EARTH MADE OF GLASS
A FILM BY DEBORAH SCRANTON

STUDY GUIDE

TRIBECA YOUTH SCREENING SERIES
AT THE 2010 TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL
ABOUT THE FILM

A president and a citizen—bound together by a profound love of country and an unquenchable desire to see the truth revealed—fight to uncover the mystery behind a murder and France’s hidden role in the horrific 1994 Rwandan genocide. This powerful investigative documentary from the director of The War Tapes (best doc, TFF ’06) is driven by the inspiring and uplifting stories of Rwandan president Paul Kagame and genocide survivor Jean Pierre Sagahutu. The film hopes to serve as a blueprint for areas of the world trapped in cycles of violence and retribution like Gaza, Iraq, etc. This is a story about the path to peace through the pursuit and discovery of the truth about the past and is a stirring wake-up call to all corners of the Earth stricken by violence.

HOW TO BE A CRITICAL VIEWER

Being a critical viewer is different than just watching a movie. Critical viewing is about being able to examine the information you are taking in as you watch a movie (or commercial, music video or TV show) instead of forgetting about what you saw as soon as it’s over, and not letting the movie impact you in any real way.

Being a critical viewer will help you understand:

• The meaning of a movie
• The reasons why the filmmaker choose to make the movie
• The message of the movie

A critical viewer is someone who:

• Listens carefully to what is being said in the movie
• Pays attention to the details used by the filmmaker to convey the message of the film
• Asks questions

In this study guide you will find background information, activities, and questions that will help you practice being a critical viewer.
Deborah Scranton, Director

Deborah Scranton made her feature film debut with *The War Tapes*, named best documentary at the 2006 Tribeca Film Festival and at BritDoc. Her first-person account of war in Iraq, *Bad Voodoo’s War*, aired nationally on PBS/Frontline. As a visiting fellow at The Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University, Scranton worked with the Global Media Project in the Global Security Program.

**ABOUT THE FILMMAKER**

_“The Truth will pass through the fire, but will not burn.” —Rwandan proverb_

“When you start a film, the journey that awaits you can never be fully imagined.

After five years of working on two acclaimed films about the war in Iraq (*The War Tapes, Bad Voodoo’s War*), my mind was beset by some unanswered questions. What remains after war ends? How can anyone forgive the murderers of a loved one? How do you break the cycle of violence? Is forgiveness enough to release a country from its past? What constitutes such forgiveness?

Contemplating telling the story of what happens after genocide ends, I had some trepidation. The horror narratives coming out of Rwanda had been so bleak, the violence so appalling, the hatred so chilling.

On May 1, 2008 I found myself seated next to the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame at a small dinner in his honor. As we spoke for several hours, he revealed himself to be warm, patient and determined to bring his country out from its nightmare. He told me that Rwanda is choosing a different path, between the justice of accountability and reconciliation. It brought to mind all the other areas of conflict around the world mired in endless cycles of violence and retribution without end. And my trepidation turned into resolve.

Once President Kagame agreed to grant us unprecedented access and become one of the main characters of the film, there was no turning back. I had to make this film. As it turned out, I had no expectation of how prescient the timing would be...

Our production team (Cinematographer P.H. O’Brien, Producer Reid Carolin and I) arrived in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, and over the next year returned there two more times.

On August 6th, 2008, against the backdrop of the world’s deadliest war in neighboring Eastern Congo, President Kagame released a report detailing the French government’s hidden complicity in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Three months later France arrested his closest aide, Rose Kabuye, on charges of terrorism. As filmmakers we suddenly found ourselves immersed in one of the greatest political thrillers of the time.

As President Kagame fought to free Rose from France and expose the truth about what really happened in Rwanda fifteen years ago, we also wanted to contrast what life was like for ordinary Rwandans who searched for a better future. Jean Pierre Sagahutu, a genocide survivor haunted by his father’s unsolved murder, has roamed the countryside on a fifteen-year-search for clues. We accompanied him on the journey as he tracked down and confronted one of his father’s killers.

As President Kagame and Jean Pierre each pursue the truth—with the fate of a family and a country hanging in the balance—they find themselves confronted with the same choice: to enact vengeance or turn the other cheek...

Though they never met, the President and an ordinary man become inextricably linked in our film. We learn that above all else, the need for truth becomes paramount. Without truth, there can be no forgiveness. As Jean Pierre defines forgiveness, ‘the hatred and violence stops with me, I will not pass it down to my children’. For him, forgiveness doesn’t mean forgiving the killers. It means stopping the cycle of hate.

There is a conscious, disciplined approach to stop the hate in their own generation. Now. This is an internal choice that need not involve anyone else. The process demands great sacrifice if only for our children’s sake. This is a lesson Rwanda can teach the world.

Former President Bill Clinton has discussed how Israel and Palestine could draw lessons from Rwanda. The survivors, he said, sought reconciliation, not vengeance. They did this work of reconciliation “with people who killed them and their loved ones because they couldn’t get away from each other; it’s a little place, and they decided to begin again.”

This small country in Africa could lead the way to peace by providing a model for ending hatred and violence throughout the world. Because the world itself has become a small place, we all have the choice to begin anew. Not later, not over time. Now.”

—Deborah Scranton
THE FILM IN CONTEXT

Understanding a little more about Rwanda can help you understand the film better. This section contains some helpful background information.

- The Republic of Rwanda is located in eastern-central Africa. It is bordered by Uganda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania. It is a small country, smaller than the state of Massachusetts.
- The main languages spoken in Rwanda are Kinyarwanda, French and English.
- Most Rwandans are Christian, with a growing Muslim population.
- 90% of the population earns their living through farming. Local crops include coffee, tea, bananas, beans, and potatoes.

GENOCIDE

Genocide is the killing, or attempted killing, of an entire national, racial, religious, or ethnic group. Hutus and Tutsis were social groups that lived together for thousands of years without any conflict. The problems started with colonialism. In the 1930s the Belgians introduced a mandatory system of identification. People in Rwanda had to carry cards identifying them as Hutu or Tutsi. The people of Rwanda were made to feel they were different from one another rather than people who belonged to the same nation. This could be compared with the different identification methods used to identify the Jews during the period of the Holocaust. The whole idea was to differentiate them with sole purpose of singling out one group as a target. There was a Rwandan equivalent of Hitler. Former Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, the leader of the genocidal government.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- 1916—Belgium takes over Rwanda and uses a system of eugenics to delineate Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups out of traditional Rwandan socio-economic classes. The Belgians give political control to the Tutsis, who are deemed to look more European in appearance.
- 1926—The Belgians introduce a system of ethnic identity cards, officially segregating Hutus and Tutsis with unequal rights.
- 1957—The “Hutu Manifesto” is published. It denounces the Tutsis who currently dominate the Rwandan leadership.
- 1959—The king of Rwanda dies and the Hutus rise up against the Tutsi nobility. Thousands of Tutsis are killed and thousands more flee to the neighboring countries. The Belgians switch their political support to the Hutu leadership.
- 1960—Rwanda holds its first municipal elections. The Hutus, who vastly outnumber the Tutsis in the population, get the majority.
- 1961—The Rwandan monarchy is abolished by a referendum and a republic is announced. The Tutsis are attacked by the Hutu leadership with the aim to drive them out of Rwanda.
- 1962—Rwanda is granted independence from Belgium. The Hutu nationalist party comes to power.
- 1963—Tutsis who fled in 1959 attack Rwanda from neighboring countries. Tutsis are attacked by Hutus in Rwanda in retaliation. More Tutsis leave.
- 1967—The Hutu leadership carries out country-wide massacres of Tutsi citizens in Rwanda.
- 1973—The Hutu leaders push Tutsi’s out of their jobs and schools. Major Juvenal Habyarimana takes power and creates a single-party state. Ethnic quotas are introduced into the public services. Tutsi’s are only allowed 9% of available jobs.
- 1975—France signs a TMAA (“Technical Military Assistance Agreement”) with the Hutu leadership in Rwanda.
- 1981—Francois Mitterrand is elected President in France.
- 1986—Tutsis in exile in neighboring Uganda form the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front); Because of their upbringing in Uganda, they speak English as a second language.
- 1990 (October)—RPF rebels invade in the hope of creating a power-sharing situation with Habyarimana. They are opposed by government troops—the FAR (Rwandan Armed Forces).
- 1990—Habyarimana travels to Paris to meet with Francois Mitterrand. Mitterrand pledges support to combat the English-speaking RPF, sending French soldiers to Rwanda to help beat back the RPF advance.
- 1990—When the RPF’s leader, Fred Rwigema, is killed in combat, Paul Kagame—his second in command—returns from military school in America to lead the RPF.
- 1991—French troops remain in Rwanda to train the Interahamwe and the FAR. France begins shipping large supplies of military arms to Habyarimana’s government.
- 1991/2—Local persecutions of Tutsis, including murders, are carried out by the Interahamwe at the orders of Habyarimana’s government.
- 1993 (August)—Habyarimana and the RPF sign a peace and power sharing agreement—the Arusha Peace Accord. 2,500 U.N. troops are deployed to Rwanda to oversee its implementation, under the command of Canadian General Romeo Dallaire.
- 1993/4—Habyarimana delays implementation of power sharing; training of Interahamwe increases. The extremist Hutu radio station, Radio Mille Collines, starts broadcasting calls to hunt, attack and kill Tutsis.
- 1994 (April)—Habyarimana restates his commitment to the Arusha Peace Accords. Extremist Hutus are alarmed by this development.
- 1994 (April 6)—Habyarimana’s airplane is shot down. He and the President of neighboring Burundi are killed. The blame is placed on the Tutsis. Massacres of Tutsis begin.
- 1994—Kagame leads the RPF into Rwanda to stop the massacres and take control of the country.
- 1994 (April 7)—FAR and the Interahamwe set up roadblocks. They round up thousands, including women and children; most are massacred using ‘pangas’—machete-like weapons. U.N. forces are forbidden to intervene, being only allowed to ‘monitor’ the situation.
- 1994 (April 21)—10 Belgian soldiers are killed; the UN reduces its forces in the country from 2,500 to 250. French soldiers flee the country and France burns all diplomatic documents at their embassy in Kigali.
- 1994 (April 30)—The situation is debated in the United Nations Security Council. They refuse to declare it a ‘genocide,’ which would mean they would be forced to intervene.
- 1994 (May 17)—A Security Council resolution says “acts of genocide may have been committed.”
The steps Rwanda has taken to recover since the genocide have earned the country a reputation as a model for other developing countries. In 2009, CNN labeled Rwanda “African’s biggest success story.” In Earth Made of Glass, it is clear how committed current President Kagame is to improving his country.

- 1994 (June 23)—French troops return to Rwanda under “Operation Turquoise.” They take control of the Lake Kivu region and begin escorting refugees over the border into Eastern Congo—giving safe passage to the fleeing FAR and Interhamwe.
- 1994 (July 17)—Kagame and the RPF troops reach the capital, Kigali. The Hutu extremists and Interahamwe leaders escape to refugee camps in nearby Congo and Burundi, where they are placed alongside Tutsi refugees. In many cases, these men continue to exercise power within the camps and the killing of Tutsis continues. Between 800,000 and 1,071,000 were murdered. Many more were mutilated, maimed or physically scarred for life.
- 1994—Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu, is appointed President of Rwanda. Paul Kagame is appointed Vice President.
- 1996—Rwandan troops invade and attack Hutu militia-dominated camps in Eastern Congo (Zaire) in order to drive home the refugees.
- 2000 (April)—Vice-President Paul Kagame elected as Rwanda’s new president.
- 2001 (October)—Voting to elect members of traditional “gacaca” courts begins. The courts—in which ordinary Rwandans judge their peers—aim to clear the backlog of 1994 genocide cases.
- 2002 (July)—Rwanda and DR Congo sign a peace deal under which Rwanda agrees to pull troops out of DR Congo and DR Congo pledged to help disarm Rwanda Hutu gunmen blamed for killing Tutsi minority in 1994 genocide.
- 2002 (May)—Voters back a draft constitution banning the incitement of ethnic hatred.
- 2003 (August)—Paul Kagame wins the first presidential elections since the 1994 genocide.
- 2003 (October)—First multi-party parliamentary elections; President Kagame’s Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) wins absolute majority.
- 2004 (March)—President Kagame rejects French report that says he ordered 1994 attack on president’s plane.
- 2004 August—Rwandan soldiers are deployed to Darfur, Sudan becoming the first foreign armed forces to combat the genocide in Darfur.
- 2006 (November)—Rwanda breaks off diplomatic ties with France after French judge issues an international arrest warrant for President Kagame and nine others including Rose Kabuye.
- 2007 (October)—Rwanda launches and independent inquiry into the 1994 presidential plane crash.
- 2008 (August)—Rwanda accuses France of having played an active role in the genocide of 1994, and issues a report naming more than 30 senior French officials.
- 2008 (September)—President Paul Kagame’s Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) wins large majority in parliamentary elections.
- 2008 (October)—Rwanda decides all education will be taught in English instead of French, officially as a result of joining the English-speaking East African Community.
- 2008 (November)—France arrests Rwandan presidential aide Rose Kabuye on charges of terrorism.
- 2009 (February)—Rwandan troops leave the Democratic Republic of Congo five weeks after entering to attack Hutu rebels.
- 2009 (November)—Rwanda is admitted to the Commonwealth, the second country (after Mozambique) to become a member without a British colonial past or constitutional ties to the UK.
- 2009 (November)—France and Rwanda restore diplomatic relations.
- 2010 (February)—French President Nicolas Sarkozy pays official visit to Rwanda, the first French Head of State to do so in 25 years.

RECOVERY

The steps Rwanda has taken to recover since the genocide have earned the country a reputation as a model for other developing countries. In 2009, CNN labeled Rwanda “African’s biggest success story.” In Earth Made of Glass, it is clear how committed current President Kagame is to improving his country.

- After the genocide, President Kagame abolished the ethnic identity cards that Belgium had instituted during the period of colonialism.
- President Kagame established a system of community courts called ‘gacaca’ which means ‘justice on the grass’ where those accused of crimes of genocide are tried by members of their own communities.
- Rwanda has instituted a system of rehabilitation for former genocidaires (those who committed genocide).
- Under President Kagame, 3 million Rwandan refugees have returned and the nation’s economy has tripled in size.
- Rwanda leads the world in governmental representation by women. Among all 186 countries, only ONE has a parliamentary house where women are in the majority: Rwanda. The US, by contrast, ranks 91st.
- Rwanda was the first to send troops to Darfur to help try to stop genocide from happening there.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before seeing this film, did you know about the Rwandan genocide? What did you already know? What new information did you learn? How does it make you feel?

Does the Rwandan genocide remind you of other historical events? Which ones, and how?

Do you think Rwanda is a good model of peace for other countries? Why or why not?
Now that you've watched *Earth Made of Glass* and worked through the Study Guide, take some time to reflect on the following questions. These worksheets are an important step in practicing your critical viewing skills. Write down your answers and compare with your friends and classmates.

**Every film has a **MESSAGE** that the filmmaker wants to communicate. There are a few key questions you can ask yourself to help figure out a film’s message.**

What do you think *Earth Made of Glass* is about?

What is Deborah Scranton trying to say about the subject? What evidence does she use?

Why do you think Deborah Scranton made this film?

**PRODUCTION** describes the process of making a film and includes writing the script, choosing different types of shots while filming, editing the final footage, and choosing music. The choices made during production affect how we experience the movie.

How is the story of *Earth Made of Glass* told? Does it remind you of other films you have seen? If so, which ones and how? If not, how was it unique?

How does the way *Earth Made of Glass* is made change the way you understand the topic? (Think about the structure of the film, the music, etc.)

**CRITIQUE: WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

When you **CRITIQUE** a film as a critical viewer you are doing more than saying whether you like it or not, you are forming your own opinion about a film, and explaining your thoughts.

What did you find interesting about *Earth Made of Glass*? Why?

Why is *Earth Made of Glass* interesting to other viewers (even if it wasn’t interesting to you)?

Why do you think the filmmaker took the time to make this film?

What would you have done differently if you were the director?

What kind of audience is *Earth Made of Glass* targeting? (Remember, one film can target many different kinds of audiences!)
RESOURCES

FURTHER READING

If you’re interested in learning more about some of the issues presented in the film, check out these books and articles.

Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda by Romeo Dallaire
We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories From Rwanda by Philip Gourevitch
The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide by Daniela Kroslak
Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide by Linda Melvern
A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda’s Genocide by Linda Melvern
Rwanda Means the Universe: A Native’s Memoir’s of Blood and Bloodlines by Louise Mushikawabo and Jack Kramer.
“A Problem from Hell” America and the Age of Genocide by Samantha Power
Silent Accomplice: The Untold Story of France’s Role in the Rwandan Genocide by Andrew Wallis

ONLINE RESOURCES

Discover more information on the web about Earth Made of Glass and related topics.

Earth Made of Glass: www.earthmadeofglass.com
Official film website

Aegis Trust: www.aegistrust.org
The Aegis Trust campaigns against crimes against humanity and genocide. Aegis runs the Kigali Memorial Centre in Rwanda (with Kigali City Council) and the Holocaust Memorial and Educational Centre in the UK.

Rwanda: The Wake of a Genocide: www.rwandagenocide.org

A collection of high-quality information and resources on the Rwandan genocide.

Avaga Agahoza: www.avega.org.rw
An association with information and resources for those widowed or orphaned by the Rwandan genocide.

Survivors’ Fund: www.survivors-fund.org.uk
Support for victims of the Rwandan genocide; read testimonies from survivors and hear their individual stories.

FURTHER WATCHING

If you liked Earth Made of Glass, you might also like some of these other films and television shows.

Hotel Rwanda
The true-life story of Paul Rusesabagina, a hotel manager who housed over a thousand Tutsi refugees during their struggle against the Hutu militia in Rwanda.

Frontline: Ghosts of Rwanda
Frontline marked the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide with this documentary. It includes interviews with key government officials and diplomats and eyewitness accounts of the genocide from those who experienced it firsthand.

Enemies of the People
Similar to Earth Made of Glass, this documentary chronicles killings that took place under the Khmer Rouge’s regime in Cambodia.

Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak by Jean Hatzfeld, Linda Coverdale, and Susan Sontag
The Antelope’s Strategy: Living in Rwanda After the Genocide by Jean Hatzfeld
A Thousand Hills: Rwanda’s Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It by Linda Melvern
Intended Consequences: Rwandan Children Born of Rape by Jonathan Torgovnik
“The Life After” (from The New Yorker; available online) by Philip Gourevitch
“Rwanda’s Trial” (from The Los Angeles Times: available online) by Stephen Kinzer
“Rwanda’s Genocide: The Untold Story” (from Wall Street Journal; available online) by Anne Jolis

Sometimes in April
This narrative film tells the story of a Hutu army officer who is married to a Tutsi. He becomes separated from his wife at the start of the genocide. Ten years later he is still trying to find out what happened to her and their two children.

Shake Hands With The Devil: The Journey Of Roméo Dallaire.
A look at the Rwandan disaster through the eyes of a hugely conflicted observer, Romeo Dallaire, the Canadian general who pleaded with his superiors to intervene and possibly stave off the slaughter, and then watched helplessly as the country went to hell. The film follows Dallaire’s return to Rwanda in 2004, as he tries to exorcise the demons that have haunted him—he suffered a breakdown and suicidal depression after his service in Africa.
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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TRIBECA FILM INSTITUTE’S YOUTH PROGRAMS, PLEASE VISIT WWW.TRIBECAFILMINSTITUTE.ORG OR EMAIL YOUTH@TRIBECAFILMINSTITUTE.ORG

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