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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2008 Volume III: Democracy in Theory and Practice

Bryce Courtenay's *The Power of One*: An Examination of Democratic and Other Political Values as Depicted in Literature

Guide for Curriculum Unit 08.03.06, published September 2008
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Whatever I know about history began with *stories*. This unit is centered on a single novel, Bryce Courtenay's *The Power of One*, the Classic Novel of South Africa. Beginning with a chart on government types, students discuss what they know about government, leading to the study of the novel as a contrast to democracy. This 7-week unit treats the novel as a classic *bildungsroman*/coming-of-age novel. The main character's development is shaped by the split between the three distinct groups of individuals that comprise his society, the black Africans, the Afrikaners, and the English. His movement among these disparate groups shows him as an iconoclast, a man for all peoples. His relationship to many groups of people, speaking their language, and Courtenay's use of boxing as a transcendent activity bringing boxers together from these groups show our hero as the coalescent force in his society, played out against the background of impending war (WWII), and post-war conditions. Study questions, three essay exams, a final essay, research project, and video guides are included.

(Developed for English IV PSP Scholars, grade 12; recommended for English IV PSP Scholars, grade 12)

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