

## World Lit

**Unit 1: Novel: Adolescents in times of war and conflict**

**Unit 2: Novel set in Tibet—Into Thin Air**

**Unit 3: Novel set in China—Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress**

**Unit 4: World Lit through Award-winning international films**

What do the movies below have to say about their particular cultures? How do they convey a sense of national identity and how do they see themselves in relation to the world as a whole? How do they reflect a heritage that includes the mixing of cultures?

### **Afghanistan:**

#### ***Osama***

In 2003, *Osama* was the first film shot in Afghanistan since 1996, when the Taliban had banned film creation. It follows the story of a young girl (Marina Golbahari) living under the Taliban regime who disguises herself as a boy – named Osama – in order to support her family. The haunting film details the tragic lives of women and families in Afghanistan during the Taliban's power, though to be clear, *Osama* holds no relation to Osama bin Laden, outside of the same popular name.

#### ***The Kite Runner***

Amir, haunted by his betrayal of his childhood friend Hassan, a son of his father's servant, returns to Kabul as an adult after learning Hassan has been killed. The movie describes Afghanistan's rich culture and beauty.

### **Africa: *Hotel Rwanda (2004)* and *Sometimes in April (2005)*:**

The films describe different aspects of the Rwandan genocide in Africa. All Rwandans share a common language, Kinyarwanda. They have the same cultural heritage, including a common national mythology which enshrines the origins and historical relationships of their three peoples: the **Hutu** (85% of the population); the **Tutsi** (14%); and the Twa, or Pygmy (1%).

From April to July 1994 in a ghastly civil war, approximately 927,000 **Tutsi** and moderate **Hutu** were shot or hacked to death. The perpetrators were the Hutu-dominated army, the Interahamwe militia, and the neighbors and friends of the victims. The international community - in particular, the United States, Western Europe and the U.N. - knew what was going on but stood by and did nothing.

*Hotel Rwanda* focuses on the heroism of one man, and while his heroism is important, the story of the Rwandan genocide is about some 927,000 people being murdered by their countrymen, friends, and neighbors. "Hotel Rwanda" tells how Paul Rusesabagina protected 1,268 people who took refuge in the Hotel Mille Collines. Like "Schindler's List," this movie paints an inspiring portrait of one man's evolving moral conviction and how, using his wits and charm, he held maniacal killers at bay.

*Sometimes in April* shows the genocide in a series of flashbacks. Scenes of documented atrocities are recreated in the movie, which has a broader sweep, recounting the stories of many victims of the genocide. In addition, the film describes the situation of three survivors.

### **Australia's Outback: *Rabbit-proof Fence***

Based on the book *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington Garimara. It is loosely based on a true story concerning the author's mother Molly, as well as two other mixed-race Aboriginal girls, who escape after being plucked from their homes to be trained as domestic staff and set off on a trek across the Outback. They ran away from the Moore River Native Settlement, north of Perth, Western Australia, to return to their **Aboriginal** families, after being placed there in 1931. The film follows the Aboriginal girls as they walk for nine weeks along 1,500 miles of the Australian rabbit-proof fence to return to their community at Jigalong, while being pursued by white law enforcement authorities and an Aboriginal tracker. Read about Australia's REAL rabbit proof fence! Really! [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbit-proof\\_fence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbit-proof_fence)

### **Central & North America: Guatemala, Mexico, USA: *El Norte* and/or *Sin Pais***

The U.S. is currently engaged in a wrenching debate about what to do with eleven million illegal immigrants living within its borders. This film puts a human face on what is otherwise an abstract term of vilification, leading the viewer to empathize with the character of Carlos, who is in the country illegally. While there is some truth to the claim that the movie provides arguments for one side in the immigration debate, the universal human truths shown in the film are important for a full understanding of the problem of undocumented people living in the U.S. This is true no matter what position a person ends up taking on the issue.

This is the story of a brother and sister who flee the violence and economic deprivation in rural Guatemala hoping for a better life in the U.S.

The indigenous people in Guatemala were living a cruel extermination that forced them to flee toward Mexico and the United States. This exodus lasted a decade and half a million Guatemalans made the journey to the United States seeking for asylum and refuge. For research the producers of *El Norte* learned about the plight of **indigenous** Guatemalans from years of research, much of it conducted among exiles living in Southern California. According to Nava, "There are hundreds of thousands of **refugees** from **Central America** in Los Angeles alone. Nobody knows the exact number, but a recent television inquiry estimated 300,000-400,000. In our own research, we came across a community of **Mayans** from Guatemala—5,000 from one village—now in Los Angeles. The original village, which is now dead, had 15,000."

<http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/news/story/2011/jul/24/war-poverty-trigger-guatemalan-exodus/54800/>

### **India: *Delhi in a Day***

Flashes of comedy shine a light on the uncomfortable realities of contemporary life in a country that has been transformed in many ways by two decades of economic growth. Jasper has arrived in Delhi to begin a tour of **India**, where the newness of his surroundings quickly prove overwhelming. As he is

drawn into the dynamics of his host family, the Bhatias, he finds that his mere presence has upset the natural order of things. Jasper finds that the first day of his journey is possibly more than he bargained for.

### **India: *Lion***

A five-year-old Indian boy gets lost on the streets of Calcutta, thousands of kilometers from home. He survives many challenges before being adopted by a couple in Australia. 25 years later, he sets out to find his lost family.

### **India: *Dhanak***

*Dhanak's* story revolves around the wonderful relationship between a 10-year old girl Pari and Chotu, her 8-year old brother who live in a picturesque village nestled among the sand dunes in the desert state of Rajasthan, India. *Dhanak* is the story of Pari and her little brother Chotu who travel the length of Rajasthan, India, in the hope that Chotu will be able to regain his sight. This story of hope and determination will make viewers think critically about access to healthcare, inequality and why essential services are so important.

### **Middle East: Iran: *Baran***

In a building site in present-day Tehran, Lateef, a 17-year-old Turkish worker is irresistibly drawn to Rahmat, a young Afghan worker. The revelation of Rahmat's secret changes both their lives. The movie is set during recent times in which there are a large number of [Afghan refugees](#) living on the outskirts of Tehran. Almost a silent movie, *Baran* won a number of awards both nationally and internationally for the director and writer Majid Majidi.

### **Middle East: Pakistan: *Dukhtar* (trans. Daughter)**

The story follows a mother and her ten-year-old daughter as they flee from their village in Pakistan on the day of the girl's arranged marriage to a tribal leader. A deadly hunt ensues for them in a surreal landscape.

### **Palestine: *Paradise Now***

Sometimes the most courageous act is what you don't do. *Paradise Now* follows the final days of two best friends living in the West Bank before they enact a suicide attack in Tel Aviv. The film is clearly controversial. Director/writer Hany Abu-Assad has said in interviews that, referring to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the issue is not just "black and white" or "good and evil," and with two potential-suicide-bomber protagonists, *Paradise Now* clearly seeks to highlight the grayer aspects of morality.

### **South America: Chile to Venezuela: *Motorcycle Diaries***

Biopic about the journey and written memoir of the 23-year-old Ernesto Guevara, who would several years later become internationally known as the iconic Marxist guerrilla commander and revolutionary Che Guevara. The film recounts the 1952 expedition, initially by motorcycle, across South America by Guevara and his friend Alberto Granado. As well as being a road movie, the film is a coming-of-age film; as the adventure, initially centered on youthful hedonism, unfolds, Guevara discovers himself transformed by his observations on the life of the impoverished indigenous peasants of South America. Through the characters they encounter on their continental trek, Guevara and Granado witness firsthand the injustices that the destitute face and are exposed to people and social classes they would have never encountered otherwise. To their surprise, the road presents to them both a genuine and captivating picture of Latin American identity.

### **South America: Brazil: *Central Station***

Dora is a former school teacher who makes a living by writing letters for illiterate people passing through Rio de Janeiro's main train station, Central Station. Among her clients are Ana and her nine-year-old son Josue, who has a fierce desire to meet his father, whom he has never seen. A sudden accident leaves Josue orphaned at the station and this is when Dora's life begins to change dramatically. Lonely and embittered, the woman begrudgingly agrees to escort Josue to his father in rural Brazil. As the two make their way through Brazil's rugged interior, they gradually form a bond that sustains them through emotional loss.

### **Southeast Asia: Cambodia: *First They Killed My Father***

A 2017 biographical historical thriller film directed by Angelina Jolie and written by Jolie and Loung Ung, based on Ung's memoir of the same name. Set in 1975, the film depicts 7-year-old Ung who is forced to be trained as a child soldier while her siblings are sent to labor camps during the Communist Khmer Rouge regime.

**For each movie:**

1. Movie details: When released, length of movie, rating, most important awards
2. Setting Place: City, Country, Map showing city & country
3. Setting Place: Using Google Maps, take us to key geographical locations, historically significant landmarks of the country
4. Setting Time: What year is movie set? What is the time span? Historically what happened in that country that year?
5. Culture & People: What are the key cultural norms in the society at the time of the movie?
6. Historical Setting or Significance: What historical events/people are part of this movie
7. Movie Trailer: Provide link and length
8. Key Characters with brief description
9. Links to Movie Review #1 and Movie Review #2
10. Links to other Movie Resources with identification of what the resource is (Prezi, Keynote, Discussion Questions, etc.)