Cuba crisis

wondering why Kennedy was killed. And, more importantly, who pulled the trigger.



↻ 550 words
2,628 characters
(2 DK normalsider)

WORDS

- all-out** – total
- basically** – simply
- CIA documents** – documents from the US spy organisation, the Central Intelligence Agency
- confrontation** – conflict
- examined** – studied
- had a huge impact on me** – had a great affect on me
- horrendous** – horrific; awful
- installed ballistic missiles** – set up nuclear missiles
- major US cities** – large US cities
- Northern Hemisphere** – the half of the Earth that is north of the equator (the line of zero latitude)
- on the brink of catastrophe** – on the edge of disaster
- posed a threat** – was a threat
- radioactive contamination** – pollution by radioactivity
- recapture** – here, recreate
- Soviet Union** – the communist USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)
- U2** – a US spy plane which flew at extremely high altitude

Questions on the text

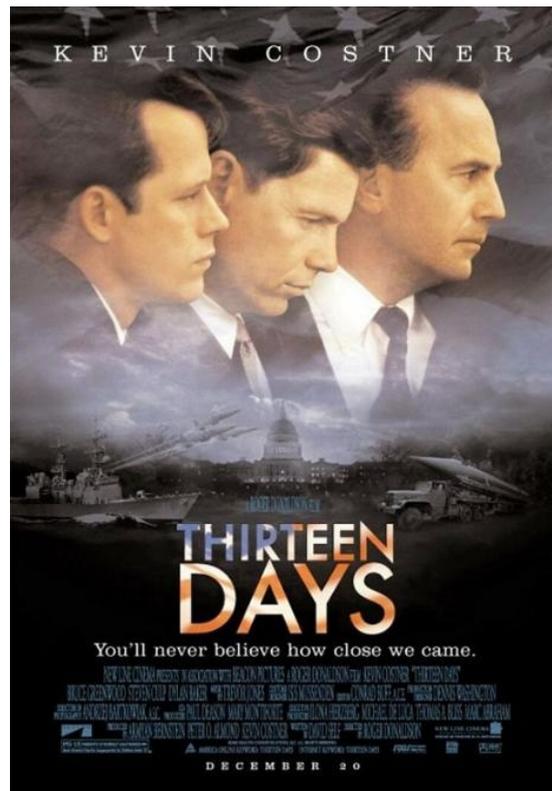
1 How did the USA find out that there were Russian missiles on Cuba in 1962?

2 Why did the Americans think these weapons were a threat to their cities?

3 Did the director of the film Thirteen Days have any memories of October 1962?

4 How did David Self prepare the story of the film?

5 What did the USA, the Soviet Union and Great Britain begin working towards within one year of the missile crisis?





School Times Worksheet

Thirteen Days

Adjectives

Adjectives are describing words. Use these adjectives in the sentences below:

ballistic, dangerous, hidden, horrendous, major, new, radioactive, secret, strong, stunned

1. President Kennedy was _____ when he heard the news.
2. *Thirteen Days* is a _____ movie about the events of October 1962.
3. Most people realise that the effects of a nuclear war would be absolutely _____ .
4. The Cuban Missile Crisis was one of the most _____ moments in history.
5. Missiles that can be steered and controlled are known as _____ missiles.
6. In the text, the largest cities of the United States are described as _____ cities.
7. Nuclear weapons (and nuclear accidents) can cause _____ contamination.
8. In the end, the Americans and the Soviets made a _____ deal to solve the problem.
9. America was a divided nation and _____ forces opposed Kennedy.
10. On November 22 1963 in Dallas, Texas, Kennedy was shot by _____ gunmen.

there / their

Use there / their in the sentences below

1. If ever _____ was a need for great leadership it was during the Cuban Missile Crisis.
2. The Soviets had installed some of _____ missiles on the island of Cuba.
3. Back in October 1962 Roger Donaldson wondered if _____ was going to be a tomorrow.
4. In the United States _____ were some people who wanted a military attack on Cuba.
5. The Soviets' first reaction was that the Americans should mind _____ own business.
6. But _____ was no way the United States could ignore enemy missiles on its doorstep.
7. If _____ is ever such a crisis again _____ will be a need for great leadership.
8. Are _____ any great leaders in the world today? Are _____ any leaders that you respect?
9. The leaders of some countries are only interested in _____ own bank accounts!
10. _____ comes a time when political leaders must take responsibility for _____ actions.