

US History Extra Credit Movie List - 11th Grade

Early 20th Century

- **Avalon** – Polish-Jewish family immigrates to America (“the promised land”) at the turn of the century.
- **There Will Be Blood** – A story of family, religion, hatred, oil and madness, focusing on a turn of the century oil prospector in the early days of the business. Can be brutal. Rated R
- **Matewan** – Set in the early 1900’s. It is about wildcat miner strikers.
- **Iron Jawed Angels** – A powerful movie, starring Hillary Swank, about the efforts of Alice Paul to get the vote for women.
- **1917** – Brand new movie about a pair of British soldiers trying to stop an attack by the British before the German slaughter them.
- **All Quiet on the Western Front** – Classic anti-war movie about a young German going off to the horrors of WW1.
- **The Lost Battalion** – Story about a group US soldiers trapped in the Argonne Forest.
- **Sergeant York** – About one of the most decorated soldiers in WW1. He won the Medal of Honor.
- **Paths of Glory** – WW1 soldiers refuse to continue with an impossible attack and what happens to them. Stanley Kubrick directs.
- **Eight Men Out** – This is an outstanding movie about the Chicago White Sox scandal involving the World Series in 1919. It involves issues of ownership power and of the unions.
- **Birth of a Nation** – A world famous racist silent movie about the founding of the KKK. In the film the founder of the KKK is made out to be a hero and the savior of American culture.
- **The Sand Pebbles** – Story about a US gunboat on the Yangtze River in 1926 China.
- **Inherit the Wind** – It is a classic movie depicting the Scopes Monkey Trial. But it is really more about the McCarthy Era of the 1950’s.
- **The Road to Perdition** – Set in crime circles during the 20’s and 30’s, especially during prohibition.
- **Cinderella Man** – Story of a washed up boxer who makes a comeback and becomes an inspiration in the 1930’s.
- **Souder** – The oldest son of a loving and strong family of black sharecroppers comes of age in the Depression-era South after his father is imprisoned for stealing food.
- **The Grapes of Wrath** – Set in the Depression, this movie is a classic which portrays the Oklahoma dust bowl, the growth of paternalism in government, and the greed of the wealthy California land owners, etc.
- **Of Mice and Men** – This is a film adaptation of another John Steinbeck novel. It is a powerful story partially about the effects of the economic devastation of the Depression on the relationship between two men. It also explores the dark side of mental illness.
- **The Great Debaters** – In 1935-36 a debate team at all-black Wiley College, takes on traditionally white colleges. Ends with Harvard, the national champs, offering to debate them.

Mid- 20th Century Movies

- **The Bridge over the River Kwai** – A classic WWII movie.
- **To Hell and Back** – Autobiography of Audie Murphy in WWII. Audie Murphy, the most decorated combat soldier in WWII, played himself in the movie.
- **Tora, Tora, Tora** – A realistic, detailed look at the dramatic events surrounding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor from both the Japanese and American perspectives. Historically accurate.
- **The Great Escape** – Based on a true story, about a big group of Allied prisoners who managed to escape from an escape-proof German POW camp during World War II. Great Steve McQueen chase.
- **Bataan** – A small group of men try to keep the Japanese from taking the Bataan Peninsula. The characters, regardless of race or creed, are treated equally, which was unusual for that time (1943).

- **Patton** - The man, the myth, the legend, all rolled into one in this great bio-drama starring George C. Scott. My favorite WW2 movie.
- **Saving Private Ryan** – Opening scene is a very realistic account of DDay. My favorite WW2 movie next to Patton.
- **Windtalkers** – About the Navajo who use their native language as an unbreakable cypher in WW2.
- **Fat Man and Little Boy** – About the secret Manhattan Project to make the atomic bomb.
- **Letters from Iwa Jima** and **Flags of Our Fathers** – The Battle of Iwa Jima in WW2 as told from the perspective of the Japanese (Letters) and the Americans (Flags).
- **Best Years of Our Lives** - Made just after the conclusion of World War II, this film views the realities of life after war for three vets returning home. Best Supporting Actor Oscar went to Harold Russell who was a real-life veteran who lost both hands.
- **A League of Their Own** – About the women’s professional baseball league during WW2. Good movie about the home front.
- **The Bridges at Toko-Ri** –A Korean War movie that takes a somewhat critical view of war, quite a change from the WWII era movies. This is important because it is an early anti-war movie.
- **Pork Chop Hill** – About one of the major battles in the Korean conflict.
- **Manchurian Candidate (1962)** – Red Scare movie about a man who is brainwashed to become an unwitting assassin in an international communist conspiracy.
- **To Kill a Mockingbird** – Based on the great book by Harper Lee, this basically true story is presented well in the 1960s era movie. It captures racial attitudes in the Jim Crow South.
- **Far From Heaven** – This is an indictment of the conservatism of the 1950s. Deals with issues involving homosexuality and racism.
- **Diner** – Life of six friends as they make the passage into adulthood in 1959 Baltimore.
- **Quiz Show** – Another relatively recent film directed by Robert Redford about a scandal involving a quiz show in the 1950s. The set, the costumes, the cars etc. are all excellently portrayed.
- **Introducing Dorothy Dandridge** – About racism in Hollywood. Interestingly, Dorothy Dandridge was the first black woman nominated for the Best Actress Oscar and Halle Berry was the first black woman to win the Best Actress Oscar (for this role).
- **Good Night and Good Luck** – 2005 movie about the life of newscaster, Edward R. Murrow during McCarthy era.
- **October Sky** - About a teenager and his science project during Sputnik Era.
- **The Front** – An early Woody Allen movie that deals with the dark side of the Red Scare, the blacklist, it features a few actors who were blacklisted.
- **Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb**– One of the best satires on the Cold War, ever. A true classic. Stanley Kubrick directs.
- **Separate but Equal** – About the Supreme Court challenge to racial segregation in Brown vs. Board of Education.
- **The Help** – White writer helps African-American maids tell their story in 1960’s Jackson, Mississippi.
- **Gentleman’s Agreement** - A ground breaking film from the 1940s that attacked the accepted American norm of anti-Semitism. It refrains from preaching while showing the human impact of prejudice as Gregory Peck poses as a Jew and gets shut out by “polite” society.
- **Hacksaw Ridge** – conscientious objector at the Battle of Okinawa in WWII. Good movie to see how conscientious objectors were treated during a war.

Late- 20th Century Movies

- **All the President’s Men** – Good story of Woodward and Bernstein’s effort to get to the bottom of the Watergate scandal, which ultimately resulted in Nixon’s resignation.
- **Platoon** – "We did not fight the enemy, we fought ourselves and the enemy was in us." One of the most powerful war films ever made. Rated R
- **The Deer Hunter, Coming Home, or Born on the Fourth of July**, all feature disillusionment of soldiers or ex-soldiers after their experience in Vietnam. They are all a bit depressing and dark. All rated R.
- **Good Morning, Vietnam** – A DJ in the Armed Services Radio shakes things up in 1965 Vietnam.

- **Apollo 13** - A very entertaining look at what happened in space as the result of an explosion that left three astronauts perilously close to being stranded.
- **JFK** - Oliver Stone movie, presents an explanation of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, worth thinking about.
- **Thirteen Days** - Account of the inside workings of the Kennedy White House during the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- **Mississippi Burning** - A great movie about the disappearance of three civil rights workers in 1960's Mississippi.
- **Malcolm X** - A good movie about the life and times of Malcolm X, it features Denzel Washington as Malcolm.
- **Nixon** - It does not portray Nixon in a light he would like.
- **Frost-Nixon** - David Frost interviews Nixon, and not the way Nixon expects.
- **Milk** - A great movie about Harvey Milk's efforts to advance the cause of gay rights in the 70s. R.
- **Argo** - Good movie about the Iranian Hostage Crisis in 1980.
- **China Syndrome** - About the nuclear power industry in the late 1970's. Coincidentally the movie was released just 12 days before the Three Mile Island nuclear accident.
- **Norma Rae** - About a woman who organizes workers in a textile mill in the South.

Other Good Choices:

- ***In the Heat of the Night***
- ***Raisin in the Sun***
- ***The Butler***
- ***Four Little Girls***
- ***Tuskegee Airmen***
- ***Untouchables***
- ***What Price Glory***
- ***Cotton Club***
- ***Paper Moon***
- ***Color Purple***
- ***Three Mile Island***
- ***Erin Brockavich***
- ***On the Waterfront***
- ***The Right Stuff***
- ***Thin Red Line***
- ***Far and Away***

There have been a lot of great movies about the 20th Century with a US focus. Pick one and ask if I think it is OK. Also TV shows (*The Americans* comes to mind) and documentaries.

Movie Critique Instructions

You may use any movie from the attached list or bring a movie you would rather watch for my approval. If you do not get prior approval for a movie not on the list, it will not count.

Two pages minimum, three pages maximum. Make sure you include the following in your critique.

1. Name of movie title, year, director and two or three leading actors.
2. Evaluate the historical accuracy of the film
 - a. What is the film's bias?
 - b. What does it reflect about history that is (to your knowledge) accurate?
 - c. Where may the filmmakers taken liberties or stretched the story?
3. Summarize the plot in one or two paragraphs
4. Review the movie
 - a. Your opinion of the movie and three reasons for that opinion.
 - i. What did you like about it?
 - ii. What did you not like about it?