

TEACHERS NOTES



**ROSA'S
JOURNEY**
THE STORY OF A NATION

ROSA'S JOURNEY - THE STORY OF A NATION

Synopsis

The journey of independent East Timor through the eyes of a remarkable and resilient woman.

Following the acclaimed documentary *East Timor – Birth of a Nation*, *Rosa's Journey* picks up the story of young East Timorese widow Rosa Martins and her family seven years after independence. Unlike the celebratory climate of 2000, life in East Timor is violent and democracy fragile, as one of the world's youngest nations faces an uncertain future.

The years following nationhood have been hard for Rosa and her country. Freedom has not translated into calm and prosperity. Every aspect of Rosa's life is informed by East Timor's continuing struggle for stability and unity.

The documentary starts in 2006 when violence breaks out in East Timor. Rosa and thousands of others are forced to flee to refugee camps. Australian and other international troops are sent to restore peace. The story continues in 2007 as the country conducts its first elections as an independent nation. It ends with the shooting of President Jose Ramos Horta.

Rosa is determined to give her children the education and opportunities denied to her by war and poverty. Against the odds, she maintains hope for the peace of her country.

Curriculum links

This program will have interest and relevance for teachers and students at secondary and tertiary levels. Curriculum links include English, Media Studies, History, SOSE/HSIE, Civics, and Politics.

Before viewing

Note that East Timor is known within the country itself as *Timor-Leste*.

East Timorese widow Rosa Martins is the central subject not only of this 2008 documentary program, but also of Part One of an earlier documentary from 2002, titled *East Timor – Birth of a Nation* (see film references section). Part One of the two-part 2002 program is titled *Rosa's Story*. In order to gain a much deeper appreciation and understanding of Rosa's dramatic life experiences and of her country's turbulent post-colonial history and struggle for survival, students and teachers are advised to first view at least *Rosa's Story*. As well, Luigi Acquisto directed both *Rosa's Story* and *Rosa's Journey*, so you may find it a worthwhile exercise to examine whether his approach to the subject is the same, or has changed from one film to the other.

Part Two of the 2002 program is titled *Lu Olo's Story*. Lu Olo is the name by which Francisco Guterres is popularly known in East Timor. Guterres was a Fretilin guerrilla soldier in his country's fight for independence from Indonesia, and after independence in 2002 he became an elected Fretilin representative and President of the new East Timorese Parliament. He later stood for the presidency of the nation in 2007, but lost the election to Jose Ramos Horta, who had previously been Prime Minister. Shortly after, in the same year, Guterres was re-elected to Parliament as the leading member for the Fretilin party.

Teachers notes on *East Timor – Birth of a Nation* (combining both Parts One and Two) are available for download from the Screen Australia website (see website references).

If you view both *Rosa's Story* and *Rosa's Journey* together, you may wish to carry out the following three activities before moving on to the other sections of this study guide.

- *Rosa's Journey* begins some six years after *Rosa's Story* concludes. Discuss in class and write notes on whether you think Rosa's general demeanour and behaviour, her impressions, hopes and expectations, and her emotional state, have changed during the intervening years, even in small ways. Has she remained constant? Either find evidence of this or indicate what might have caused or contributed to any changes. Perhaps she may have changed in some ways, but not in others. To support your views, highlight specific moments or scenes when comparing the later *Rosa's Journey* to *Rosa's Story*.

ROSA'S JOURNEY - THE STORY OF A NATION

- In terms of the general family, cultural, political and social environment and climate in which Rosa lives, especially in and around Dili (East Timor's capital city), have there been any noticeable changes over the years from one film to the other? Have some aspects remained constant? Discuss, with evidence from the two documentary programs.
- Write a short commentary on whether the general directorial style, filming and editing method and narrative approach to the subject matter in *Rosa's Journey* is similar to, or different from, those of *Rosa's Story*. For example, do you think either of the films is judgemental towards any of the subject matter depicted, or attempts to manipulate viewers' reactions and feelings? Give examples to support your opinions. (For more on this 'specialised' kind of media discussion and analysis, see the Media Studies section.)

Rosa's Journey: background and overview

East Timor was a Portuguese colony from the 16th century to 1975, with the exception of Japanese occupation of the country between 1942 and 1945, during World War Two. Despite also being invaded and occupied by Indonesia between 1975 and 1999 before achieving national independence in 2002, the Portuguese influence of language, customs, culture and religion is still strongly evident in East Timor today, as is evident from viewing the program.

- In class, first discuss the significance of the program's full title, *Rosa's Journey – The Story of a Nation*. What is Rosa Martins' 'journey'? Is it a physical journey from one location to another, or is there a deeper, metaphorical purpose to the choice of wording? In what sense is Rosa's journey also 'the story of a nation'? In what ways are the personal and the national linked—the smaller, individual scale and the larger picture?
- In order to place East Timor into a geographical and politically international context, construct small-scale and large-scale maps on poster display paper. In one section of the poster draw a labelled map showing East Timor in relation to the other countries in its proximity, especially the islands of Indonesia and the northern part of Australia. Mark the Timor Sea, Savu Sea and other maritime regions of consequence, and the locations of important cities and towns such as Dili.
Add a large scale map of East Timor to the poster (or construct another poster) showing the boundary to the western side with Indonesian Timor. Label Dili and other regions, including Maubisse, a town that is featured in the program. On the map include the colours and design of the East Timorese national flag, and statistical information such as population figures, climate, living standards, education, industries, main religions, ethnic groups and languages etc. Find information about natural resources such as oil and gas, and indicate on the map where these are, and whether they are a source of wealth to the East Timorese people, or controlled and owned by outside interests.
- Carry out appropriate research, and on poster paper or on a website page construct an East Timor timeline of important events from the end of Portuguese colonialism in 1975 to the present day. Ensure you refer to the arrival of foreign peacekeeping forces such as those from Australia, and the prominent political and military figures who appear in the program: Jose Ramos Horta, Xanana Gusmao, Mari Alkatiri and Alfredo Reinado. From the program (and perhaps also from *Rosa's Story*) work out the approximate dates of items from Rosa's biography and ensure you add those events that are of importance into the same timeline. For example, when does she send her son, Jose, to her uncle's farm? When does her daughter, Goreti, disappear from home? When is Cristina born?
In organising and constructing the timeline use different colours either for different kinds of political or personal events, or to distinguish between the participants throughout the drama of East Timor's recent decades.
- From your viewing of the program and from further research, write a commentary in 400-500 words on the influence of long-term Portuguese colonialism on the general East Timorese culture, language, customs and way of life, citing examples from the program. Discuss the problems and difficulties this Christian cultural inheritance creates for East Timor and its people.

ROSA'S JOURNEY - THE STORY OF A NATION

Politics, hope, disillusionment

We see during the program that Rosa is highly and actively politicised. When very young, in the 1970s, her father had been a Fretilin delegate, killed by the Indonesian military. At around the same time her mother had starved to death in order to feed the children. During the Indonesian occupation Rosa later smuggled messages from Dili to Fretilin members hiding in the mountains. Independence in 2002 had left her excited and hopeful of a better future. (These events are narrated in *Rosa's Story*.)

- If you haven't already done so, from the Teachers Notes for *East Timor – Birth of a Nation*, carry out appropriate research then write a short account of Fretilin's history. When and why was Fretilin formed? What are its objectives, and have they changed since the organisation's creation? Since Independence in 2002, has Fretilin ever been in government in East Timor? What is the present state of its political power and position in East Timor? Who is its leader today? Define and explain Fretilin's relationship with past and present Australian governments, particularly those of the Howard and Rudd administrations. (See 'Fretilin' in website references.)
- Early in the program, although Rosa is still a Fretilin supporter some years after national independence, she says that its leaders are 'stubborn, and we suffer. The people are sick to death of it. We're unhappy'. Explain what she means by this. Why do you think there is an issue, an argument, a difference of opinion separating East Timorese people (especially members of the military) in the western region of the country, from those in the eastern region?
- In class, discuss and explain why Xanana Gusmao is highly regarded by Rosa. Why, in 2007, does Gusmao form a new political party, the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT)? In what ways are the CNRT's objectives different from those of Fretilin's? Why does it claim to have an 'international' stance or outlook? Explain why Rosa travels to Maubisse to cast her vote in the 2007 national elections, and why she and her older family relatives vote for Fretilin. Although Fretilin gains more votes than the CNRT, under what circumstances is the CNRT elected to head a new government in 2007? Why does this result in further street violence? Does Rosa feel that Fretilin has been cheated out of power or not? Describe and explain her thoughts and emotions about CNRT's win. (For general background see 'CNRT' in website references.)
- Continuing from the previous activity, prepare two different front page news items about the result of the 2007 election as though for two different newspapers; one newspaper is sympathetic to Fretilin and Alkatiri, the other is supportive of the CNRT and Gusmao. Use desktop publishing software to format the items, with headlines, columns, photographs, captions and other illustrative material as desired.
- Write a commentary describing the possible reasons behind the assassination attempt on President Jose Ramos Horta in early 2008. What happened immediately and in the longer term as a result of the attempt?
- In class, explain why Rosa attends the funeral of the man suspected of being responsible for the attempt, Major Alfredo Reinado. What are her overall responses to the death of Reinado, the state of the nation and the welfare of its people at the conclusion of the program?
- Discuss in class the possible thematic and dramatic elements of plotting, characterisation, setting and style, then plan and write a short fiction story about political hope and disillusionment, from a personalised viewpoint. You may draw directly or indirectly on aspects of Rosa's experience, or from elsewhere.
- After examining the general issue of political power and government in East Timor, plan and write an argued commentary as to whether East Timor can prosper and develop while the 'old guard' of Fretilin and former Fretilin members continues to seek and maintain political power.

Peacekeepers

During the program Rosa refers to the presence of 'foreign troops' in and around Dili. (See 'Peacekeeping troops in East Timor' in website references.)

- In class, discuss Rosa's response to the presence and necessity of foreign peacekeeping troops in her country.
- Carry out research then plan and create a formatted, illustrated magazine two-page spread about Australian peacekeeping forces in East Timor, examining the range of reasons for their presence and the role they are expected to carry out. Are they looked upon favourably by the East Timorese populace? Have the Australian people supported the deployment of forces in East Timor? Is there any criticism of their presence as a foreign military force?
- Drawing on events depicted in the program and further research, in pairs or small groups plan and write the script for a scene, or sequence of scenes, involving a dramatic situation concerning local people

ROSA'S JOURNEY - THE STORY OF A NATION

and foreign peacekeeping troops. Consider the possibilities for characterisation, setting, dramatic narrative and resolution. Rehearse a reading of the script, editing and revising as required, then present a reading or a 'live' performance to the class.

- Plan and write a set of imagined personal diary or blog entries about what it is like to be a member of a peacekeeping force in an unfamiliar, foreign land. For example, how dangerous and threatening is it? Is there a lighter side to your experiences?

Family and social-economic dislocation

Much of *Rosa's Journey* is about the struggle of citizens to live a 'normal' daily existence in torrid and highly stressful circumstances. Children, for example, who have lost a parent to mob killings are growing up exposed to almost unimaginable horrors, in an environment where rules, social structures and mores have broken down around them. What long term effects will this have on them?

- Discuss in class then write your own commentary on the issues surrounding how difficult life is for Rosa as a woman, a widow, and a mother of many children in East Timorese society and culture. Do you think her situation is common in East Timor? Define her relationships with the male partners in her life. Why is she led to observe about her current partner, on the birth of her eighth child, that, 'Timorese men are like this. They destroy everything. So I thought, I'd better end it'. What does she mean by saying that they 'destroy everything'?
- Offer a considered written opinion about the circumstances surrounding the behaviour of the male nurse who treated Rosa for tuberculosis. What happened as a result of his behaviour? Why hasn't Rosa made an official police complaint about his behaviour? Is it possible to suggest that she ought to have complained, and the outcome may have therefore been different – or are we, as onlookers, too far removed from her situation and culture to understand and appreciate her response?
- Following from the previous activity, consider the thematic possibilities, then plan and write a fiction short story intended to dramatise and expose the plight of women such as Rosa.
- Discuss your impressions of the issues and problems Rosa faces in attempting to rear her children alone. Provide specific examples from the program.
- Write a commentary on the importance Rosa places on a formal school education for her children, and the difficulties she encounters in attempting to achieve this.
- Consider the on-camera portrayal of Rosa's son, Jose. Discuss the ways in which Jose is a victim of his environment in Dili, yet also being drawn into being an active participant within it. What are the long-term potential dangers of this? Why does Rosa send him to her uncle's home in the inland mountain region of Maubisse? In what ways is his behaviour in Dili different from his behaviour in Maubisse, and why? Later in the program, why does Rosa place Jose into a church school, and what is the outcome of this? Discuss whether we, as members of the viewing audience, feel emotionally more positive about Jose's chances of a better life at the end of the program than at the beginning.
- During the program Jose refers to his constant fear. Plan and write a series of personal diary entries, or oral monologues, that take place over an extended period of time, from Jose's viewpoint, looking at his thoughts, emotions and perceptions towards his life, his mother, his family, his friends in the streets, and the general social and psychological environment of which he is a part.
- Drawing on the events surrounding Goreti's disappearance and Rosa's subsequent efforts to find her, work in pairs or small groups to plan and write a fictionalised drama script designed for sound only. For example, you may wish to examine the events from Goreti's viewpoint both before her disappearance, examining the causes leading up to it, the pressures upon her, and the environment in which she lives. The script may even question whether Goreti's situation at 14 years old, and as a female, reflects and even repeats those of her mother's. Rehearse a reading of the script and revise as required. When you consider it is completed, produce a recorded performance of the drama for playback or podcast on your school's intranet.
- Discuss in class the importance of Christianity and the role of the Roman Catholic church in everyday life, both for Rosa and her family, and for the East Timorese in general. Can this faith, belief and reliance of the people on their religion and their clergy have negative as well as positive outcomes for them?

ROSA'S JOURNEY - THE STORY OF A NATION

Alola Foundation

In preparing to give birth to Cristina, Rosa is offered assistance by Kirsty Sword Gusmao, and the Alola Foundation. (See 'Kirsty Sword Gusmao' in website references. A search for 'Alola Foundation' will also find many more websites in Australia and around the world.)

- From the program describe in writing the potentially life-saving role played by Kirsty Sword Gusmao in her friendship with Rosa.
- Who is Kirsty Sword Gusmao, and what is her position and status in East Timor? Carry out appropriate research then plan and write a biography of her in 400-500 words. Ensure that you include a description of the work she does for the East Timorese people, and some information about the books she has written. You may add illustrations if desired.
- Carry out research on the history, purpose and work of the Alola Foundation, then prepare a two-page spread about the Foundation, written and illustrated for a magazine aimed at young teenage readers. Include an explanation of why it is named the 'Alola' Foundation.
- Does your school have any involvement in the work of the Alola Foundation? If not, you may wish to work in groups to promote the Foundation through creating and displaying promotional posters, speaking to students in other classes about the Foundation, or arranging for speakers from the Foundation to visit your school. Perhaps as a class you might organise assistance activities or beneficial links with Alola-based groups in East Timor.
- Plan and write a short fiction story in which the Alola Foundation is, one way or another, either in the background or as a central element, featured in the narrative. Consider themes, characters, plotting, setting, dramatic points and stylistic approach to the story.

Media studies

- Discuss in class and write notes on the opening sequence of *Rosa's Journey*, up to and including the title credits. What does the sequence tell us about the themes, content and approach to the subject matter of the rest of the documentary? Through choice of camera shots, editing and sound, how does the sequence set up and portray the character and on-screen persona of Rosa? Comment on the selection of soundtrack music during the opening sequence, and its emotional effect on the viewing audience.
- Write a commentary on whether the presence of the camera on Rosa and her family throughout *Rosa's Journey* affects the on-camera behaviour of the participants, their actions and the outcome of events. Offer examples from the program.
- Luigi Acquisto, the director of *Rosa's Journey*, states in the film's press kit that he plans 'to revisit Rosa's story—and that of East Timor's developing democracy—in a new documentary in seven years time'. Write a description of what you think this next film might reveal and tell us about Rosa and her family, and the fortunes of their country.
- Try to imagine that you are in the film director's position, observing but not intervening in Rosa's difficulties. Plan and write a series of personal diary entries about your moral and ethical concerns in making such a film, looking at your relationship to the participants, and expressing your deepest feelings and thoughts about your involvement in their lives.
- Plan and write two reviews of *Rosa's Journey*, each of 250-300 words. The first should be for a general readership of a newspaper TV liftout guide. The second will be for an informational magazine or online publication produced for a human rights organisation. With your audiences in mind, consider the differences in approach, style and content between the two reviews.

ROSA'S JOURNEY - THE STORY OF A NATION

References and Further Resources

Books

- Irena Cristalis and Catherine Scott, *Independent Women: The Story of Women's Activism in East Timor*, Catholic Institute for International Relations, London, 2005
- Xanana Gusmao, *Timor Lives! Speeches of Freedom and Independence*, Longueville Media, Alexandria, 2005
- Kirsty Sword Gusmao, *A Woman of Independence: A Story of Love and the Birth of a New Nation*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2003
- Bob Lowry, *After the 2006 Crisis: Australian Interests in Timor-Leste*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Barton, 2007
- Lynne Minion, *Hello Missus: A Girl's Own Guide to Foreign Affairs*, HarperCollins, Pymble, 2004
- Richard Plunkett, *The Long Patrol: Australia and East Timor's Wars*, Black Dog Books, Fitzroy, 2008
- Michael G. Smith and Moreen Dee, *Peacekeeping in East Timor: The Path to Independence*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder; London, 2003
- Anna Trembath and Damian Grenfell, *Mapping the Pursuit of Gender Equality: Non-Government and International Agency Activity in Timor-Leste*, Globalism Institute, RMIT, Melbourne, 2007

Film/TV

TV drama mini-series:

Jessica Hobbs (director), *Answered by Fire*, Roadshow, 2006

Documentary:

- Luigi Acquisto (director), *East Timor – Birth of a Nation*, Film Australia, 2002
- Alan Erson et al (directors), *Policing the Pacific* (episode 4 – 'Dili's New Street Cops'), Film Australia, 2006
- Jeni Lee (director), *Casualties of War*, ABC, 2008

Websites

Mari Alkatiri:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mar%C3%AD_Alkatiri
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1989267.stm>

CNRT:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Congress_for_Timorese_Reconstruction

East Timor:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_East_Timor
<http://geography.about.com/library/maps/bletimor.htm#info>
www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0902237.html
East Timor – Birth of a Nation, teachers notes:
www.filmaust.com.au/programs/default.asp?content=program_display&sn=8476

Fretilin:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutionary_Front_for_an_Independent_East_Timor
<http://fretilin-rdtl.blogspot.com>

ROSA'S JOURNEY - THE STORY OF A NATION

Government of Timor-Leste, official website:

www.timor-leste.gov.tl

Xanana Gusmao:

<http://www.moreorless.net.au/heroes/gusmao.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xanana_Gusm%C3%A3o

Peacekeeping troops:

http://svc029.wic009tp.server-web.com/education/activities/east_timor/main.html

www.wsws.org/articles/2007/aug2007/etim-a27.shtml

http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Peacekeepers_take_control_in_East_Timor

Jose Ramos Horta:

<http://www.moreorless.net.au/heroes/horta.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jos%C3%A9_Ramos-Horta

Alfredo Reinado:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfredo_Reinado

abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/02/06/2156288.htm

abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/02/11/2159179.htm

Kirsty Sword Gusmao:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirsty_Sword_Gusm%C3%A3o

www.alolafoundation.org

http://www.aeuvic.asn.au/pv_vol4_iss3.pdf

Rosa's Journey – The Story of a Nation

A Screen Australia National Interest Program in association with Abracadabra Films.

Produced in association with SBS Independent.

Executive Producer: Anna Grieve

Producers: Stella Zammataro, Luigi Acquisto

Director: Luigi Acquisto

Year: 2008

Duration: 52 Minutes

Study guide written by Roger Stitson © NFSA.

Photographs by Luigi Acquisto and Stella Zammataro © Abracadabra Films

For information about Film Australia's programs, contact:

National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Sales and Distribution | PO Box 397 Pyrmont NSW 2009

T +61 2 8202 0144 | F +61 2 8202 0101

E: sales@nfsa.gov.au | www.nfsa.gov.au



SCREEN
AUSTRALIA

