



The Chicago International Film Festival

Cinema/Chicago and the Chicago International Film Festival

Education Program Screening: *Adama*

Director: Simon Rouby

82 minutes

Please use the below synopsis/study questions to lead your students in film preparation and post-screening discussion. Following the field trip, students are required to respond to the screening with a one-page essay. Essays must be sent to Cinema/Chicago in order to be invited to subsequent film screenings.

Synopsis

Twelve-year-old Adama ventures outside the forbidden cliff walls of his remote West African village in 1916 in search of his older brother, Samba. Adama's journey takes him across land and sea, until eventually he finds himself struggling to survive in war torn Europe, searching for his brother on the frontlines of World War I. Ultimately, Adama's love for his brother will open an unexpected way to his initial journey.

African Soldiers in World War I and the Battle of Verdun

During World War I, colonial troops were enlisted to fight alongside their European colonizers in both combat and non-combatant roles. In Africa, over two million people fought for European countries, like Germany, France and Belgium, with some volunteering after receiving a modest income and many enlisted by their respective European country.

As the war prolonged and many countries realized it would not be over as quickly as they thought, they began heavily recruiting African soldiers. French African soldiers participated in almost every battle of World War I, including the Battle of Verdun. In *Adama*, this is the battle where Adama reunites with Samba.

The Battle of Verdun was the longest and bloodiest conflict of World War I between the German and French Armies. It lasted for over 10 months, with the French armies ultimately recapturing the fort in December of 1916. French West African soldiers were used in the battle to route the German defenders.

These soldiers also encountered a great deal of racism during their time in service, often placed in segregated camps. In some cases, colonial troops were used in deadly missions to avoid

French casualties. Because this history has been somewhat forgotten in the mainstream, there have been recent efforts to bring back awareness of these soldiers contribution to the war.

Study Ideas/Questions

1. What are some character differences between Adama and Samba? Do you think these differences are just based on age? Why or why not? How does our introduction to Samba show Adama's admiration of him?
2. How does the director use color to show the differences between West Africa and France? In what ways does this show the culture shock Adama experiences?
3. Is there someone in your life who you have a relationship similar to that of Samba and Adama? What role do you play in that relationship? How is it similar or different to Adama and Samba's relationship?
4. How important is Adama's age to the film? How might it be different if Adama was older?
5. In what ways does the animation style affect your experience watching the film? Do you think you would react differently if the film were live action? Why or why not?
6. How does "knowledge" play a role in the plot of the film? What types of knowledge are shown in the film? Is there one character that is more knowledgeable than the rest? If so, why and what knowledge does he or she demonstrate?
7. What did you think of the end of the film? Why do you think the director chose to end it the way he did?
8. Do you feel a connection to Adama? Why or why not? In what ways does the director try to have the audience identify with him?
9. How does Adama's traditional upbringing affect his perception of the war? By the end of the film, do you think he has the same beliefs as he did at the beginning? What might have shaped those beliefs?
10. What are some general fears associated with leaving ones home? How are those fears actualized in *Adama*? Have you ever experienced the same fears? If so, how did you combat them?
11. Twice in the film, Abdou says, "I know every path. By road, by sea, by air and even the path that goes through the Earth." How does this reflect Adama's journey? What do you think he means by "path that goes through the Earth?"

Useful Resources

Chicago International Film Festival [website](#)

Adama [website](#)

Guide prepared by Hannah Hoffman – Cinema/Chicago, 2015