



Film Study Guide (revised 10/20/2020)

Movie #2 Roots – Season 1, Episode 1 (May 2016)



This movie takes place in Gambia, West Africa in 1750. Kunta is the son of Omoro Kinte and his wife Binta. Kunta is trained in Mandinka customs. He desired to go to the University in Timbuktu. In 1767, Kunta is kidnapped and sold to British slave traders. Kunta is loaded on a slave ship going to Annapolis, Maryland. This episode will show Kunta's journey to America and his fight to retain his African identity.

The movie is available on Amazon Prime and YouTube. It was directed by Phillip Noyce, Mario Van Peebles, Thomas Carter and Bruce Beresford. This version is a mixture of fact and fiction with some variations from original series based on the novel by Alex Haley released in 1977. The movie time is about 80 minutes

Roots Season 1 – Episode 1 Study Guide

1. How would you characterize Africans enslaving Africans under Mandinka rule and Euro-Americans enslaving Africans? The same? Different? Explain.
2. What are some of the Mandinkan cultural traditions that enabled Kunta to be strong and relentless in his effort to fight enslavement? Do some still pertain, do you think?
3. Racism involved dehumanization and shaming of African people, both on the journey across the Atlantic and by slave owners in America; how so? Where is the racist shaming in the movie? Where is racist shaming in the present?
4. Why do you think plantation owner, Mr. Waller, wanted to change Kunta's African name? Why did Kunta want to keep his name? What is the significance of a name?
5. How does Fiddler's character evolve in this episode? What differences do you see between some of the Africans that were brought to America for enslavement compared with some of the descendants of African slaves born in America?

6. The movie, *Roots I*, gives us a glimpse of life for enslaved Africans from 1750 through 1769.
 - a. Two hundred and seventy years later (2020), what are the most glaring side-effects for some descendants of African slaves? Explain your answer.
 - b. Two hundred and seventy years later (2020), what is the most severe impact for the descendants of slave owners (White Americans)? Explain your answer.
7. After viewing *Amistad* and *Roots Episode 1*, what can you do to strengthen your resolve to seek truth, love, and justice for all? Between now and Christmas, what one thing will you do and to whom will you be accountable? Here are some ideas.
 - a. Choose to support racial justice every day in some way you can name and do in these COVID-days.
 - b. Educate yourself by using many of the resources that are to hand via our computers or other paths.
 - c. Donate money to organizations that support and are led by people of color.
 - d. Have difficult conversations, when you are in a situation where something unjust is said.
 - e. Take political action.
 - f. Safely join a protest, or find some other way to add to the group.
 - g. Get connected to organizations such as a local “Showing up for Racial Justice” (SURJ) group.