

The Film: “Breaker Morant”

On January 20, we will view the film “Breaker Morant” and briefly discuss the film and the war (the Second Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902), as well as place this in the general context of the history of South Africa. [If at all possible also try to view the Film “Zulu” on your own which provides an historical account of the Anglo-Zulu war of 1878-79, focusing on the Battle of Rourke’s Drift. This was the culmination of 60 years of ascendancy of the Zulu nation and strife between the Zulus and other black African tribal groups in the region and the Europeans].

This web site from the South African Anglo-Boer War Museum, gives a detailed account of factors leading up to the war and the war itself, complete with pictures: <http://www.anglo-boer.co.za/> Also take a look at the Wikipedia site on the Anglo-Boer War (second): http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War. [The first Anglo-Boer war was fought in 1880-81: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Boer_War.] Spend some time browsing these sites after our meeting. There are also many other web sites on this war (also known to Afrikaners as the ‘Second War of Independence’). It was South Africa’s White Civil War (although Blacks were embroiled as well), and repercussions remain to this day; we will see this theme repeated in other films. The Anglo-Boer War was the first of the modern era wars, and a prelude to World War 1. It saw the first modern trench warfare and use of large artillery, the first “concentration camps” were established by Britain for non-combatants (see: <http://www.appiusforum.com/hellkamp.html> for an interesting Boer perspective; the web site is now run by some obscure Christian sect), guerrilla war tactics, etc. After the war there was an attempt at reconciliation, a merging of South African British Colonies and the Boer Republics, and eventual independence for South Africa in 1910, as the ‘Union of South Africa’. For interesting video and archival photos also see: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cL_wVAQvGcY or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQRzNuaW0yE&feature=related> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WyF8KaVyt8> http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0i-hy_0VWZ8

Some interesting personalities who served in the Anglo-Boer war include: Mahatma Gandhi, Sir Robert Baden-Powell (the founder of the Boy Scouts, who conceived of the idea during the war), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Winston Churchill, Rudyard Kipling, Cecil Rhodes, and many others.

“Breaker Morant” is an Australian film that recounts the celebrated story of 3 Australian soldiers who go off to fight for the British Empire in the Anglo-Boer War, and the events leading up to their Court-Martial. Harry ‘Breaker’ Morant is the central character: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breaker_Morant ‘Breaker’ was something of a poet as well: <http://www.middlemiss.org/lit/authors/moranth/poetrybulletin.html>

For an analysis of the legal implications of the film by an American lawyer, see: <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/lpop/etext/okla/kershen22.htm>

References on the history of South Africa:

Mason, D. 2004. A Traveler’s History of South Africa. Interlink Books, New York.

Sparks, A. 1990. The Mind of South Africa. Ballantine Books, New York

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