



UNIT 11

Imperialism

ZULU DAWN

Zulu Dawn Films, 1979; directed by Douglas Hickox

| Major Character | Actor/Actress |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| General Lord Chelmsford | Peter O'Toole |
| Colonel Durnford | Burt Lancaster |
| Sir Henry Bartle Frere | John Mills |
| Lieutenant William Vereker | Simon Ward |
| Bishop Colenso | Freddie Jones |
| King Cetshwayo | Simon Sabela |
| Colonel Hamilton-Brown | Nigel Davenport |
| Lt. Colonel Pulleine | Denholm Elliott |
| Norris-Newman | Ronald Lacey |
| Colonel Crealock | Michael Jayston |

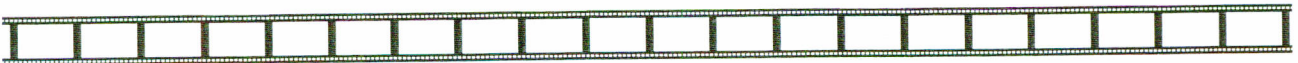
WHAT TO WATCH FOR

This film is a prequel* to the highly acclaimed film *Zulu* (1964). It is a more useful film than *Zulu* in history classes because it gives the background of the British involvement in South Africa and the Zulu War of 1879.

The Zulus were a Bantu tribe that was turned into a highly disciplined war machine by Shaka, their chief from 1818 to 1828. All Zulu males served in the *impi*, or army, from late adolescence to old age. Warriors were not permitted to marry until they were 40 years old or had “washed their spears in blood,” either in battle or by brave acts. The king of the Zulus in 1879 was Cetshwayo, who controlled a large independent territory called Zululand.

**Prequel* is film slang for a movie that is made after another film but covers actions or events that occur before those of the first film. (For instance, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* is the prequel to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.)

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The British by 1879 controlled most of South Africa, including the state of Natal, which bordered Zululand. British officials were concerned by the presence of an independent native state. They also wished to show the Boers—white settlers of Dutch ancestry—that they could control the native peoples. Most historians and many British government officials believed that Lord Chelmsford's invasion of Zululand was not justified. The British did eventually defeat the Zulus, but not before receiving some setbacks to their notion of invincibility and superiority.

Watch for the attitudes expressed in this film by the British. The imperialist concept of European superiority was common in the late nineteenth century. While there were people like Bishop Colenso, the more prevalent attitude was the one conveyed by Lord Chelmsford. Look for examples of prejudice against native peoples and lack of regard for the lives of non-Europeans. Unfortunately, some of these attitudes have carried through to the twentieth century and were displayed during the war in Vietnam. Note the confidence and bravado of the British army. Remember that late nineteenth-century Europeans (and Americans) believed it was their God-given destiny to control the world.





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VOCABULARY

Bantu

Boer

Cape Colony

impi

kraal

laager

Natal

Transvaal

Zululand

QUESTIONS BASED ON THE FILM

1. How are the native people employed by the British army treated by the Europeans?

2. What are the differences in treatment between the British officers and enlisted men?

3. How does King Cetshwayo defend his actions in Zululand when confronted by the British ultimatum?

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UNIT 11: Imperialism *(continued)*



4. As the British troops enter Zululand, what is their justification for the invasion?

5. Why do the British feel confident of victory over the Zulu?

6. Compare the British style of fighting with that of the Zulu. Why are the Zulu victorious at Isandhlwana?

