



The Athlete
(Ethiopia, 93 minutes)
(Directors: Davey Frankel and Rasselas Lakew)

Synopsis

In 1960, Ethiopian marathon runner Abebe Bikila stunned the world by becoming the first African to win the Olympic gold medal. But his story had just begun with Olympic medals. Years later in Addis Ababa, fate presents this champion with his greatest challenge. Seamlessly blending autobiography, biopic, drama, and documentary, *The Athlete* is a beautiful and moving investigation of a man who is ceaseless in his journey for greatness.

Study Ideas/Questions

1. The Athlete story unfolds by cutting back and forth between archived footage and “present day.” How does this technique advance the story? How did the filmmakers tie the archived footage with the present day storyline?
2. What is foreshadowing, and how is Abebe’s accident foreshadowed in the film?
3. Abebe suffers huge setbacks in his life. Have you experienced anything similar? Have your goals been harder to achieve?
4. When Abebe is driving the priest to the church, they come across a blinded horse in the road. Abebe decides to put the horse down, and then changes his mind. How is Abebe like this horse, and why do you think he decides not to kill it?
5. Abebe is both harassed and honored when he enters a bar for a drink. Why was there conflict over him and between the patrons of the bar? Is there anyone in public life in the United States who is similarly disliked and revered?
6. What do you know about the colonization of Italy on Ethiopia prior to World War 2?
7. The film has a strong soundtrack. How did the music effect your viewing experience?
8. It has been said that Abebe’s style of running was admired by fellow runners. Are there athletes you admire today? What about them are you drawn to?
9. Abebe is loved by much of Ethiopia, yet he seems to often be alone or with select close friends. Do you think Abebe is a “loner”? Why or why not?
10. Do you think Abebe failed or succeeded to reach his final goals? He is unable to run in the Munich games, but does he still “win”?

Useful websites

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abebe_Bikila

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1130965/>

http://www.ethiopians.com/abebe_bikila.htm

www.chicagofilmfestival.com