



Heroes and Villains of the Rain Forest: Latin American History through Film

Guide for Curriculum Unit 98.01.07
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Ten films set in rain forests are guides to Latin American history. Themes include: discovery, exploration, exploitation, colonial division of land, indigenous rain forest people, use and abuse of rain forests, individuals whose integrity made a difference, and the modern invasion of the rain forests by North and Latin Americans. The historical films are: *Cabeza de Vaca*, *Aguirre: the Wrath of God*, *The Mission*, *One Man's War*, *The Burning Season*, *La Muralla Verde*, and *The Emerald Forest*. The second group, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord*, *The Mosquito Coast*, and *Green Mansions* are complete fiction, two from well known novels, but realistic in nature; that is, the people and events are invented, but the background is historically accurate. My purpose in using fiction is to expose students to differences in the perspective of the film makers. The ten films were made by Spanish, North American, Peruvian, and British film makers between 1957 and 1997. Most are in English; some are subtitled. I will use them in themes, in groups of two to four films, to contrast perceptions and attitudes about issues of the rain forests.

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