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Turn into the waves

By Brian Lockhart

When I was in my final year of high school, our entire Grade 12 class entered the gym to view the movie ?A Tale of Two Cities.?

The teachers set up a large movie screen and ran the film through a projector.

We were studying the classic Charles Dickens novel in English class, and this was a good way to really bring the story to life.

I believe it was the 1958 version of the film.

There were a lot of crying girls at the end of the film when Sydney Carton stands in front of the guillotine, and his overdub states: ?It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known.?

It was a great way to learn about something you are studying.

If there is one film I have always thought that should be shown in schools, it would be the 1954 classic, ?The Caine Mutiny,? starring Humphrey Bogart, Fred MacMurray, Van Johnson, Robert Francis, and José Ferrer.

It is a great film, and the final scene is where the lesson is taught.

The film is set on a fictional U.S. minesweeper in the Pacific during World War Two.

A new commander is taking over the ship. Lt. Cmdr. Queeg, played by Humphrey Bogart, is an old-school naval man who believes discipline and order are needed on a naval ship.

When Queeg assumes command, his executive officers are not pleased with his style. They begin to take notes on his behaviour.

At one point, several of the executive officers request a meeting with the Admiral to ask for Queeg's dismissal. However, as they wait for their meeting, one of the officers notices the behaviour of the sailors on the aircraft carrier.

He realizes those sailors were acting how you were supposed to behave on a naval ship, not the way the lackadaisical and undisciplined crew of the Caine behave, and they change their mind about meeting the Admiral.

Queeg certainly has some quirky habits, and it is suggested he is losing his nerve as a combat commander in a war zone.

The executive officers question his command and always give him a hard time. This frustrates Queeg, who is trying to run the ship as a naval vessel should operate.

During a severe storm in the Pacific, when the entire fleet is in danger, Queeg refused to turn the ship into the waves or take on ballast, even though his executive officers are insisting on saving the ship, because the ship has received no orders to do so.

The officer played by Fred MacMurray steps in and orders Queeg to stand down, and he takes command of the vessel ? effectively committing a mutiny.

In the resulting court-martial, in which the executive officers are on trial for mutiny, their attorney paints a picture of Queeg as being incompetent and possibly mentally unstable. He hails the officers as heroes for taking command from a faltering Queeg and saving the ship and the lives of everyone on board.

The officers are found not guilty as a result.

It is after the trial, when the executive officers are celebrating their acquittal at a party, that the real drama unfolds.

Their lawyer enters the room and is infuriated by the sight of the men celebrating.

He tells them what really happened. The lawyer tells them that to save them from being found guilty, he had to ?torpedo' Queeg and deliberately destroy a man's reputation.

If the executive officers had behaved like real naval officers and respected Queeg's command, he tells them, then likely during the storm, Queeg would have respected their advice and turned the ship into the waves.

He calls Henry Fonda's character the real villain and throws a drink in his face.

It is a story of deflecting the truth and avoiding responsibility and accountability.

Our current federal government is doing this all the time. Instead of addressing the concerns of our country's citizens, they make announcements about unpopular policies and tell us we should be thrilled about the decision.

The government gladly gives your tax dollars to other countries while we have homeless people sleeping on the streets. Our borders are not secure, but they tell us that building more houses will fix that, rather than addressing the real issue.

Violent criminals go unpunished while law-abiding citizens are threatened with more gun bans.

Canadians are a little too complacent when demanding responsibility and accountability from their politicians.