

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES, HISTORICAL FICTION, AND MOVIES

The autobiographies and historical fiction I recommend here can be used for supplemental reading assignments in social studies classes. They can be used more effectively if a school allows coordination and joint planning between social studies and English teachers.

I do not show entire movies in class, but a brief segment can be very useful for illustrating an idea, a region, or an event. As a rule of thumb, two to five minutes is ideal, ten minutes is maximum. I use movies as “documents” to promote class discussion. As with any document, I give students specific questions to consider or write about.

A. Autobiographies

Autobiographies give students a unique look at events from the inside. However, people who tell their life stories can have an axe to grind, an ideological bias, or a political agenda. They can also be so narrowly focused that the authors are unable to effectively provide historical context. The stories in many of the recommended books center on war and oppression, rather than on ordinary life, which is probably why they first came to public attention.

The historical reliability of some of the accounts discussed here has been disputed, but I believe the broader story remains useful. Students have to read these autobiographies critically as historians examining questionable evidence.

I like to assign books that have teenage characters. In recent years a number of books have appeared by and about child soldiers and “lost boys” in Sudan, but at this point there is none that I am comfortable recommending. These are my recommendation, listed alphabetically by author.

Ishmael Beah (2007). *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux). Beah, from Sierra Leone, claims he was forced to join an army unit as a child soldier when he was thirteen years old then fought in that country’s civil war. He escaped with the help of UNICEF at the age of 16. The accuracy of the memoir has been disputed, but not its powerful message. This book is accessible to high school level readers.

Olaudah Equiano (2006). *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s). First published in London in 1789, this first-hand account of slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade by a formerly enslaved African played a major role in the campaign to abolish the slave trade. Equiano was born along the Niger River in West Africa about 1745. He was kidnapped by slave traders as a boy, survived the middle passage, and eventually became literate and secured his freedom. This is a long, difficult, and emotionally draining book. I recommend assigning sections rather than the entire text.

Zlata Filipovic (1995). *Zlata's Diary*, (New York: Penguin). Zlata Filipovic’s family lives in Sarajevo and struggles to survive during the civil war that follows the collapse of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The book is self-consciously modeled on the *Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl* and is simply written by an eleven-year old girl. My principle misgiving is that it was written with an eye toward publication, which can distort the feelings it is intended to portray. It is a very easy read for middle-level readers.

Anne Frank, Otto Frank and Mirjam Pressler, eds. (1993). *Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl* (New York: Bantam). The book reprints the secret diary of a teenage Jewish girl in The

Netherlands written during World War II. After years of hiding in an attic, Anne and her family are captured by the Nazis and sent to a concentration camp where she dies. While the account is very narrowly focused, the family receives limited news from the outside world, it is an understated, yet powerful personalization of the extermination of six million people because of their ethnicity and religious beliefs. It is an easy read for middle-level readers.

Ji-Li Jiang (2001). *Red Scarf Girl*, (New York: Harper Trophy). When she was twelve-year old, Ji-Li was an enthusiastic member of the youth division of the Red Guard at her school. The story takes place during the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. The book was written after Jiang emigrated to the United States and writing retrospectively, she is critical of the events she describes and the treatment of her family. It is intended for middle-level readers.

Gerald Keegan (1991) *Famine Diary* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press). The authenticity of this book is disputed. The manuscript, which purports to be an autobiographical account of the Great Irish Famine and the Irish Diaspora, first surfaced in the 1890s. Whether it is genuine or not, it is a very accurate historical account told from the perspective of a young schoolteacher. It is an easy read for middle-level readers.

Primo Levi (1959). *Survival in Auschwitz* (Simon and Schuster). Levi was a chemist and a Jew fighting in the Italian underground after Germany seized control of the northern region of the country. He was captured and sent to Auschwitz where a language barrier prevented him from communicating with other camp inmates. Levi remains sane by viewing the insane as a detached scientists. He accidently survives and publishes this memoir in Italian in 1947. I believe his memoir is the best account of the European Holocaust.

Mark Mathabane (1998). *Kaffir Boy* (New York: Free Press). This is a first-person account of life under apartheid in South Africa. Mathabane and his family lived an impoverished life in the

shantytowns surrounding Johannesburg in South Africa. This book is accessible to high school level readers.

Frank McCourt (1996). *Angela's Ashes* (Scribner). A great storyteller, this is McCourt's rendering of growing up in poverty and as an outcast in Depression era Ireland. This book is accessible to high school level readers.

Rigobertu Menchu and Elisabeth Burgos-Debray (1984). *I, Rigobertu Menchu* (Verso). This is an edited first-person account of the life of Nobel Peace Prize winning indigenous activist Rigobertu Menchu. The details of this book have been disputed. Menchu admits that all of the events described here did not actually happen to her, but claims the book is an accurate description of the life and struggles of indigenous people in Guatemala. This book is accessible to high school level readers.

Shlomo Perel and Margot Bettauer Dembo (1999). *Europa, Europa*, (Somerset, NJ: Wiley). Perel was a Jewish teenager with blond hair and blue eyes whose family fled Germany and the Nazi regime just before the outbreak of World War 2. Perel was captured, first by the Russians and then by the Germans, but survived the fate of other Jews because the Nazis mistook him for German and enlisted him in the Hitler Youth. This book is accessible to high school level readers.

Doris Pilkington, also known as Nugi Garimara (2002). *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (New York: Hyperion). The author tells the story of her grandmother who was born from a transient relationship between an Australian Aboriginal women and a European father. British policy was to take mixed race children away from their maternal families and forcefully acculturate them in residential schools. Three girls resisted and trekked over a thousand miles across open desert to be reunited with their own people. It is an easy read for middle-level readers.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2010). *Dreams in a Time of War: A Childhood Memoir* (Pantheon). The author is a Kenyan writer who lived through and describes the nation's struggle for independence from Great Britain. This book is part one of a three part memoir. I find it the most engrossing because of his descriptions of life in a traditional village compound and his family's struggle for him to attend school. This book is recommended for stronger high school level readers.

Loung Ung (2001). *First They Came for My Father* (New York: HarperCollins). This is a first-hand account of the Cambodian genocide. The author's father was a military policeman in the pre-revolutionary government and the family was forced to flee the Khmer Rouge and go into hiding. After her father was captured and killed and the children were separated from their mother, Loung was sent to a camp for orphans where she was trained as a child soldier. This book is accessible to high school level readers.

Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb (2013). *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* (Little, Brown). Malala is a Nobel Prize winning activist for women's rights. She was gravely wounded at the age of fifteen in an assassination attempt because of her role in the struggle for educational opportunities for girls. The book is easily accessible to high school level readers. There is also a children's edition.

B. Historical Fiction

One of the few books I remember actually reading in high school was a fictionalized biography of Napoleon written by the novelist Emil Ludwig (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1926). As a result, Napoleon remained my favorite historical character for decades and I long anticipated traveling to France.

Since then I have read a number of works of historical fiction that are accurate portrayals of time periods, locations, and events. They help me enter the past and experience the lives of the people I am studying. I especially look for work by indigenous authors who are writing about their own cultures and societies. The books are listed alphabetically by author with one title per author.

Chinua Achebe (1994). *Things fall apart* (Anchor). Achebe is an award winning novelist from Nigeria. *Things fall apart*, first published in 1958, is a classic work about the impact of European imperialism on African society in the late nineteenth century. This book is often assigned in high school English classes.

Monica Ali (2008). *Brick lane* (Scribner). This is the story of a Bangladeshi girl who is sent to live in London, England in an arranged marriage. It provides a vivid portrayal of Europe's growing Islamic immigrant community. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Tariq Ali (1998). *The book of Saladin* (Verso). The author is a prominent left-wing British political commentator who is originally from Pakistan. This novelized version of the life of Saladin, the Islamic general who led the resistance to the European Crusades and liberated Jerusalem from Christian rule in 1187, is one of a five-part series that explores different periods and locales in Islamic history. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Julia Alvarez (1995). *In the time of the butterflies* (Pume). This novel tells the story of the four Mirabal sisters, known as Las Mariposas. Three of the sisters were assassinated in 1960 for defying the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic. Their struggle and martyrdom helped to overthrow the dictatorship. This is one of the more easily readable of the recommended titles.

Russell Banks (2004). *The darling* (HarperCollins). This very disturbing novel explores events in a West Africa country, Liberia, during one of the recent bloody civil wars over the control of resources, especially diamonds. The narrator of the book is an American woman who had been married to a Liberian government official. After the murder of her husband she flees and her two sons become child soldiers for one of the competing armies. It is a difficult read for advanced students, but it is definitely worth the effort.

Madison Smartt Bell (1995). *All souls' rising* (Pantheon). This book is part one of a three-part fictionalized account of the Haitian Revolution led by Toussaint L'Ouverture and perhaps is the best novel historical novel I have ever read. Many of the scenes portray graphic violence and brutality, which is an accurate depiction of what took place. It is a difficult read for advanced students, but it is definitely worth the effort.

Andre Brink (1980). *A dry white season* (Penguin). I first learned of this book when I saw the movie. The movie was great. The novel is even better. Brink dissects apartheid through the eyes of an Afrikaner teacher who slowly uncovers injustices he had always ignored. In the background is the 1976 student rebellion in Soweto. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Patrick Chamoiseau (1997). *School days* (University of Nebraska Press). This book looks at education as forced acculturation on the French Caribbean island of Martinique. This is one of the more easily readable of the recommended titles.

Edwidge Danticat (1999). *The farming of bones* (Penguin). The setting of this novel is the Dominican Republic in the late 1930s. Dictator Rafael Trujillo wants to build support for his autocratic rule by stimulating nationalism and through a campaign to "whiten" the country by expelling or killing Black Haitians who live in the border region between the two countries. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Charles Dickens (2007). *Hard times* (Simon & Schuster). First published in 1854, the book is set in a fictitious factory town in England during the Industrial Revolution. It explores class tensions and includes a classic portrayal of a school using the factory model. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Alan Furst (2016) *A hero of France* (Random House). Furst specializes in World War II era historical fiction where anti-Fascists resist Nazi Germany. He has written over a dozen novels. This one focuses on the French Resistance and is one of my favorites. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Denise Giardina (1998). *Saints and villains* (Ballantine). A fictional account based on the actual participation of a German theologian in an unsuccessful plan to assassinate Hitler and overthrow the Nazi regime. The author raises many questions about the obligation of moral and religious individuals to put their lives at risk to resist the immoral actions of others. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Khaled Hosseini (2004). *The kite runner* (Riverhead). This novel uses the story of two boys to explore the turmoil in Afghanistan in the second half of the twentieth century. I did not like the book or movie as much as most critics because it tells its story from the perspective of a privileged family and is very unsympathetic to the people who side with the Islamic rebels. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Yu Hua (2004). *Chronicle of a blood merchant* (Anchor). This book examines life in rural China after the communist revolution is supposed to have transformed society. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Duong Thu Huong (2002). *Paradise of the blind* (Harper Perennial). This book focuses on daily life and family conflicts in Hanoi, Vietnam under communist rule with the Vietnamese war in the background. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Witi Ihimaera (2003). *The whale Rider* (Harcourt). An important question for discussion, one that is explored in this book, is “What does it mean to be part of an indigenous culture, in this case the Maori, in the modern world?” This is one of the more easily readable of the recommended titles.

Ghassan Kanifari (1998). *Men in the Sun and other Palestinian Stories* (Lynne Rienner Publishers). Kanifari was a Palestinian activist and novelist whose family was displaced by the Arab-Israeli wars. This novel tells the story of three Palestinian refugees who leave refugee camps in Lebanon to seek work in Kuwait. It was banned in some Middle Eastern countries because it was critical of local governments. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

John le Carré (2001) *The constant gardener* (Scribner). The wife of a British diplomat in Kenya is assassinated by drug company agents after she uncovers illegal drug testing. The distraught diplomat finally exposes the company. One of le Carré’s best.

Bette Bao Lord (1997). *The middle heart*. (Ballantine). In the forefront are traditional friendships and love stories. In the background are World War II and the mid-twentieth century Chinese Revolution. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Walter Macken (1968). *The silent people* (Macmillan). The second book in a trilogy on Irish history is set in 1826 and looks at the tensions between Ireland and Great Britain that culminate in the Great Irish Famine. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Rohinton Mistry (2001). *A fine balance* (Vintage). By the 1970s India had supposedly outlawed the caste system, but this powerful book shows that it remained deeply imbedded in the

culture and continued to dictate what happened in people's lives. It also examines the government corruption, poverty, and local tyranny that infest what is supposed to be the world's most populous democracy. It is a difficult read for advanced students, but it is definitely worth the effort.

V.S. Naipaul (1979). *A bend in the river* (Knopf). Naipaul is a Nobel Prize winning author, born in Trinidad, of South Asian ancestry. While I find Naipaul out-Britishes the British in his allegiances, he offers a critical view on events in the Third World. *A bend in the river* explores the impact of corruption in an unnamed newly independent country, possibly the Congo. The Nobel committee called Naipaul the heir to Joseph Conrad "as the annalist of the destinies of empires in the moral sense: what they do to human beings." It is a difficult read for advanced students, but it is definitely worth the effort.

Irène Némirovsky (2006). *Suite Française*. (Vintage). This is an amazing book about everyday life and accommodation to defeat in occupied France during World War II. The French are surprisingly petty and the Germans surprisingly human, especially given that the author was born Jewish and wrote the novel while resisting being sent to a concentration camp where she died. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Viet Thanh Nguyen (2015). *The Sympathizer* (Grove). This Pulitzer Prize winning novel offers a complex portrayal of the Vietnam War from the perspective of a Communist sympathizer who is an undercover agent in the United States. The story line can be confusing at times, but the vignettes offer insightful renditions of events, ideologies, and difficulty sustaining revolutionary dreams while fighting wars and after achieving power.

Joseph O'Connor (2002). *The star of the sea* (Penguin). A ship is sailing from famine-stricken Ireland. In back stories readers learn about complex relationships across religion and

class in the British colony exposed by a natural disaster and government indifference. It is accessible to stronger high school readers.

Arundhati Roy (2008). *God of small things* (Random House). The book explores the complexities of religion and caste in India in the 1960s through the eyes of “mixed caste” children who are marginalized by their family. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Mongane Wally Serote (1981). *To every birth its blood* (Heinemann). The book explores the lives of Black Africans living under Apartheid in South Africa. Serote was an anti-Apartheid activist and a leader of the African National Congress, He later became South Africa’s Minister for Arts and Culture. The language in this book is risqué and students, supervisors, and parents should be alerted, but it is worth reading.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, also known as James Ngugi (1989). *Matigari* (Heinemann). Thiong'o is a Kenyan political activist who champions writing in indigenous African languages and has criticized the legacy of imperialism and authoritarian and corrupt governments on the continent. Matigari is a former guerilla who finds he must challenge the new rulers of an independent Kenya to achieve the goals they had fought for in the war for independence. It is easily accessible to high school readers.

Barry Unsworth (1992). *Sacred hunger* (Norton). This novel, which was awarded a British Booker Prize, explores the impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade on enslaved Africans, slave traders, sailors, and European merchants. It is a difficult read for advanced students, but it is definitely worth the effort.

Emile Zola (2004). *Germinal* (Penguin). In the mid-19th century, Zola set out to document the impact of industrialization and modernization on French society in what became a twenty volume series. *Germinal*, which was first published in 1885, focuses on a coal miners’ strike.

While this novel is a work of fiction, it is also a sociological and historical study. It is a difficult read for advanced students, but it is definitely worth the effort.

C. Movies

Even the most interesting documentaries and historical movies have problems that social studies teachers need to consider. Documentaries often have limited interest, fictional accounts frequently sacrifice accuracy for dramatic considerations, and television, especially *The History Channel*, promotes violence, disasters, and sensationalism to attract an audience. Students love Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* (1995), but little in it is historically verifiable and I do not know which part I would show to a class. Selecting a short segment to show a class is a problem even with the best movies.

Even when accuracy is not an issue, there can be other problems. For example, story lines in a number of movies center on a European character, rather than on a member of the culturally marginalized social group it is supposed to portray. In *Cry Freedom* (1987) and *Gandhi* (1982), the narrators are White newspaper reporters. In *Schindler's List* (1993), a European holocaust drama, the central character is a Nazi industrialist. *The Last Samurai* (2003) stars Tom Cruise as an American military advisor who embraces traditional Japanese culture.

We also have to be aware that what students "see" in the film clip may not be what we intend to present. I doubt if any global history teacher would show a segment from a classic Tarzan movies from the 1930s to represent Africa or Africans because the depictions are caricatures and arguably racist. Yet teachers in a workshop I conducted on using movies to teach global history selected movie segments about events in contemporary Africa that under closer examination left viewers with a sense that Black Africans are savage and dependent on White Europeans to

ensure humane behavior. These segments, from *Blood Diamond* (2006), *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), *Tears of the Sun* (2003), *Sometimes in April* (2005), *The Last King of Scotland* (2006), and *Black Hawk Down* (2001), also ignored the impact of imperialism, globalization, the remnants of colonization, and capitalist exploitation on the situations portrayed in the movies. No one selected *The Constant Gardener* (2006), which offers a much more critical account of the West and western corporations in creating the conditions that exist in Africa today.

The following are movies recommended as supplements to the global history curriculum. Many are based on novels mentioned earlier. They are organized by region of the world and are listed in roughly chronological order in each region.

I recommend showing brief, approximately five minute long segments, as “documents” to be evaluated by the class. I also recommend providing students with guiding questions as if they were reading text. Students who are engaged by a movie clip can always watch the rest of the movie on their own.

Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania

Rabbit-Proof Fence (2002) is about European efforts to forcibly assimilate Australian Aborigines in the first half of the twentieth century. It tells the story of three young mixed race girls who escape from a boarding school and attempt to rejoin their extended matriarchal families. Scenes depict Aboriginal life on reservations and the treatment of the children in the boarding school. In *Walkabout* (1971), an aboriginal boy helps two Euro-Australian children stranded in the backcountry to survive. *Whale Rider* (2002) is about efforts to preserve Maori culture in New Zealand and asks: What does it mean to be part of a traditional cultural

community in contemporary society? Scenes show a tribal elder trying to convince young boys to practice the traditional culture.

Latin America and the Caribbean

I recommend four movies about the colonial period. *The Mission* (1986) is about Spanish settlement in South America and the debate over whether indigenous people should be converted or enslaved. *The Last Supper* (1976) is about slavery in 18th century Cuba and *Burn!* (1970) is about British colonialism in the Caribbean. *Sugar Cane Alley* (1984; French with English subtitles) examines life on a plantation in the French-speaking Caribbean.

Latin America and the Caribbean have long histories of left-wing struggles against imperialists and their local allies and these stories have been presented in movie form. *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004) is based on a journal kept by a youthful Ché Guevara in the 1950s. The scenes depicting life and mining in the Andes are particularly powerful. *In the Time of the Butterflies* (2001) tells the story of four sisters known as Los Mariposas (the butterflies) who helped to topple the dictatorial Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic. *Missing* (1982) is about the overthrow of the democratically elected Allende government by U.S. backed forces in Chile and the systematic murder of people allied with the left and the student and labor union movements.

During the 1980s Argentina had a repressive military government that systematically murdered leftists and democratic forces. *The Official Story* (1985) is a Spanish language film about a childless couple living in Buenos Aires who suspect the baby they adopted is the child of “desaparecidos,” disappeared political activists murdered by the military. It won an Academy Award as best foreign film. *The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo* (1985) is a Spanish language

documentary about a group of mothers whose adult children were murdered by the Argentine military and whose grandchildren were kidnap and given to families loyal to the regime. *Death and the Maiden* (1994) is an English language film about a woman from an unnamed Latin American country who encounters a former government official who had tortured and raped her while she was a political prisoner.

There are a number of good movies about recent civil wars in Central America. The opening scenes in *El Norte* (1984; Spanish with English subtitles) are about political and economic oppression in Guatemala. They effectively illustrate the world described by Rigoberta Menchú in her autobiography. *Salvador* (1986) is an American made movie that is sympathetic towards the left-wing peasant revolutionaries and highly critical of the U.S. backed military and death squads. In *Romero* (1989), Archbishop Romero speaks up against the right-wing pro-government death squads that are victimizing the poor of El Salvador and he is assassinated. *Hombres Armados (Men With Guns)* (1997) takes place in an unnamed Central American country where “campesinos” (peasant farmers) are murdered by private mercenaries and police working for the landowners.

Environmental issues are addressed in *The Emerald Forest* (1985) and *The Burning Season, The Chico Mendes Story* (1994). These films examine the impact of development on traditional forest people and exploited workers in the Amazon Rainforest.

Brazil has a developing movie industry that has produced a number of excellent movies. *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* (1985) looks at the repression of the political opposition. *Central Station* (1998) explores the relationship between a retired teacher and an orphan. *City of God* (2002) is a painful examination of poverty and youth gangs in the notorious shantytown near Rio de Janeiro.

Asia

Ran (1985; Japanese with English subtitles) is about conflict in the royal family in 15th-century Japan. *Shogun* (1980) is a made-for-television miniseries about European merchants in Japan. *The Last Samurai* (2003) is not a particularly good movie that celebrates feudal arrangements over modernization, however it does have very good scenes depicting 19th century Japan.

Scenes from *The Last Emperor* (1987) illustrate the opulence of the Forbidden City during the last Chinese dynasty, whereas scenes from *The Empire of the Sun* (1987) show the privileged European community and the extreme poverty of ordinary people living in Shanghai. *Little Buddha* (1994) offers both a look at life in the Himalayas and insights into Buddhist religious beliefs.

A number of movies look at anti-imperialist struggles and challenges to local elites and military governors. *Gandhi* (1982) has many dramatic scenes about Indian life, the struggle for independence, and conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. Especially useful is the depiction of the Salt March. *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1983) is about revolutionary uprisings in Indonesia. *Beyond Rangoon* (1995) and *Indochine* (1992) are about revolutionary times in South East Asia. *The Killing Fields* (1984) examines the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

Interesting movies to recently come out of China include *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), about an educated woman who becomes the fourth wife of a feudal nobleman in the 1920s, *The King of Masks* (1999), about an itinerant performer who adopts a homeless boy as an apprentice, only to discover that the boy is a girl, and *Not One Less* (1999), about education in rural China.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Sankofa (1993) examines the Atlantic Slave Trade at its point of origins as does the opening scenes in the epic *Roots* (1977). *Shaka Zulu* (1986) has some useful scenes on the Zulu effort to resist British rule. *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980) is the story of a traditional San living in the Kalahari Desert whose tribe has no knowledge of the outside world until they discover a soda bottle that was dropped from an airplane. *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988) is about a scientist studying mountain gorillas who mounts a campaign to save them from extinction.

The anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa is covered in *Cry the Beloved Country* (1951/1995), *Cry Freedom* (1987), *A World Apart* (1988), *A Dry White Season* (1989), *Sarafina!* (1992), and *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013). *A Dry White Season* includes scenes where the police attack student protesters in Soweto in 1976. *In My Country* (2004) and *Invictus* (2009) examine attempts to build national unity after majority rule is implemented.

A number of movies have focused on recent conflicts in Africa, which are often rooted in the European colonial past. *Nowhere in Africa* (2001) is German film about Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany who settle in Kenya. It won an Academy Award as best foreign film. *Lumumba* (2001) looks at the continuing impact of colonialism on the Congo. *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) and *Sometimes in April* (2005) are both about the Rwandan genocide. *Blood Diamond* (2006) is about the impact of the illegal diamond trade on West African societies. *Beasts of No Nation* (2015) is about a young boy who becomes a child soldiers in an unnamed African country. *The Last King of Scotland* (2006), which stars Academy Award winner Forest Whitaker as Idi Amin, is about his brutal reign in Uganda. *The Constant Gardener* (2006) looks at the exploitation of vulnerable African communities by European pharmaceutical companies. *Captain Phillips* starring Tom Hanks is the story of a cargo vessel seized by Somali pirates off the coast of East

Africa. The pirates are portrayed as human beings living through enormous stress rather than dismissed as monsters.

North Africa and the Middle East

The Battle of Algiers (1966; French with English subtitles) is about the Algerian uprising against French colonialism. It raises the question, “Who are the terrorists?” Terrorism is also addressed in the movie *Paradise Now* (2005), about two Palestinian young men plotting a suicide bomb attack in Tel Aviv. *Babel* (2006) is about the inability of people to connect with each other in a global age. It includes stark scenes of life in rural Morocco. Movies have explored the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from different perspectives. They include *Munich* (2005), about the Israeli retaliation for a Palestinian attack on Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics and the documentary *Blood and Tears* (2007). *The Insult* (2017) is a French/Lebanese movie about a conflict that erupts in between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon. *The Last Men in Aleppo* (2017) is a documentary, in Arabic, that focuses on civilian medical personnel during the Syrian Civil War.

Ancient and pre-industrial Europe

Spartacus (1960) is about a slave rebellion during the Roman Republic and is much better than *Gladiator* (2000). *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1981; French with English subtitles) is about French peasant life during the Crusades. *Beckett* (1964) and *A Man for All Seasons* (1966) are about conflicts between church and king in England. *Amazing Grace* (2007) was produced in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It tells the story of English abolitionists at the turn of the 19th century.

Modern Europe

Movies about the early industrial era include *David Copperfield* (1999) and *Germinal* (1993; French with English subtitles), which examines the impact of industrialization on French coal miners. There are excellent scenes of work, a strike, and women organizing against local merchants. *The Organizer* (1963; Italian with English subtitles) examines similar scenes of industrial unrest. *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006) and *Michael Collins* (1996) are about the post-World War I Irish independence movement and civil war.

All Quiet on the Western Front (1930 and 1979) portrays trench warfare during World War I. Similar scenes are depicted in *Legends of the Fall* (1994). *Paths of Glory* (1949) is about the way French troops are treated by their officers. In *Gallipoli* (1981), young Australians enlist in the British army to see the world and are used as cannon fodder on the Turkish Front. *Enemies at the Gate* (1991) is about the Battle of Stalingrad, perhaps the major turning point of World War II. *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), about the Greek resistance, remains my favorite movie about World War II. Recent powerful World War II movies include *The King's Speech* (2010), *Dunkirk* (2017), and *Darkest Hour* (2017).

Bridge of Spies (2015) is a Cold War thriller with scenes showing the construction of the Berlin Wall. *Good-Bye Lenin* (2003) is a humorous look at the end of communism in Eastern Europe, while *Welcome to Farewell to Sarajevo* (1997) and *No Man's Land* (2001) looks at civil war in the Balkans after the collapse of Yugoslavia. *Strike* (2006) tells the story of Polish dockworkers and the Solidarity campaign that helped overthrow a pro-Soviet communist regime.

European Holocaust

The Garden of the Finzi-Continis (1971; Italian with English subtitles), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961; with scenes from the concentration camps), *Playing for Time* (1980), *Europa, Europa* (1990), *Schindler's List* (1993), and *The Truce* (1996), examine Nazi efforts to exterminate European Jews. *Defiance* (2008), *The Pianist* (2002), and *Uprising* (2001) are very good movies about Jewish resistance. *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* (2005) is about German students who oppose against Hitler. *Night and Fog* (1955; French with English subtitles) and *Weapons of the Spirit* (1990) are important documentaries. *Weapons of the Spirit* focuses on French Huguenots who help Jews escape the Nazis. *Operation Finale* (2018) is about the capture of Adolf Eichmann, architect of the Final Solution, who was smuggled out of Argentina to Israel to stand trial. Note: I do not use *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (2008). It is completely fictional and I do not want to promote sympathy for a concentration camp commander because his son was inadvertently killed in a gas chamber along with millions of Jews.