



TEACHERS' NOTES

Film Education's online resource for learners aged 11-14 features digital teaching materials exploring the film *Africa United*. This resource is designed for students of English and Media, Citizenship and Geography at KS3.

FILM SYNOPSIS

Africa United tells the extraordinary story of three Rwandan children and their bid to achieve their lifelong dream – to take part in the opening ceremony of the 2010 Football World Cup in Johannesburg. On the way to the vital selection trial, disaster strikes when Fabrice, Dudu and Beatrice board the wrong bus and cross into the Congo; without papers, money or a believable story, they are escorted to a refugee camp. But with considerable ingenuity and sass (and a World Cup wall chart for a map), our pint-sized heroes escape the camp and set off through the endless horizons of Africa in pursuit of their dream, picking up along the way a "dream team" of displaced kids, who help them negotiate a series of glorious, dangerous and hilarious adventures. Through their 3,000 mile journey, we encounter an Africa few people in the West have ever seen; experience an epic adventure through seven countries; and feel the joy, laughter and hope that comes from making an incredible journey together.

RESOURCE OVERVIEW

The resource has five sections each of which is relevant to particular subject areas:

Predictions: English and Media

Themes: PSHE and Citizenship

Journeys: Geography

Representation: English and Media

Co-production: English and Media, Citizenship

PEDAGOGY

Film Education promotes active approaches to learning. Close viewing and analysis of film is central to our ethos and opportunities to discuss ideas about how and why certain representations appear on screen are central to all our resources. We believe it is vital that young people have the chance to talk through ideas without always being expected to write down answers and therefore, all sections of this resource meet significant elements of the NC English requirements for speaking and listening. The connection between spoken language and thought is a crucial one. It is important to give learners opportunities to discuss their ideas in pairs or small groups in order to develop critical thinking skills. It is left to the professional judgment of the teacher as to how groups are organised, rotated, combined and encouraged to share ideas.



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PREDICTIONS

Curriculum focus: English and Media

Key concepts and processes: critical understanding

Using *Africa United's* publicity material including the film's poster, trailer and official website, students discuss how character and genre are introduced to audiences. An extract from the film entitled 'The Dream Team' provides further stimulus for students to consider the relationship between central characters and predict key themes in the film (e.g. relationships with friends and parents; human qualities such as loyalty and independence; the power and significance of football; dreams and ambitions).

Predictive questions encourage students to consider the purpose of marketing material and how it works to promote interest in the film. Depending on how much time you have to spend on this section, you may prefer to organise your class into three groups each of which analyses one of the elements [poster, trailer and clip, website] before reporting back their findings to the whole class.

THEMES

Curriculum focus: PSHE and Citizenship

Key concepts and processes: relationships; risk; global community

The activities in this section are based on three clips exploring the film's themes: relationships, risk, and challenges facing the global community. The first clip 'Silky Skills' builds on ideas about relationships and introduces the notion of child soldiers. The character Foreman George has a backstory that is revealed as the film develops relating to his forced involvement in a previous violent conflict.

Close analysis of the film clips will stimulate PSHE discussions about the connection between relationships and risk taking. Students have the opportunity to undertake some research within a Citizenship framework about the issue of child soldiers and how they might become involved in campaigning to stop such abuse. It is left to the professional judgment of teachers as to how much time is spent on this and how it might fit with other ways of taking informed and responsible action within the Citizenship curriculum. Other Citizenship themes touched upon in *Africa United* include the experience of refugees and HIV both of which would be suitable to explore in more detail having seen the whole film. It is essential, however, that students appreciate that this is NOT a film about Africa's problems. These more serious elements provide a backdrop to the story that teachers may wish to explore with students, not least to highlight the children's resilience and spirit. This is particularly relevant to the character of Dudu who we later discover has known from the start that he has HIV.



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JOURNEYS

Curriculum focus: Geography

Key concepts and processes: graphicacy and visual literacy; place; scale

This section aims to support learners' understanding of the physical context of the film's narrative.

The opening task within this section supports students to understand the vast distances covered in the film and to consider how these might be represented visually on a map. The map is a recurring element in the film where it is used to highlight the route taken by the children. The map has been reproduced for students as a PDF so they can research the locations of the different countries in the region, label them and chart the children's journey. There are further opportunities for research about each of the countries, which would work well as a homework task.

The image of the children walking through lush forests should stimulate discussions both about the landscape in different parts of Africa and the practicalities of such long distance travel. The concept of a 'journey' in film and literature often connotes more than just a physical crossing from one location to another. This is true for *Africa United*, and whilst your students may not have yet seen the film, it is worthwhile exploring how physical journeys may function metaphorically to represent other rites of passage. The final question in this section initiates this discussion.

REPRESENTATION

Curriculum focus: English and Media

Key concepts and processes: critical understanding; cultural understanding

The filmmakers of *Africa United* are very clear about their intention to make a film about Africa that does not simply focus on the stereotypical and often negative images such as child soldiers, a continent at war, poverty, deprivation and AIDS. That is not to say that some of these elements do not feature in the film. Where they do appear, however, it is to provide moments of tension or sadness; yet at no point are they defining elements of either the characters or their relationships with each other. This section explores students' knowledge and perceptions of Africa by challenging them to reflect on what they know and how they know it.

Discussion questions encourage young people to think about other films they may have seen set in Africa. Examples might include: *Cry Freedom*; *Out of Africa*; *Skin: Blood Diamond*; *Amistad*; *Catch a Fire*; *Tsotsi*. Film Education's film library has resources on all these films. Students should consider how the African characters are represented in these films: what roles do they play? Is the actor African and is this important? How well developed are their characters compared to European characters? How is the audience encouraged to respond to them?



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THE 53 AFRICAN COUNTRIES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- | | |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Algeria | Libyan Arab Jamahiriya |
| Angola | Madagascar |
| Benin | Malawi |
| Botswana | Mali |
| Burkina Faso | Mauritania |
| Burundi | Mauritius |
| Cameroon | Morocco |
| Cape Verde | Mozambique |
| Central African Republic | Namibia |
| Chad | Niger |
| Comoros | Nigeria |
| Congo | Rwanda |
| Côte d'Ivoire | São Tomé and Príncipe |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire) | Senegal |
| Djibouti | Seychelles |
| Egypt | Sierra Leone |
| Equatorial Guinea | Somalia |
| Eritrea | South Africa |
| Ethiopia | Sudan |
| Gabon | Swaziland |
| The Gambia | United Republic of Tanzania |
| Ghana | Togo |
| Guinea | Tunisia |
| Guinea-Bissau | Uganda |
| Kenya | Zambia |
| Lesotho | Zimbabwe |
| Liberia | |

The remaining activities in this section are image analysis tasks. Four still images from different parts of the film accompanied by focus questions provide students with stimulus for discussion around key themes: wealth and poverty; dreams and nightmares. Students should be encouraged to look closely at the images in order to ascertain how meaning has been created through a range of techniques including framing, positioning, costume, lighting, location etc.



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CO-PRODUCTION

Curriculum focus: English and Media, and Citizenship

Key concepts and processes: Cultural understanding; Identities and diversity

Africa United is an international co-production between individuals and institutions in the UK, South Africa and Rwanda. This section explores the Rwandan roots of the film in light of its recent brutal history and encourages students to consider the significance of the international dimension to the film's production.

By considering the social, cultural and financial motivations behind the film, students are provided with a concrete example of the interconnections between the UK and the wider world. Whilst much of this resource develops students' skills of analysis and critical thinking by using the content of the film to stimulate discussion about Eurocentric perceptions of the world, this section challenges young people to reflect on the socio-political dimensions to filmmaking.

In order to contextualise the production history, this section introduces references to the Rwandan genocide with which your students may be unfamiliar. This resource is aimed at KS3 students and whilst it is important for them to have some understanding of what happened in Rwanda in 1994, teachers should be wary of asking students to research the subject widely. Broad internet searches may produce graphic images of dead bodies which dehumanise those murdered as well as disturbing the viewer. SURF, the Rwandan Survivors Fund, provide appropriate resources and educational background to the genocide www.survivors-fund.org.uk/education. The purpose of introducing information about the genocide is to place the film into historical context by showing how it differs from some previous representations of Rwanda. *Africa United* is NOT a film about the Rwandan genocide but in order to explore its life affirming spirit, some understanding of the country's past is essential.



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