



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2006 Volume I: Stories around the World in Film

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## **The Rhetorical Nature of Narrative**

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The goal of this unit is a common one for the high school English teacher: to teach students to read closely, think deeply about what they have read, and demonstrate this in writing. What is unusual about this unit is that I have chosen to use techniques derived from film studies to accomplish this.

Film studies utilizes segmentation to analyze the structure of texts. Segmentation provides the means to systematically take a text apart and examine the relationships between the parts, analyzing them for the ways they work together to craft meanings. This unit seeks to teach students to segment a film first and then apply that same tool to a written text.

The long-range goal is to introduce the complexities of narrative structures into the classroom. After analyzing multiple narratives for possible meanings, the class will examine the ways that narratives themselves operate in accordance with specific societal and cultural demands and expectations. This introduces the beginnings of a conversation about ideology and narrative into the classroom. Hopefully the students will begin to realize that thinking of literature rhetorically reveals much about what we as a culture think about ourselves.

(Developed for AP Language, grade 11, AP Literature, grade 12, and Film, grades 10-12; recommended for Film Studies and AP English Language and Composition, grades 10-12, and AP English Literature and Composition, grades 11-12)

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