Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2003 Volume I: Geography through Film and Literature

Africa, Africans, and Film

Guide for Curriculum Unit 03.01.02
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This unit seeks to understand what impact the Atlantic slave trade had on Africa and the African people, through the analysis of literature and film. At one point in recent history, almost the entire continent of Africa was dominated by the continent to the north. Now there are over fifty unique and independent nations in Africa. The processes by which Africa was first controlled by Europe and then by which it liberated itself was a long and complex struggle of forces historical and geographical, external and internal. It is the goal of this unit to examine the conditions of Africa and African society before this period of domination and the effect this domination had on the African people. Also, this unit will examine how Africa and Africans are portrayed in film.

Many elements and countries of Africa can be addressed in the unit. More specifically, the history of any region of Africa can be taught using this unit. The vast, rich nature of African geography and history insists that the student of history examine each region separately. There can be one consistent theme found in the histories of all regions, however, and that is the history of contact with Europeans and their domination and exploitation of the Africans.

This unit will address those historical themes, using film and literature, as they apply to different regions at different times. On another level, the unit will analyze Africa in film. The students will compare the treatment of the geography and history of Africa in African film versus that in Hollywood's films.

(Recommended for History and Geography, grades 9-12.)