



The Agronomist
(USA, 2003, 90 Minutes, English and French with English Subtitles)
Director: Jonathan Demme
Study Guide

Synopsis

Haiti: courage amidst suffering, long denied aspirations of democracy, rare episodes of progress, and repeated setbacks. *The Agronomist* embodies all of these in the deeply affecting and inspiring story of radio journalist and human rights activist Jean Dominique, founder of Radio Haiti Inter, and one of the country's authentic heroes. In this moving homage to his friend, director Jonathan Demme weaves together many threads to produce a rich view of Dominique's amazing life and work: historical footage of Haiti's vivid and tumultuous past; interviews with Dominique and with Michele Montas, his heroic wife, life-long love, and extraordinary partner; and footage shot for this long-planned documentary whose course was forever altered by Dominique's assassination on April 3, 2000.

Study Questions

- What do you know about the history of Haiti: The Slave Trade: Landowners, Petite Blancs Freed slaves, The Maroons The Slave Rebellion of 1791 Culture and Religion, Agrarian Population, Urban life, Economics US Occupation, The Dictatorship of "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc" Duvalier and the Ton Ton Macoutes, Recent History: Free elections, Military Coup, Presidency of Jean-Bertrand Aristide

Discussion Questions

- Why did Radio Haiti Inter do its' initial news broadcasts only in Creole?
- What does Jean Dominique mean when he refers to "sniffing" the climate each broadcast day before going on the air?
- Why do you think the director decided to call the film "The Agronomist", since Jean Dominique ran the radio station and hadn't worked in agriculture in many years?
- What do you think of Michele Montas' radio broadcast after Jean Dominique's death?