

AP World Final Project: Hooray for Bollywood! – *Lagaan* (Once Upon a Time in India)

Film Synopsis:

The year is 1893, when most of India had come to accept that the British would rule for another 100 years. The Rajahs had lost most of their legendary power and wealth and were now only nominal rulers.

In a small village of Champaner in North India lies a community of poor and innocent farmers who are content plowing, sowing, praying for the rains, and reaping their harvest. In the heart of this community are Bhuvan (Aamir) a young farmer and Gauri (Gracie Singh), his love.

After a number of adversities, the village is faced with another setback. The British have decided to raise the land tax (lagaan). The village is starving as it is, and the increased tax will only make them more destitute. The British army captain challenges the villagers to a cricket match, knowing full well that the locals have never seen, much less played the game. Moreover, the captain places the condition that the loser of the match will have to pay an even higher lagaan.

Although poor, the villagers are people of self-respect. Led by Bhuvan they are ready to take on the Britons despite their ignorance of the game. Now comes to their rescue the army captain's younger sister Elizabeth (Rachel Shelley). At first Elizabeth helps the rustic team purely out of sympathy for them, but later she grows affectionate for Bhuvan (scandal?!?).

But Bhuvan is fixated on one thing. With grit and determination he and villagers stand together against the ruthlessness of their perpetrators. Faith and courage comes face to face with arrogance and ruthlessness and what follows is the thrilling showdown between the Indians and British. Who will have to pay the Lagaan...?

PROJECT OPTION #1 – PERSUASIVE ESSAY: MAKING A CASE FOR LAGAAN

You are going to write a short persuasive essay arguing to the Academic Committee of the CSN Board of Trustees whether *Lagaan* is a film worthy of student viewing. Here is the issue (hypothetical):

Some person on the Board heard that Mr. Farshtey has shown a film that allegedly glorifies Indians (Hindus from that country in Asia, not Native Americans) and presents our friends and allies the British in an unfavorable light. In addition, the Indian characters in the movie wear provocative clothing and do not worship the Christian God.

Your assignment is to argue for or against the showing of *Lagaan* in AP World History class. You will need to make a claim about the meaning of the film and provide compelling evidence from the movie to convince the Board that your interpretation is believable. As stated, your interpretation will be the focus of the essay and must be stated in a clear thesis sentence in your first paragraph. Your thesis may be centered on the film as a whole or you may focus more directly on setting, time period, character (major or minor) or the actual historical correctness of the film. Music and dance are certainly at the center of this film. You could make a statement about the film as a musical.

OK, so here it is → your topic is the legitimacy (or not) of the film. Your writing format is PERSUASIVE. That is, you are writing to convince the Board of the authenticity of your view. A formal tone would be appropriate for your audience.

I expect about 5 paragraphs including an intro with thesis, and a conclusion that wraps up your interpretation.

ASSIGNMENT IS DUE NO LATER THAN WEDNESDAY, MAY 26TH

PROJECT OPTION #2 – Critical Analysis of Themes in Lagaan

General Directions:

After viewing the film, write a five paragraph essay analyzing any theme or topic that was dealt with in the movie. This essay should not be a movie review summarizing the film. Rather, it should be a critical analysis of the film that further develops, provides examples of, and / or challenges a theme.

Ways you can focus the paper:

- Pick one or two themes and analyze how the film reflects, interprets, and / or portrays this theme(s). In your paper you should try to provide examples of particular scenes that support your ideas.
- Feel free to use materials from your class notes, as well as any outside resources, but be sure to cite your sources!
- If you plagiarize a fellow student's or another author's work (especially from the web), you will receive a zero on this assignment.

Organization of the paper:

1. You should start with an introductory paragraph that discusses in general terms the chosen theme. The best format will be to start with a short, 1-2 sentence introductory paragraph which clearly states the theme or themes to be analyzed and the three points you will make in the paper.
2. You should structure the paper to look at the film and how it relates to the theme you have chosen to discuss. In each of the next three paragraphs you will demonstrate in detail how the film relates to your theme → use good examples from the film.
3. The paper should have some type of concluding paragraph. (Basically we're using a 5-paragraph format.) This paragraph should be a short but clearly written conclusion that wraps up the analysis, briefly restating the three points you covered in your body paragraphs.

Specifics of the paper:

It should be close to 2 pages long, no longer than 3 pages please. The paper should be typed, double-spaced, with no larger than 12 point font and 1 inch margins. All sources cited should be listed at the end of your paper.

***Lagaan* Theme Brainstorming**

- Climate
- Racial Issues
- British Colonialism in India
- India: Daily life
- Music of India
- Cricket
- Caste System
- History of religion in India
- How did India resist the British
- "Bollywood" movies

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