**Discussion Questions for *The Boxer*, a film by Jim Sheridan**

**Directions**: These questions are just to help guide our discussions. You might want to jot down ideas as you watch the film, though.

1. This is a very different film from *The Quiet Man*, but it should be noted that here again we have a boxer who has become “quiet” and averse to violence, at least outside the boxing ring. How does Danny’s stance toward fighting, both inside and outside the ring, relate to the message of the film? How does that relate to Sean Thornton’s or Shawn Kelvin’s experience?
2. In a sense, this is a sports film, though it has other themes. It is a sports film of the type that shows how sports can uplift a community that is struggling with poverty and the kind of defeatism that poverty and oppression bring (such as *McFarlane, USA* or *Hoop Dreams*). Is that plot line strong enough to be persuasive? Can you imagine the rebuilt gym making a real difference in the community after the credits roll on this part of the story? Why or why not?
3. In a deleted scene, we see Harry (the rogue IRA man who doesn’t want to accept the peace process with the British) in bed with his wife, discussing the latest developments. “The Brits got him where they want him and they’re going to keep pushing,” says his wife. “If we don’t make a move soon, the war is over.” What kind of connection does this make between the situation in Belfast in 1997 and that of Michael Collins’ Dublin of 1920? Why do you think this scene was not used in the film? Should it have been?
4. Another deleted scene shows Maggie’s husband in prison, speaking to her on visiting day. He shows no opposition to her seeing Danny because he feels Maggie never really belonged to him (the husband) anyway. Had it been included, how do you think it would change the story? Why do you think it was cut?
5. Sheridan said he considered making Maggie a Protestant, instead of making her inaccessible by marriage. What does this theme of the prisoners’ wives’ duty add to the story? What judgment on that custom did you think the film is making? Note: Divorce was illegal in Ireland until 1995.
6. In a *NY Times* review of the film, Janet Maslin says, “[T]his film, despite the grief it describes, dares to sound a note of hopefulness, too. Mr. Sheridan tells a story of bravery, love and renewal with the stirring conviction that such things are possible even in perpetually embattled places.” Do you agree that the film, overall, convinces us that a hopeful future is possible for a community as battered as this one, where the divide between warring communities has been hardened by centuries of conflict? Why or why not?

Note: like *Michael Collins*, this film was released during a delicate truce in Northern Ireland (late December 1997). The Good Friday Peace Accord that officially ended the Troubles was signed a few months later (April 1998).