

Pirates, Traders and Travelers

K-14 Lesson Plan

Suggested Grade Levels:

- 9-12 and community college

Background

- This lesson plan intends to give students an introduction, through literature and popular film, to narratives of travel, both in South Asia and the greater Indian Ocean region. The goal of this lesson plan is to expose students to less regionally-centric ways of thinking about history and human geography, as well as to illustrate the rich vein of European and non-European travel literature about this area.

Goals/Learning Outcomes

- Develop stronger close reading skills and critical analysis skills through reading and working with diverse textual materials
- Develop and highlight connections between reading materials and other related media, such as film and internet.
- Develop discussions and class projects around travel and migration in the South Asian context.

Activities/Discussion Questions:

- Read Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and *The Man Who Would Be King*. Discuss how travel works in these two stories. Where do the characters go? Do the characters really have a "home" that they can return to? Why do the characters travel? What do they learn from their travels? How do stories like these, set in a British colony, and narrated by British colonists, compare to American stories centered around travel, like Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*?
- (This book is more suitable for upperclassmen (11-12) and community college classrooms). Read Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*. How does travel

figure into this book? How is it reflected in the language of the sailors and the various travelers? What meanings and possibilities does travel hold for those who participate in it (such as the freedman carpenter-turned-captain Zachary Reid and the widow Deeti?) What do the characters think about the homes that they have left? How is the notion of “home” challenged in this book? How do the sailors in this book compare to more popular versions of pirates, such as in Disney’s film series *Pirates of the Caribbean*? What role does the British Empire, in which this book is set, have in the characters’ lives?

- Watch the Bollywood film *Bunty Aur Babli* (in Hindi, available with subtitles in English). How does travel, and the escape that travel provides, figure into the lives of the two main characters? Pay attention to the first song, in particular, and the recurring image of the moving train. How does travel and escapism figure into these characters’ lives? Why do they travel, and what are they escaping from?
- Ask students how travel and migration have figured into their own lives. Have they moved from place to place? Have they stayed in one place, and now wish to see other parts of the world? Discuss how travel can facilitate dialogue and relationship between different parts of the world.

Suggested Reading

- Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*
- Kipling, Rudyard. *The Man Who Would Be King*
- Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*
- Rushdie, Salman. *The Enchantress of Florence*
- *The Ibis Chrestomathy*, online at http://www.amitavghosh.com/latest/ibis_chrestomathy.pdf

Suggested Films

- *Bunty Aur Babli* (Hindi)
- *Slumdog Millionaire* (English, with Hindi)