

# **BRITFILMS**

**BRITISH SCHOOL FILM FESTIVAL**

**#11 - 2017/2018**

**Study Guide**

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**A UNITED KINGDOM**

# A UNITED KINGDOM

German certification	minimum age 6 recommended for 13 years and older
Language	English with German subtitles
Country, Year	Great Britain/Czech Republic/USA 2016
Running time	111 min.
Directed by	Amma Asante
Starring	David Oyelowo (Seretse Khama), Rosamund Pike (Ruth Williams), Jack Davenport (Sir Alistair Canning), Tom Felton (Rufus Lancaster), Laura Carmichael (Muriel Williams) and others

## What A UNITED KINGDOM is about

London 1947. „Have you ever been in love?“, the young british woman asks her companion. „No, but then Ruth Williams came my way“, is his response. But „A United Kingdom“ is far from an ordinary love story. Seretse Khama is not only from Botswana, he is also the heir to the Botswanan throne. Despite the political, social and familial reservations, Seretse and Ruth get married, even before returning to Seretse's native land. Once back home, Seretse clashes with his uncle Tshekedi, the reigning king. Considering the neighbouring country of South Africa and its Apartheid regime, a light-skinned queen may be considered a wrong signal. Not only the furious king wants the marriage annulled, for fear of losing economical ties with South Africa, the british protectorate's leadership joins the protest.

Amma Asante's biopic is based on true events and deals with racism by telling an intimate love story. One of the main story elements is South Africa's Apartheid regime, that slowly influences the neighbouring country of Botswana and even the relationship between Europe and the former british protectorate known as Botswana. The film also deals with the discrimination Ruth experiences in Africa due to her light skin color. Despite all that, Seretse and Ruth prove to be loyal and strong-willed partners and lead an exemplary fight for freedom and justice. A fight that director Amma Asante captures and shows in intensely expressive and strong imagery.

The following work sheets deal with

- Important terms (Apartheid, for example) that inspire further research
- The problem of racism as illustrated by the conflict between Seretse and his uncle Tshekedi
- The interests and politics of the United Kingdom and how they shape the development of Botswana for several years to come
- How the seemingly hopeless situation surrounding Seretse and Ruth is expressed through recurring visual motifs and the constriction of the picture frame

## Publishing information

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Photo credits: Alamode

(All the stills serve as image quotations, to enable study of the film's content, and not as illustrations.)


**Terms**

Explain the following terms:

<b>Apartheid</b>	
<b>Colonialism</b>	
<b>Protectorate</b>	
<b>Exile</b>	

**Seretse Khama and his uncle Tshekedi Khama**

A severe conflict grows between Seretse and his uncle Tshekedi. Clarify the positions the two are taking. Take into consideration how they see their role as leaders and how they define their responsibilities for their people.

<b>Seretse Khama</b>		<b>Tshekedi Khama</b>
		

Using the following image, describe how the conflict between Seretse and Tshekedi is told visually.



Discuss in class: Which arguments brought forth by Seretse and Tshekedi Khama are comprehensible and solid? Also, talk about the rights of an individual person and how they may clash with that person's responsibilities and the welfare of the public.

#### **No man is free..**

„No man is free who is not the master of himself“, is said by Seretse Khama twice during the film. Explain, how this sentence has a personal as well as a political meaning.

Personal meaning		Political meaning
	↔	

#### **Great Britain's interests**

Botswana has been a British protectorate since 1885. Discuss the political interests that the British pursue in „A United Kingdom“ and what methods they use to achieve them. What conclusions can be drawn concerning the idea of man that was prevalent at that time (the film's action begins in 1947)? Also talk about the general politics of colonial powers and the consequences for the colonized countries and their development.

### Conveying feelings by using images

Over and over, obstacles are put in Seretse's and Ruth's way. With the help of the following images, examine how their feelings and situations are expressed via imagery.



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### Obituaries for Seretse Khama and Ruth Williams Khama

Seretse Khama died on July 13th, 1980. Ruth Williams Khama on May 22nd, 2002. Pick one of them and write an obituary, focussing on briefly describing their lives and what they achieved. In addition to the events depicted in film, also include further important details and milestones in their lives. (The most important biographical info can be found on the German and English Wikipedia)