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Hollywood History & Mythology

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Hollywood History & Mythology

by [Joe Escobar](#) – Friday, January 22, 2016, 9:30 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Hollywood History & Mythology topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT – SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Hollywood History & Mythology

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A Movie Being Used As A Teaching Tool

by [Shawn Jenkins](#) – Saturday, January 23, 2016, 12:38 PM

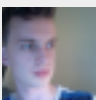
I consider myself fortunate to have attended school in the eighties. Where we learned by examples known to be fact in most cases or supposed theory based on all the available iformation. To learn that the movie Amistad is now being used as a tool to teach about slavery is incredulous. It is a Hollywood production based on very little fact. Eric Foner remarks on the accompanying study guide by saying, "The guide erases the distinction between fact and fiction." Mr Foner goes on to say that the study guide encourages "the use of a fictional character rather than real historical figures". How can this be educational? How can it even be allowed let alone be encouraged?

Should we all now learn to drive by watching such films as The Fast And Furious? Or better yet learn about time travel from Back To The Future?

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Will the Real Facts Please Stand Up?

by [Peter Nixon](#) – Sunday, January 24, 2016, 2:45 PM

Personally, it always bothers me when historically inaccurate information is peddled as fact. In the case of the movie *Amistad*, what bothers me is not so much the factual inaccuracies in the movie (as an amateur filmmaker I an appreciate the difficulty in making a strictly true story interesting enough for American audiences), but the fact that it was presented as a viable tool for learning history, which it obviously is not. All historically based films must take some kind of creative liberties with the story in order to translate it to the screen, but a film advertised as “based on a true story” is not claiming to be historically accurate in all regards. *Amistad*’s tagline “A true story” is claiming more than that, and coupled with the distribution of study guides for use in schools, I

find the filmmakers’ lack of transparency about their translation of the story disturbing.

As for the American mythology of the Underground Railroad, I found Dr. Blight’s video very interesting. Though I learned some stories about Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, I never received the impression that it was a vast network. I have always imagined that it consisted of one or two people every few towns, with few safe resting places along the way. I was surprised to learn that the majority of Railroad member were black, although upon reflection that makes sense. My impression that the composition of the Railroad was equally white and black is evidence of a mythological influence in my own ideas. But overall, I don’t think I was as affected by the mythology of the Underground Railroad as Blight thinks most people are. However, the creation of mythology around historical events can certainly be dangerous if it is used to hide the truth. The belief that the Underground Railroad was so vast may be a way for certain regions to deny their ancestors’ adherence to slavery and argue that they are descended from secret abolitionists. While I understand the inclination to deny certain unpleasant truths about the past, it is always better to face the truth and learn from it, rather than hide from it. And when history is rewritten by people attempting to hide from the truth, the likelihood that others will find the truth is also diminished.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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What is our true history?
by Emma Knutson – Monday, January 25, 2016, 1:15 PM

Academically learning all the history of how slaves were treated and how the southerners were corrupt widens my eyes when I learn that historians pry open my mind and say that is not actually what happened. I am a firm believer in the fact that history books are only printing what the authors are wanting us to know. The authors are writing history in a new way to say this is “really” what happened when really that is not what happened at all. And going along with what Professor David Blight said, most of the people that helped the fugitive slaves escape were black. Growing up, I always thought it was prominently white famers. And it is very interesting to hear from the movie that in Hollywood history, whites again do show up in any main lead whereas it is pertaining to blacks or any other races. It is sad to think that I don't know as much as I thought I knew or hoped to know. It also makes me wonder what the future generations are going to learn about the formation of the states or even what is going on today and how much our culture will change it to something it is not to not make our country look bad.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Hollywood History & Mythology
by Keefer George – Monday, January 25, 2016, 2:39 PM

I personally don’t mind exaggerations and falsehoods in “historically based” Hollywood movies as my motivation while watching them is purely to be entertained.

Academically I can understand the complaints against exaggerations and falsehoods in movies as they may cause people who get their history lessons through Hollywood movies to adopt a different and false view of history. Countering this is the reason documentary films exist, to educate.

When it comes to what students learn in school textbooks I take more offense. I believe students should receive an accurate portrayal and retelling of historical accounts in school and not the misrepresentation of the truth that often occurs as seen in the Underground Railroad example, where this myth of a huge tightly-knit network of people existed, who’s jobs were moving slaves north through secret stations with conductors and station masters. When in reality it was far fewer people willing to help the escaped slaves on their journey north. I personally find it ridiculous that this kind of storytelling occurs in education and hope to see a shift more towards facts and accuracy in the future. I’m absolutely concerned when historical truth has been kept from me because I don’t think a good reason exists for keeping historical truths secret.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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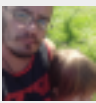
Re: truth to some extent
by Rebecca Heard – Thursday, January 28, 2016, 11:42 AM

I can agree in saying that it doesn't always have to be 100% accurate, if it's enjoyable and pleases you it is

worth the watch. However, I think as viewers, we need to be told that it's not as accurate as they portray it to be. We should always dig deeper and hear the opinions of our educated historians, but with that being said I wouldn't say anyone below the high school level should watch this in an educational setting being that they will most likely believe all they are watching, they don't know any better and if their teacher is lacking in their field and exposing them to these falsities, they surely aren't going to discuss the falsities at any given time.

But how can certain teachers or peers be stopped from encouraging falsities? I'm not sure there is an answer for this, as middle school students in fact aren't going to know if what they are being told is accurate when it comes to the nineteenth century, or even a principle that sits in on a class, who received a masters in education and not history.

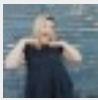
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The Hollywood Version of The Underground Railroad
by [Shawn Jenkins](#) – Monday, January 25, 2016, 5:23 PM

Once again I find myself wondering why there is a difference in the education i received and that received by others. As far as i knew, the railroad was a haphazard collection of stations sometimes hundreds of miles apart ran mostly by blacks. I cannot remember ever being taught that it was well organized or assisted by more than a few white people. Why is it that what i learned in the eighties isn't the same as what people think they know now? I don't find fault with Hollywood. The goal of a movie is to be seen and if that means taking numerous liberties with the facts, then so be it. Hollywood isn't here to educate people. Hollywood is here to entertain people. Hence the disclaimer in so-called factual movie's opening credits, "Based on a true story" and "Based on actual events".

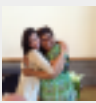
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Re: The Hollywood Version of The Underground Railroad
by [Emma Knutson](#) – Monday, January 25, 2016, 7:31 PM

I also believe in the difference in educations. Mainly because throughout the country every state has different standards on what they teach and how they teach it. For example I had teachers that didn't get a degree in history teaching me what our country was about while my history teachers throughout high school had a completely different way of approaching the history of America. I can't see why this is acceptable. But also Hollywood should yes be able to entertain people but there should also be some historic teachings and historic facts that are indeed true if the move is claiming to be a true story. So I can't tell if you are concerned about how the movie industry is twisting what our country was built on or if you re trying to say if our generation is being pulled away from the historical events and lacking a good education.

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Re: Hollywood History & Mythology
by [Angelina Rivas](#) – Monday, January 25, 2016, 8:53 PM

I think that Hollywood needs to make some "historically based" movies exaggerated so they could have the ratings to make it a good movie in the box office. Does that make what they are doing correct? No, they should probably mention that some parts of the story is exaggerated and kept from the viewer. Also as the viewer it should be common sense that not everything Hollywood shows is historically correct. Making real stories into movies will always change what really happened because the movie has an audience to satisfy.

Also the underground railroad may be a myth, or an exaggerated event. I think something like that happened, BUT to a small extent. Like the north star is what slaves used to head to the northern states, or when some people (very few white people) helped them by masking their scents and not housing them when they are still in the south. I do believe as a scholar and personally that the law official used hounds to find runaway slaves.

I wish that after watching a movie based on history they would give some type of source that I can go to so I can look up information on what just happened. I want to be able to see them credit their sources and not everything is made up with little history. I wish that not only Hollywood, but schools were a little more Frank and told things

as they are.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Hollywood History & Mythology– First Post

by [Nicholas Pearce](#) – Monday, January 25, 2016, 9:14 PM

Personally, I am not surprised in regards to Hollywood's manipulation of historical events. Viewers should do some fact checking after movies like these to really be aware of how much Hollywood manipulates films about historical events. Academically its disappointing/concerning to know how false information can easily depicted in media or about historical events in general.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Hollywood History & Mythology: Amistad

by [Sohni Maan-Davie](#) – Monday, January 25, 2016, 11:26 PM

According to both the history book and Eric Foner, Amistad is a horrible representation of slavery during the late 1800s. Foner says that the Amistad's problems go deeper than what they show in the movie and that the talk of civil war is 20 years after the Amistad incident. The heroes are white men and women and the movie is basically about the American people learning moral growth and self-discovery, and the African characters are used to achieve that goal. Foner also mentions that the audience never learns about how the captives respond to the ordeal. Foner dislikes the fact that there are subtitles for when the Africans speak Mende, and he thinks it would be better to have them speak English instead of being mute. He also doesn't like how the movie sugarcoats the relationship between the slavery and the American judiciary. The Amistad case in 1840 revolves around the Atlantic slave trade and not the slavery in the U.S. Also the fact that a study guide is based off the movie, Amistad, and it teaches students about black abolitionism is horrifying, since the study guide uses Theodore Joadson, a fictional character from the movie, instead of historical figures.

The history book says that the best and accurate representation of slavery during the late 1800s is the movie 12 Years a Slave. Since the movie is told from a slave's view, and there aren't any scenes that have white men talking to each other without a slave there.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Eric Foner

by [Rebecca Heard](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 5:06 PM

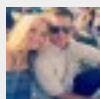
To me as a viewer, the movie trailer seemed intriguing. After reading what Eric Foner had to say about the film, I questioned it.

When reading the movie review article by Eric, it was easy to conclude that as a historian he was irritated with the movie. He lists many falsities of the movie: that Amistad's main characters are white, not black, candidates did not campaign, etc. Eric does not describe the movie as an accurate portrayal of the past, he describes it as the opposite and suggests the film makers spend their \$75 million dollar production on accurate on our public libraries to feed students with accurate information.

As a student, I'm obviously not an expert on Amistad and slavery, so without the knowledge of my textbook, and other historians, I would never know I was being fed false information. This easily frustrates me and makes me wonder what else I have learned that wasn't the truth. I will be reading many more reviews when it comes to historical films and readings from this day forward. I could only imagine the frustration of these falsities being a historian.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Hollywood History & Mythology Eric Foner on"Amistad"

by [Benjamin Glaeser](#) – Friday, January 29, 2016, 9:52 PM

After reading Eric Foners review of Amistad the Hollywood movie I started to think about all the historical movies i'v seen and began to wonder how many falsehoods and exaggerations have been put into those movies to make

them more entertaining or thrilling. Personally I respond to this thinking, as long as there is some kind of warning or note that the movies are not exactly historically accurate, then whats the problem? My problem comes when the movies are portrayed as truth or fact. Which is where i would respond academically in saying that, no movie that is labeled "historical fiction" should be passed of to students as something they should watch to learn about history. I found it very interesting what Eric Foner said about the study guide being passed on in our school as well as the comment he mentioned about historians trying to suppress slavery which Foner quickly corrects. I understand Hollywood is a business concerned with making money, which fine I get it, but to take what is meant to make money and turn it into a way to receive information is ridiculous. Why not teach students the way it really happen then let them see the differences, faults and facts in the movie as they are? And lastly why not put some of that \$75 million dollar budget for a poor movie into our libraries as Foner says?

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Genre
by Rebecca Heard – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 4:54 PM

I noticed a few people concerned with the fact that Hollywood left out that Amistad had its fair share of falsities, and some saying it isn't their duty, as their duty is just to survive in the industry. I completely agree with the fact that no, Hollywood doesn't have to make all of their movies with 100% truth to them, however like mentioned a few times I believe it should be stated if they are not all truthful. I simply searched the movie Amistad and the genre that is was listed under; "historical drama film"

Now, I simply found the definition to each one of these three words.

Historical: "Of or concerning history; concerning past events"

Drama: "an exciting, emotional, or unexpected series of events or set of circumstances"

Film: "a motion picture, a movie"

So, definition speaking, was Amistad "historical? Yes. Was it "drama"? Yes. And lastly was in a "film"? Yes.

So, the movie may have not clearly depicted from what was really truthful in the nineteenth century and what was not, but to me the genre doesn't lie. It was all three of these things, at least to a certain extent. Honestly, if this movie is shown in an educational setting for learning emphasis, I put all blame on the scholastic teachers because they should after all, know their history and know whats right and wrong.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Slightly confused
by Jennifer Jones – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 10:26 PM

I am not seeing any links to relate to this topic for us to discuss. Am I missing something? I noticed there weren't as many replies to this one as the cartoon one, but hopefully I am not the only one with this problem.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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