

## Discussion Questions for *13 Days*

**Some of the major characters to watch for:** President John F. Kennedy, Kenny O'Donnell (special assistant to the President), Bobby Kennedy (Attorney General), Robert McNamara (Secretary of Defense), Adlai Stevenson (Ambassador to the UN), General Maxwell Taylor (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff).

1. Early in the conflict the President seems to be moving quickly toward adopting the military strike option instead of seeking a diplomatic alternative. But then he slows down the decision making process while at the same time committing to do whatever it takes “to make things right.” Comment on his approach.
2. Throughout the movie, President Kennedy is surrounded by military people who don't trust him or find him credible. The same is true of many Congressional leaders who are pushing him to destroy the missiles quickly. How did he handle these situations? And comment on his response to all this doubt and second guessing.
3. When the blockade becomes operational the Joint Chiefs begin doing things that will likely force a military conflict (low level flights over Cuba, shots across the bow of Russian ship, detonating experimental nuclear weapons in the Pacific, going to DefCon 2 without President's approval). What is the President's response to these challenges to his authority?
4. The delaying could have cost tens of millions of lives...or saved them. What's your perspective on Kennedy's leadership during this crisis?
5. Which character do you admire the most in this movie, which one the least, and why?