

4

UNIT 4: HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND THE MASS MEDIA

Unit Overview

This unit explores the links between media, history, and literature. The unit focuses on a world history event—the take-over of the Congo in 1890 by Leopold II of Belgium. Students explore how writers have written about this event through various media venues, including:

- journalism (both factual and investigative journalism)
- literature (fiction and non-fiction books)
- film and television (documentaries and made-for-TV movies)

Students learn about the real story that serves as background for the novel by Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*. They explore how writers of fiction and historians shape our perception and understanding of the past. Students examine the role of investigative journalists and activists in writing the “first draft of history.” Students also learn about the role of budgets and writing in the film production process. They write a fictional film scene based on an actual event from history.

This unit provides the opportunity for much discussion of concepts related to Character Education in the context of complex social issues like colonialism. These concepts may be particularly valuable: **courage, responsibility, faith, loyalty, fairness, justice, self-direction, and perseverance.**

The “essential questions” of this unit are:

- **How do different representations of history shape our understanding of the past, the present, and the future?**
- **What role do journalists and activists play in identifying social problems and what role does the public play in helping to solve these problems?**
- **How has racism affected our understanding of social, historical, and political issues in Africa? What role does the mass media play in reflecting and/or shaping such attitudes?**



4

UNIT 4: HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND THE MASS MEDIA

Reflect on the connections between journalism, history, and literature by exploring colonialism in Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

4.1 Mediated History

Compare and contrast a documentary to a fiction film.

4.2 Leads about Literature

Examine lead paragraphs from four different book reviews.

4.3 Spin and Counterspin

Read an interview with Adam Hochschild on the 20th century's first investigative journalists and activists.

4.4 Cast the Congo Characters

Write the casting descriptions to select actors to portray the three historical figures.

4.5 Writing a Treatment

Analyze the elements of a treatment, the document that is the first step in creating a TV program.

4.6 What's in a Budget?

Analyze how budgets for TV shows are developed.

PRODUCTION ACTIVITY

Write a Treatment for a Film

Write a treatment for a film based on a historic event and historic figures.

4

UNIT 4: HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND THE MASS MEDIA

CONNECTIONS TO MARYLAND STATE CONTENT STANDARDS

The *Assignment: Media Literacy* curriculum has been designed to align with Maryland State Content Standards. Many of the activities and lessons are modeled upon the structure and format used in the MSPAP tests for language arts and social studies.

For each unit, the standards are listed for each subject area. The numbers at the end of each line refer to specific instructional goals identified in the Maryland Content Standards.

Use the chart below to identify the specific instructional objectives developed in each unit of the program.

HIGH SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS

1.12.1	Concepts of Print and Structural Features of Text (all)
1.12.5	Comprehension and Interpretation of Informational Text (all)
1.12.6	Evaluation of Informational Text (all)
2.12.1	Characteristics of Literary Genres (#1,3)
2.12.2	Comprehension, Interpretations, and Analysis of Text (all)
2.12.3	Comprehension of Literary Text from Diverse Cultures (all)
2.12.4	Evaluation of Literary Works
3.12.1	Organization and Focus (all)
3.12.2	Research (all)
3.12.3	Personal Narrative Writing (all)
3.12.7	Persuasive Writing (all)
4.12.2	Comprehension and Application of Standard English Language Conventions
5.12.1	Active Listening Strategies
5.12.2	Comprehension and Analysis (all)
6.12.1	Organization and Delivery Strategies (all)

HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES

1.12.1	Demonstrate understanding of the meaning, implication, and impact of historical events and hypothesize how events could have taken other directions.
1.12.3	Interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.
1.12.5	Analyze the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.
1.12.7	Analyze an author's implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions and beliefs about a subject.
1.12.8	Synthesize information from multiple sources and make distinctions between sound generalizations and misleading oversimplifications.
1.12.9	Explain how various historical interpretations vary according to prevailing orthodoxies of the period of their writing.
1.12.11	Use clear research questions and coherent research methodology to elicit and present evidence from primary and secondary sources using available library, electronic, and human resources.
2.12.3	Analyze how the character and meaning of a place is related to its political, economic, social, and cultural characteristics, including an analysis of perspectives and perceptions that different groups hold about contemporary places and regions in the world.
3.12.10	Analyze how differing points of view and self-interests play a role in conflict over territory.
7.12.1	Evaluate the ways in which the public agenda is shaped and set, including the influence of political parties, interest groups, lobbyists, the media, and public opinion.

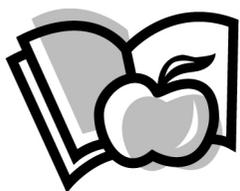
HIGH SCHOOL MATHEMATICS

7.0 Process of Problem Solving	Students will demonstrate their ability to apply a wide variety of mathematical concepts, processes, and skills to solve a broad range of problems.
8.0 Process of Communication	Students organize and consolidate their mathematical thinking in order to analyze and use information, and present ideas with words, symbols, visual displays, and technology.
9.0 Process of Reasoning	Students will demonstrate their ability to reason mathematically, using inductive and deductive reasoning, to evaluate mathematical situations. Students will justify and draw conclusions.
10.0 Process of Connections	Students will demonstrate their ability to relate and apply mathematics within the discipline, in other content areas, and in daily life.

HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE

Content Standards

Outcome III	Creative Expression and Production: Expectation A, Indicator 6.
Outcome IV	Aesthetic Criticism: Expectation A, Indicator 1,2; Expectation C, Indicator 1.



TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.1 | MEDIATED HISTORY

Students compare and contrast two scenes from a documentary and a historical drama about the events in the Belgian Congo in the beginning of the 20th century. The activity uses the critical concepts of media literacy to explore differences in purpose, motive, and point of view.

Getting Started

Explain that students will be seeing two different types of media messages about an event that happened in world history—the take over of the Congo by King Leopold II of Belgium. You might refer to the Congo on a world map and point out that, at the time of the takeover, the Congo was about the size of the United States west of the Mississippi River.

Pass out Activity Sheet 4.1 and review the questions. Then show each video segment. After each segment, ask students to write the answers to the questions. Then review student responses using the answers provided below:

Questions and Answers:

1. Who created this message and what is the purpose?

Great Books: created by Cronkite-Ward Productions for The Learning Channel; the purpose is to teach about the value and continuing relevance of the great works of English literature.

Heart of Darkness: a film adaptation of the novella by Joseph Conrad, created by Turner Network Television; the purpose is to entertain (and possibly to teach about the complexities of human nature).

2. What type of message is this?

Great Books: documentary

Heart of Darkness: made-for-TV movie (fiction film)

3. What techniques were used to attract and hold your attention?

Great Books: The scene uses a map, dramatic statistics and facts, black-and-white images of colonial activities, and an interview with an author.

Heart of Darkness: The scene uses a relationship between two men, images of Africans who are chained and physically disabled.

4. What meaning does the message have for you? How might others interpret it differently?

Great Books: Student answers will vary. Students may bring negative associations to the genre of documentary, identifying this programming as “boring” or not targeted at them.

Heart of Darkness: Student answers will vary. Students may experience feelings of repulsion at the horrifying images of maltreated and abused Africans.

5. From whose point of view is the message told? What information or points of view may be missing from this message?

Great Books: The segment viewed tells the story from a historical perspective, using a historian who outlines the growth of colonialism in Africa. European colonialism is described in ways that emphasize its economic values. What’s missing? Because only a small segment of the documentary is shown, much information is missing, including the value of resources taken out of Africa, and the current political and social situation in the Congo.

Heart of Darkness: This segment shows the experience of arriving in the Congo from a white person’s perspective. European colonialism is visually represented in ways that show it to be destructive and inhumane to the native people of the land. What’s missing? Because only a small segment of the film is shown, we lack information to understand the relationship between the two men depicted in the drama.

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.1

MEDIATED HISTORY

Instructions: After watching the two video segments, answer the questions below.

1. Who created this message and what is the purpose?

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VIDEO #1

VIDEO #2

2. What type of message is this?

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VIDEO #1

VIDEO #2

3. What techniques were used to attract and hold your attention?

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VIDEO #1

VIDEO #2

4. What meaning does the message have for you? How might others interpret it differently?

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VIDEO #1

VIDEO #2

5. From whose point of view is the message told?

What information or points of view may be missing from this message?

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VIDEO #1

VIDEO #2



TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.2 | LEADS ABOUT LITERATURE

Students analyze the purpose, construction techniques, and subtext of four different book reviews of King Leopold’s Ghost, a non-fiction history of the take over of the Belgian Congo at the turn of the 20th century.

Background

Book reviews are a great way to learn about new topics and issues—and to decide if you might be interested in reading or buying a specific new book. Hundreds of articles and interviews followed the publication of *King Leopold’s Ghost*. This activity introduces students to the conflict and controversy surrounding the Congo Free State from 1880 through 1907, while at the same time providing a lesson in how journalists construct their feature stories and columns to attract and hold reader attention.

Getting Started

Pass out Activity Sheets 4.2 (A) and 4.2 (B) and review the instructions with students. After reading the leads for the four book reviews, ask students to answer the questions on the activity sheet. You may want to assign this as an in-class reading and writing, as a small-group discussion activity, or as a homework assignment.

Questions and Answers:

- 1. What attention-getting techniques are used?**
 - a. anecdote: B and C
 - b. shocking statistic: A
 - c. comparison between two events: D
- 2. What assumptions are made about the readers?**
 - a. audience are readers of literature: D
 - b. passages A, B, and C (since all provide key information about the time and place)

3. Which passages state an opinion?

Passage B states that Hochschild “has produced a history like none other.” Passages C and D use a technique that is sometimes called a delayed lead, where the writer sets up a situation in order to make a point.

4. Which passages use horror imagery?

Passage C is more emotionally charged than A or D. Words to circle include “hands full of fire,” “slaughtered,” “campaign of murder, forced labour, and starvation,” and “blood drenched.”

Circled words for the other passages include “killed,” “died of starvation,” “worked to death,” and “atrocities” (A); “shrivelled human head,” “systematically despoiled,” and “rape” (D).

Review the Main Facts

Although you and your students may not have read this book, the book reviews are informative as well as persuasive, providing details about history. After reading the reviews, check students’ comprehension by seeing if they can answer these questions:

Who was King Leopold and when did he rule?

King Leopold II was king of Belgium between 1880 and 1909.

What is the present-day name for the Congo? The country has been named Zaire.

What controversy surrounded the politics of the Congo in the early 1960s? In the 1960s, the U.S. government tried to assassinate the first democratically elected leader of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba, because they feared he would lead the country toward communism.

What Congo resources were coveted by countries far beyond Africa? The country is rich in mineral resources, but European countries valued the ivory, gold, diamonds, rubber, and human resources.

Who was murdered in the Congo? How, and by whom? Between five to ten million Congolese were murdered during the colonial empire of King Leopold. The killers were men who worked for the Belgian leader and business interests he hired to exploit the country’s resources.

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.2 (A)**LEADS ABOUT LITERATURE**

Instructions: Literature does not belong solely to the poets and novelists. Non-fiction writers and essayists also compose literature. But what about journalists? When Adam Hochschild published his non-fiction book *King Leopold's Ghost* in newspapers around the world soon followed. Read the lead paragraphs from reviews below, then answer the questions that follow on the next page.

Passage A:

Salon.com, 9-9-98

In *King Leopold's Ghost*, journalist Adam Hochschild chronicles the depredations of Belgian rule of the Congo (today's Zaire) between the 1880s and 1909, when Leopold, the king of Belgium, died. During this period, five million to ten million people were killed, or died of starvation, disease, and being worked to death. All of this for rubber, harvested from the thick vines that contained that precious gelatinous sap. Hochschild understandably wanted to know why so few of us have ever heard about the atrocities of Leopold's rule.

Passage B:

The Financial Times, London, 4-3-99

In 1961, Adam Hochschild was a student visiting Leopoldville. A drunken CIA agent was boasting how they had organized the murder of Patrice Lumumba, and driven the body of the slain Congolese leader round the city in the boot of the agent's car to find a place where it could be disposed of. Hochschild never forgot the Congo, and three decades later he has produced a history like none other.

Passage C:

The Vancouver Sun, 3-14-99

First, they killed all the men, women and children they could find. Then the soldiers passed through the villages, their hands full of fire. "A party of men had been detailed with torches to fire every hut," wrote Edgar Canisius, the young American officer in command. "As we progressed, a line of smoke hung over the jungle for many miles, announcing to the natives far and wide that civilization was dawning."

Canisius wasn't writing about Vietnam. His war was on another continent, and more than a half century earlier. The natives the young officer slaughtered were members of the Budja people of the Congo River Basin, and Canisius was one of the white mercenaries from Europe and North America who conducted, during the last decades of the 19th century and first of the 20th, a campaign of murder, forced labour and starvation there for King Leopold II of Belgium, the proprietor and CEO of the blood drenched Congo Free State.

Passage D:

London Sunday Times, 4-18-99

Many readers have been chilled by the images in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, such as Marlow's boat rising and falling on the greasy swell, its guns firing shells into the continent of Africa at regular intervals for no clear reason, or the wooden posts in front of Kurtz's house, each one topped with a shrivelled human head.

Conrad's novel can fruitfully be read not as allegory, fable or myth, but as an accurate portrayal of events in the Congo at the end of the last century. Under the eye of King Leopold of the Belgians, who ran the Congo as his personal fiefdom, it was systematically despoiled of rubber, ivory and people. Conrad, whose political views were far from anti-imperialist, described Leopold's rape of central Africa as "the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience."

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.2 (B)

LEADS ABOUT LITERATURE

Instructions: Answer the questions below using the excerpts from newspaper reviews of Adam Hochschild’s book, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, found on the preceding page.

Questions:

- Lead paragraphs are perhaps the most important part of a journalist’s article, at least in terms of hooking and holding a reader. When writing a feature story or column, journalists need not stick to the journalism jigsaw puzzle for news stories: Who-did-what-to-whom-when-and-why? In writing about *King Leopold’s Ghost*, which passage or passages—A, B, C, or D—uses the following attention-getting techniques? Write the letter in the space below.

an anecdote (or interesting story) to appeal to the reader	
a shocking statistic	
a comparison between two seemingly unsimilar events, people, or ideas	

- Journalists also write with a specific audience in mind. In doing so, the writer makes assumptions about that audience. Which passage or passages—A, B, C, or D—makes these assumptions about the reader? Write the letter in the space below.

the audience are readers of classic literature	
the audience may not be knowledgeable about the historical period covered by the book	

- Journalists write with a specific purpose in mind—in the case of book reviews, that purpose is not to inform but rather to influence or persuade. Which passage or passages states an opinion about Hochschild’s book? What is that opinion?

- Three of the passages use “horror” in their headlines. Circle specific words or phrases in each passage that seem to mirror the horror of which Hochschild writes in his book.



TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.3 | SPIN AND COUNTERSPIN

Students learn about the role of the missionaries and investigative journalists who first exposed to the world the horrors of King Leopold's regime.

Background

It's important for students to realize the connections between journalism and history. Many times our understanding of an event is shaped by the people who cared enough to first write about it.

Getting Started

This is an ideal article to use as an oral reading. Pass out copies of Activity Sheet 4.3. Assign students the various paragraphs and ask them to pre-read the paragraph in preparing to read it aloud. You can be the person asking the questions as they read. Since the interview is a transcript, an oral reading captures the tone of the speakers well.

The questions can be used for in-class writing or for homework. Or you may want to have students discuss these questions in a small group, or involve students in discussing these questions as a large group.

SPIN AND COUNTERSPIN

Adam Hochschild, author of *King Leopold's Ghost*, discussed the role of the media in exposing the horrors of Leopold II's rule over the Congo. This interview appeared on *FAIR's CounterSpin*.

Q: King Leopold was able to portray himself as one of the world's great philanthropists and humanitarians. How did that happen?

AH: He sure did, and this is one of the fascinating parts of the story to me, that here he was running essentially a massive slave labor regime. And maybe I should say something about how that operated. Basically, gathering wild rubber in the African rain forest is very labor intensive. The way that they forced people to do this was they would send soldiers in village after village and hold the women hostage until the men had gone out and gathered a quota each month of wild rubber, something which took most of the month.

Q: What happened if the quota wasn't reached?

AH: People would be killed. Sometimes they would kill everybody in the village in order to send a message to the next village that we mean business here. . . . So while all this was going on, King Leopold very effectively was portraying himself to the world as a disinterested philanthropist, someone who was involved in Africa purely for humanitarian purposes to bring civilization to these benighted natives, to invite missionaries in to spread Christianity. He was not making a profit, he said. He was there purely for philanthropic purposes, and until news of what was going on began to leak out, the world believed it.

Q: What roles did journalists play in this?

AH: There were only a small number of white men in the Congo, only a few thousand Europeans. They worked for the

king. . . . There were a handful of horrified witnesses who were British, Swedish, and American missionaries who were there, who saw the population being decimated, people starving to death, people fleeing into the rain forest to avoid the regime. They tried to tell the world about it but they didn't have much media savvy. They had access to missionary journals but not the mainstream press. As a result, very little information leaked out. . . . The person who really blew the whistle was a black American journalist named George Washington Williams. After he had been traveling for several months, he sat down on the banks of the Congo River and wrote a remarkable document, which was "An Open Letter to King Leopold II." It was published in newspapers, both in Europe and the United States, created a tremendous ruckus, was really the first comprehensive exposé written of this regime. Williams, very sadly, however, died of tuberculosis on his way home from Africa, so he never had the time to write the book about this, or to take part in the international campaign that later was mounted against it.

For the next ten years very little information leaked out. Then the major journalist who comes into the story is a remarkable Englishman named Edmund Dean Morel. . . . He went to the head of the shipping line and said, something terrible is going on here. We can't be a party to it. The head of the shipping line told him to get lost, and when that didn't work, he tried to promote him to another job in another country, and when that didn't work, he tried to pay him some money to shut up. Morel wouldn't shut up. He quit his job and in the

space of three or four years he became the greatest British investigative journalist of his time, and for ten years he worked sixteen hours a day trying to put his story of slave labor in King Leopold's Congo on the world's front pages. And he succeeded.

Q: You say in your book that in one year Morel sent 7,000 letters in carrying out his activism again King Leopold's slave state.

AH: That's true. He did nothing but write all day long. He wrote letters. He wrote pamphlets, he wrote books, he edited a weekly newspaper. . . . He knew what any investigative reporter today knows, which is that to get people to pay attention you have to be absolutely correct in what you say, everything has to be documented and you also have to write in a way that people will want to read it.

Q: How would you answer critics or people who say that one shouldn't mix journalism with activism?

AH: I think that there's something of a myth that there is a distinction between factual journalism and opinion journalism. Which facts you choose to talk about is a

political decision, and I just think that whether journalists believe that they're writing straight reportage or believe that they're writing something that's more of an opinion, you let your passion drive you towards ferreting out the facts of the story.

Q: With the Congo getting some news media attention these days—it's in the middle of a widespread war involving more than half a dozen African countries—you'd think that history would be recounted occasionally. Why are we not hearing these stories of the past more frequently?

AH: One of the tragedies of what's happened in Africa, one of the effects of colonialism, is that it's robbed people not only of their natural resources but also of their history. . . . Many Africans have told me that a lot of the material in *King Leopold's Ghost* comes as news to them, not that they didn't know that colonialism was brutal or that ancestors of theirs died, but censorship forbade the details of what happened from being written about throughout Africa in the colonial period . . . the conquerors wrote the schoolbooks.

Questions:

1. Elsewhere in this interview, Adam Hochschild describes the King Leopold story as one of spin and counterspin from one hundred years ago. What was the "spin" and who was promoting this false idea to the public? What was the "counterspin"?
2. Using context clues in the interview, explain what Hochschild means by "mainstream press." Why would a missionary journal not be considered "mainstream" press?
3. Using context clues again, explain what Hochschild means by "media savvy."
4. In what way was Morel "media savvy"?
5. What reason does Hochschild give for why George Washington Williams was not more effective in his attempts at counterspin?
6. According to Hochschild, why are some Africans not fully aware of the atrocities committed on their people a century ago?
7. What two types of journalism are discussed in this interview? Provide an explanation of each.





TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.4 | CAST THE CONGO CHARACTERS

Students take on the role of casting director to select actors to play the roles of the three men who exposed the horrors of the Congo to the world. In writing the casting call for a Hollywood movie based on the historical event, students study the real-life description of characters, look at old photos of the three men, and explore how “star power” may help the film be financially successful.

Getting Started

Ask students about their knowledge of the job of casting director. Students may know that casting directors are involved in selecting the actors to play the various roles in a film, play, or television program.

Provide Activity Sheets 4.4 (A) and 4.4 (B) and introduce the assignment. Show the video which displays old photos of the three historical figures and give students a few minutes to look at them.

Studying the Character Sheet

Invite students to read the character chart shown on Activity Sheet 4.4 (B) carefully. The chart introduces students to three individuals who played a role in exposing the exploitation of the Congo: William Sheppard and George Washington Williams, both African-American missionaries; and Edmund Dean Morel, a shipping clerk and writer whose anger at the atrocities he discovered triggered the first international human rights movement.

The chart also illustrates how a writer reconstructs history, beginning with a historical figure, researching his or her life history, and selecting details to create anecdotes. The second column on this chart is narrative writing from Adam Hochschild’s book, *King Leopold’s Ghost*.

Students Write the Casting Call

You may want students to work together in teams of three to complete this activity. Ask students to brainstorm the different personality traits and physical descriptions for each character. Encourage them to identify two or three celebrities who might be appropriate for the roles. If students work as a team, each person should write a description of one character.

It's important for students to realize that, in writing the casting call, they must also imagine the relationships between and among the three characters as well as the twists and turns of the plot. Students should reflect on how the audience will identify with the characters as they watch the action on the screen.

Remind students that there are two target audiences for a casting call: the agent and the actor. An effective casting call should conjure up an image of the character and spark an actor's interest in playing the role.

Review the format for a business letter to help students strengthen their ability to master this format.

CAST THE CONGO CHARACTERS

CASTING FOR KING LEOPOLD'S PLAYGROUND

A new film about the real-life horror of Belgium's rule over Central Africa in the 19th century and the three courageous heroes who exposed the horror to the world and helped bring an end to colonial rule.

Instructions: You've been asked to assist the casting director in preparing the materials to send out to the agents who represent actors. Write a casting memo that provides guidelines to consider in selecting the actors for these three roles. Be sure to include the following:

- A brief description of the character and his contribution to the dramatic action
- A list of the character's personality traits, lifestyle, and habits
- A physical description of the character

STEP ONE: Review the three descriptions of the characters provided on the next page and look at the old photos of the three men on the video.

STEP TWO: Brainstorm a list of personality characteristics, physical traits, and other information that helps to create a "snapshot" of how each character looks and acts when brought to life in the film. Write a paragraph to describe each character.

STEP THREE: Keep in mind that to be a success, movies need a combination of "star power" and "fresh faces." At least one of the three characters *must* be a well-known Hollywood actor or celebrity in order for the movie to be financially successful at the box office. Identify your three or four top choices for famous actors who might be interested in these roles.

STEP FOUR: Format your document as a business letter to the attention of Tiffany Demara, Casting Director, Four Winds Productions, Inc., 4501 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10019

Leading Characters for King Leopold's Playground:

- WILLIAM SHEPPARD
- GEORGE WASHINGTON WILLIAMS
- E. D. MOREL



UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.4 (B)
CAST THE CONGO CHARACTERS
Character Chart: Historical Figures
WILLIAM SHEPPARD

<p>Born 1865 in Virginia, the son of slave; studied to become a missionary; traveled to Africa in 1890; spoke several African languages; skillful hunter; asked by his Presbyterian mission to investigate rumors of atrocities by the army of King Leopold in the region of the rubber harvests; wrote news articles about the trading companies who force men and women to work making rubber; Belgians put him on trial for libel; news of his Congo trial spreads around the world; found not guilty; dies in 1927 in America.</p>	<p><i>Description of African soldiers in the rubber harvest region:</i> On the day he reached the marauders' camp, his eye was caught by a large number of objects being smoked. The chief "conducted us to a framework of sticks under which was burning a slow fire, and there they were, the right hands, I counted them, 81 in all." The chief told Sheppard, "See! Here is our evidence. I always have to cut off the right hands of those we kill in order to show the State how many we have killed."</p>
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GEORGE WASHINGTON WILLIAMS

<p>African-American journalist; traveled to Africa in 1890; witnessed slave labor; wrote "An Open Letter to King Leopold II," a document denouncing the atrocities and promoting human rights; document's publication in newspapers triggered a world wide outcry; died from tuberculosis on return journey to England.</p>	<p><i>Description of Williams writing his "Open Letter":</i> At the Stanley Falls station on this July day, a forty-year-old man sits down in a white-hot blaze of anger. In a graceful, energetic hand, he begins writing. Perhaps he sits outside, his back against a palm trunk, perhaps he borrows the desk of the station clerk . . . The document that flows from the man's pen over the next day or two is a milestone in the literature of human rights and investigative journalism.</p>
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EDMUND DEAN MOREL

<p>British; father died when he was boy; at 15 took a job in Paris as a clerk to support his mother who was ill; spoke French; wrote business articles on African trade issues; in the late 1890s, he began working for a Liverpool shipping company doing business with Belgium; a few years after discovering the horror of Leopold's Congo, he leaves his job and begins writing about the atrocities, igniting the first international human rights movement.</p>	<p><i>Description of him discovering the truth of Leopold's Congo:</i> The year is 1897 or 1898. Try to imagine him, briskly stepping off a cross-Channel steamer, a forceful, burly man, in his mid-twenties . . . At the docks of the big port of Antwerp, he sees his company's ships arriving filled to the hatch covers with valuable cargoes of rubber and ivory. But when they cast off their hawsers to steam back to the Congo . . . what they carry is mostly army officers, firearms, and ammunition. There is no trade going on here!</p>
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 SOURCE: *King Leopold's Ghost* by Adam Hochschild



TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.5 | WRITING A TREATMENT

This activity involves students in critically analyzing the content and structure of a treatment, the written document used to sell a concept for a film or TV show to a network. This activity prepares students to write their own treatment, which is the Production Activity for this unit.

Background

It's very unusual for students to get the opportunity to read the "behind-the-scenes" writing of media professionals. That is why they may enjoy the opportunity to see how much writing occurs before anyone on a film or television program ever picks up a camera.

Ask students if they know what a treatment is. A **treatment** is a persuasive document that outlines the idea for a film or TV show. The treatment is given to the network or other funding source and is used to help visualize what the show will be about.

Since the purpose of a treatment is to sell an idea to a film company or TV network, a treatment must be written in a way that will engage the network officials into investing large amounts of money into the project.

Analyzing the Treatment

You may want students to answer the questions in the margins as an in-class writing or as homework. Or you may want to explore these questions through small-group or whole-class discussion.

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.5 (A)

WRITING A TREATMENT

Instructions: The excerpts below come from a treatment written by Marty Koughan for the Great Books Heart of Darkness documentary. The treatment is not reproduced here in its entirety. Knowing what you know now about Heart of Darkness and the history of the times, answer the questions in the pull-outs.

Uses narrative writing; captures sounds as well as sights to create the scene.

TEASER

The sound of drums. The rhythmic chants of a Central African tribe. Suddenly, the witch doctor emerges from his grass hut and approaches those who have come to be healed. He takes out a knife and thrusts it into the chest of one kneeling believer. The blood is drained into a bowl—to remove the evil spirits that are afflicting him.

We are witnessing a tribal ritual happening today. The rite being performed is centuries old. When the first European explorers witnessed such ceremonies, they were aghast. This was primitive, savage, unchristian. The only hope for the souls of these barbarians was to impose Western civilization and Christian beliefs. It became the mantra of colonialism.

The rituals have endured. Western thoughts and beliefs did not turn out to be salvation for “these savages.” In fact, the Western “pilgrims” turned out in many ways to be more primitive, more brutal, more savage than the Africans they came to enlighten.

In the last year of the 19th century, Joseph Conrad wrote of this cruelty and hypocrisy in *Heart of Darkness*. It is a vivid tale of man’s worst instinct brought to the service of man’s best intentions. Its message is as relevant today as ever.

Uses heading. To what does this refer?

ACT I: The End of Innocence

“They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretense, because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew . . .”

Our story opens with a montage of sounds and images from turn-of-the-century Europe. Victorian England. A world that was orderly, stable, serene. Mannered gentlemen with top hats. Proper ladies with long dresses and parasols. It was a time of a self-satisfaction, guided by the belief that their society and culture were destined to dominate the world.

Heart of Darkness, written in the last year of the 19th century by Joseph Conrad, has been called by critics the best short novel in the English language. Conrad would become one of the best known novelists of his time.

Begins with a dramatic scene set in the present day. What dramatic scene would you suggest as a teaser? Why?

Sums up in a sentence the theme of the novel that will be the focus of the film. But is this an accurate interpretation?

Opens with quoted lines from novella. What other quote—literary or journalistic—could open this first section?

Description suggests visuals. How would you as filmmaker capture this on camera?

Uses quote from historian for credibility. Does quote fit the section heading? Does it or does it not mirror the opening scene to this section?

“The 1890s were a very anxious time,” observes Dr. Laurence Davies of Dartmouth. “It was outwardly stable, yet artists of the period were picking up on all sorts of anxiety, reflecting a brutal time coming. There was a disease, a malaise, a fretting and worrying.”

Heart of Darkness is the story of a seaman named Marlow who captained a steamboat on the Congo River during the height of the Belgian colonization. Marlow tells of the one trip to relieve the chief of the most distant outpost, one Mr. Kurtz, the most successful ivory trader and a man of considerable reputation. Marlow ultimately finds that the enlightened civilizer has become a vicious, power-hungry tyrant.

Each section opens in the same manner, with quoted lines from the novella. While these lines are spoken, what images would you show?

Act III: A Man Called Kurtz

“You should have heard him say, ‘My ivory.’ Oh, yes, I heard him. ‘My intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—’ Everything belonged to him. It made me hold my breath . . .”

Nearly a century later, Conrad’s Mr. Kurtz remains one of the enduring enigmas of modern fiction. In the third act, we will explore the character of Kurtz from the inside—through the eyes of actor John Malkovich, who played Kurtz in a recent TV movie. Malkovich, known for his skill portraying dark, brooding characters, recalls Kurtz as one of his most challenging roles. . . . Kurtz was both the scholar who wrote reports for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs—and the savage who decorated his station with the skulls of his enemies.

Mentions big-name actor. Explain why this is or is not a clever construction strategy for the film.

Mentions famous scientific publication. Why?

Conrad wrote his novel at a time when 19th-century Europe was still trying to digest the meaning of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. Did it apply to humans? The issue at the time was not merely the evolutionary process. Victorian scholars feared the process might work in reverse. What if modern life makes people degenerate? Could we embrace the habits of a more savage humanity—or even those of our primate ancestors? Conrad’s Mr. Kurtz was the Victorian intellectual’s worst nightmare.

Who is the audience for this *Heart of Darkness* film? And what does audience have to do with the filmmaker’s decision to devote a whole section to the Vietnam War?

Act IV: America’s Descent into Hell

“Droll thing life is—that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose.”

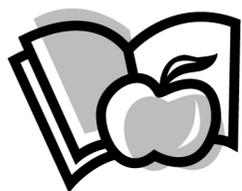
The most famous adaptation of Conrad’s story is the movie *Apocalypse Now*, in which American involvement in Vietnam, like the colonization of Africa, becomes a painful descent into hell—and a vivid lesson on the limits of power in the modern age.

What does this paragraph suggest about the long-range effects of Conrad’s novella? From what you’ve read of the treatment, what information is missing from this story?

Act V: Wrap and Epilogue

“They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force. . . .”

Marlow’s tale was a rude shock to 19th century audiences. It forced them to look into the shadows and confront the forces that would ultimately destroy their perfect world. Europe would never be the same—and neither would its literature.



TEACHER NOTES

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.6 | WHAT'S IN A BUDGET?

This unit introduces students to the basic format and structure of a budget for a television documentary.

Students learn about the skills needed for a career in the mass media and practice doing basic math to analyze elements of the budget.

Getting Started

How many of your students have ever contemplated working in a media industry? You may be surprised at the show of hands. Play students the video segments for this activity, which include interviews of producers from the Discovery Channel who discuss the way in which money flows in media organizations and the skills needed to be successful in the television and film business.

Production Phases

Pass out Activity Sheets 4.6 (A) and 4.6 (B), which ask students to review a real production budget for a Discovery Channel documentary and answers some questions.

Ask students to read the opening paragraphs in the activity sheet and before continuing, check their understanding of the concepts of **pre-production, production, and post-production**.

You might want to give them a mini-quiz, by asking them which of the following activities belong in one of the three phases of production:

- Putting in the titles and graphics (post-production)
- Hiring the cast members (pre-production)
- Building the sets (production)
- Rehearsing the actors (production)
- Adding the music and voice-overs (post-production)

Doing the Math

Give students time to solve the problems on the activity sheet or assign these questions as homework. These are basic math problems but will be a good opportunity for students to see the use of math in the world outside the classroom.

Questions and Answers:

How much was spent on getting rights and permissions to use visuals for the documentary?	\$ 55,500
How much does it cost to hire a camera operator for one day?	\$ 600
What percentage of the total expenditure is for travel?	4.2%
How much money is spent on editing per week?	\$ 8,142
If personnel costs went up by 10%, how much would the total budget be?	\$ 339,102
What percentage of the total budget goes to the people who produce the project?	31.9%
Every episode of the Great Books series is budgeted separately. Four other shows in this series cost the following amounts: \$303,560, \$351,250, \$312,450, \$329,000. Find the average cost for an episode.	\$ 320,907
Approximately how much money would The Learning Channel need to create eight episodes of the Great Books documentary series?	\$ 2,567,256

CHALLENGE

837,000 males ages 25 to 45 watch the show. Advertisers pay \$9.42 to reach 1,000 males for thirty seconds. How much money does it cost to place an ad to reach them?	\$ 16,254
If twelve minutes of ads are sold, how much ad revenue is gained?	\$ 390,096

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.6 (A)

BUDGETING TIME AND MONEY

GREAT BOOKS: HEART OF DARKNESS

FINAL BUDGET: October 30, 1998

PROJECT TOTAL: \$308,275

LENGTH: 50 minutes

Personnel	
Executive Producer and Series Producer	\$ 32,500
Producer	\$ 45,000
Associate Producer	\$ 21,000
Pre-Production	
Expenses, research, meetings, miscellaneous	\$ 6,245
Production	
Cameraman (6 days)	\$ 3,600
Camera Equipment (6 days)	\$ 4,800
Sound man and equipment (6 days)	\$ 4,800
Fees and other expenses	\$ 6,080
Travel Expenses	\$ 24,000
Post-Production	
Music	\$ 10,000
Graphics	\$ 2,000
Editing (7 weeks)	\$ 57,600
Tape	\$ 3,850
Voice-overs	\$ 19,000
Travel	\$ 13,300
Rights and Permissions	\$ 55,500
TOTAL	\$ 308,275

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

UNIT 4 | ACTIVITY 4.6 (B)

WHAT'S IN A BUDGET?

Instructions: Using the budget on the next page, answer the following questions.

Questions:

How much was spent on getting rights and permissions to use visuals for the documentary?	
How much does it cost to hire a camera operator for one day?	
What percentage of the total expenditure is for travel?	
How much money is spent on editing per week?	
If personnel costs went up by 10%, how much would the total budget be?	
What percentage of the total budget goes to the people who produce the project?	
Every episode of the Great Books series is budgeted separately. Four other shows in this series cost the following amounts: \$303,560, \$351,250, \$312,450, \$329,000. Find the average cost for an episode.	
Approximately how much money would The Learning Channel need to create eight episodes of the Great Books documentary series?	



CHALLENGE

837,000 males ages 25 to 45 watch the show. Advertisers pay \$9.42 to reach 1,000 males for thirty seconds. How much money does it cost to place an ad to reach them?	
If twelve minutes of ads are sold, how much ad revenue is gained?	



TEACHER NOTES



UNIT 4

WRITE A TREATMENT FOR A FILM

Write a treatment for a film based on a historic event and historic figures.

This activity invites students to select a historic event and write a persuasive treatment about it. They may choose to write a treatment for a documentary or a feature film adaptation.

The activities in this unit provide models of the research and pre-writing stages of the process of writing a treatment. A list of suggested pre-writing steps is included in the assignment checklist.

You might want to remind students that the target audience for the treatment is the funder—the individuals who work for a film production company or network who will take a risk with their money in producing this film, documentary, or TV show.

Review the Checklist

Pass out the Production Activity worksheet and review the steps in the process needed to complete the activity. Encourage students to check off the steps by using the circles in the left margin. Establish a realistic deadline and monitor students' work during the process.

Evaluation

Use the evaluation rubric provided to give students feedback about their writing. You might also want students to evaluate each other's work using this evaluation sheet.

Publishing Student Work on www.AssignmentMediaLit.com

See the Resources section on page 183 to learn how you or your students can send completed treatments to be published on the *Assignment: Media Literacy* website.

ASSIGNMENT



UNIT 4

WRITE A TREATMENT FOR A FILM

(**ASSIGNMENT:** Write a treatment for a film based on a historic event and historic figures.

CHECKLIST TO COMPLETE THIS ACTIVITY:

Select a historical event and gather information.

- Brainstorm a list of various issues or topics.
- Collect and read at least five sources of information about the topic you have identified.
- Develop a premise (or main idea or concept) for your proposed film.

Create a character chart and write a story outline.

- Select at least three characters for further research and create a “character chart” as a tool for development as shown on Activity Sheet 4.4 (B). Research the character’s “facts of life” as well as anecdotes that may be useful for telling a story through film.
- Make a map of the major events in the film, showing what happens in chronological order. Be sure your film has rising action and a climax.
- Tell the story using the map and get feedback from representatives of the target audience to be sure the story is interesting and comprehensible.

Write the treatment

- Use the model provided to give you an idea of the format.
- Divide the treatment into major sections.
- Be sure to use techniques to attract and hold the reader’s attention and to help him or her visualize the key moments in the film.
- Send your completed project to the www.AssignmentMediaLit.com website to publish it.

EVALUATION



UNIT 4

WRITE A TREATMENT FOR A FILM

Student Name: _____

The characters and the storyline are interesting and based on real people and events.

4	A character map has been created and a story map has been used to outline the sequence of events. The characters and story are compelling and interesting to the target audience.
3	The characters and story are compelling and interesting to the target audience, but a character map has not been created or a story map was not used to outline the sequence of events.
2	The characters and story are not interesting enough to the target audience, and a character map has not been created or a story map was not used to outline the sequence of events.
1	No evidence that characters or story were carefully planned.

The written treatment is interesting, credible, and persuasive.

4	The treatment demonstrates solid understanding of the historical event, and the treatment is structured in a way that captures and holds the reader's attention. The treatment persuades the reader that the film is worth making.
3	The treatment demonstrates an adequate understanding of the historical event, but the treatment is structured in a way that does not capture and hold the reader's attention. The treatment persuades the reader that the film is worth making.
2	The treatment does not demonstrate an adequate understanding of the historical event. The treatment is structured in a way that does not capture and hold the reader's attention. The treatment is not persuasive enough in showing the reader that the film is worth making.
1	The treatment is missing major elements, is sloppy, or is incomplete.

Comments:

Grade: