



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2007 Volume II: Voyages in World History Before 1500

Fact versus Film: How Hollywood Depicts the Crusades in The Kingdom of Heaven

Guide for Curriculum Unit 07.02.03
by Sarah Black

The goal of this unit is to use my students' love of film to teach them how to distinguish between historical facts and inaccuracies that plague "historically representative" films. Specifically, this unit will help my students develop a critical eye when viewing historical films by strengthening their background knowledge and understanding of historical context so they can discern historical fact from fiction.

This unit will analyze how the Medieval European Crusades were portrayed in the film *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005). The film portrays the events leading up to the Battle of Hattin in 1187. In the course of this unit, my students will analyze primary sources and read secondary sources to provide background information and survey a range of historical perspectives on the Crusades. We will then view *Kingdom of Heaven* and draw comparisons between the primary source accounts as well as the film's portrayal of those same events. For the culminating activity, my students will choose between acting as either a film critic, writing a review for *Kingdom of Heaven* for its historical accuracy; or as screenwriter, rewriting the script for a chosen scene in order to make the scene more historically accurate.

(Developed for World History, grades 9-12; recommended for World History, grades 9-12)

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2021 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University
For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>