

The Tree of Spirits Study Notes



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Directed by: Cilia Sawadogo

Certificate: PG

Running time: 45 mins

Release date: 2002

Synopsis:

Two young children, Kodou and Tano, discover an ancient spirit world through Ayoka, the spirit of a magical Baobab tree. The tree is soon to be cut down by a ruthless businessman and the children know that without it, the door between the real and spirit world will be closed and the spirit of rain will never be free. They turn to the ancestors for help and guidance. This fantastical tale raises important environmental issues in Africa.

These Study Notes are suitable for KS2 Geography, Science, Literacy, PSHE and MFL.

Before watching the film

1. Use books and the internet to find facts about the fascinating Baobab tree. Try to find answers to the following questions:
 - Where do they grow?
 - How big can they become?
 - How long do they live for?
 - When do they grow leaves?
 - Why is the Baobab called the 'tree of life'?
2. Collect books about Africa, including traditional stories, picture books and non-fiction texts. Read them as a class and discuss what life is like in the savannah and why water is so precious.
3. *The Tree of Spirits* is in French with English subtitles. Its original title is *L'Arbre aux spirits*. Learn some simple French words and phrases so you can listen out for them in the film. Here are some to get you started:

Arbre - Tree

Esprits - Spirits

Eau - Water

Je fais du vélo - I ride my bicycle

Dans la savane - in the savannah

Il pleut - It's raining

After watching the film

1. Water, Kodou's bike and the Baobab tree were all very important to Kodou and Tano. Think about the most important things in your life. Family? Food? Your toys? Draw a Baobab tree with all its spindly, root-like branches. At the end of each branch write a word for something that you couldn't live without.
2. Write a strongly worded letter to the businessman and urge him not to cut down Kodou and Tano's tree. Use your knowledge of what makes the tree special and the parts of Africa where it grows and present the most persuasive arguments for saving it.
3. Kodou and Tano have to ride a bike and pay a high price for water because it hasn't rained for a long time. In some parts of the world, including some parts of Africa, humans have to travel a long distance for water and it won't even be as fresh and clean as the water we take for granted in our homes. How can we avoid wasting water at home and in school? Create a persuasive poster or a presentation that encourages people to use water wisely.

Written by Matthew Poyton