

Lesson: Global Economics: *Big Men* Versus Big Oil

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will practice writing, listening, discussion and research skills as they compare and contrast global economic models of oil exchange and examine the impacts of these models on local communities.

Video clips provided with this lesson are from the film *Big Men*. Over five years, director Rachel Boynton and her cinematographer film the quest for oil in Ghana by the Dallas-based company Kosmos Energy. The company develops the country's first commercial oil field, yet its success is quickly compromised by political intrigue and accusations of corruption.

POV offers a lending library of DVDs that you can borrow anytime during the school year—FOR FREE! Get started by joining our Community Network.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- examine some of the major players in the global oil market
- explore discovery of the Jubilee oil field in Ghana
- analyze the capitalist oil industry model of the United States
- compare and contrast government owned and privately owned oil production models

GRADE LEVELS

9-12

SUBJECT AREAS

Culture
Economics
Politics
World Government

MATERIALS

- Internet access and equipment to show the class an online video
- **Copies of the *Wall Street Journal* article “The Long Shadow of the Invisible Hand” (May 22, 2010) by Ian Bremmer**
- Copies of “Oil Industry” from History.com

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED

One 50-minute class period and additional time to review extension activities

FILM CLIPS

Note: The following contain some details and complex information. It may be helpful to ask students to take notes during the clips, then take a moment to recap what they learned after viewing.

Clip 1: Oil Discovery: Ghana (Length: 7:00)

The clip begins at 3:00 with a helicopter flying above Ghana’s oil field and ends at 10:00 with Jim Musselman, CEO of Kosmos Energy, speaking at the Ashanti king’s reception.

Clip 2: The American Model (Length: 2:46)

The clip begins at 14:06 with the director’s voice saying, “The American model for people making money off a single oil well is . . .” and ends at 16:52 with Musselman saying, “That’s, pure and simple, what it’s all about.”

Clip 3: The Benefits of Big Oil (Length: 5:00)

The clip begins at 29:42 with a caption about Kosmos’ contract and ends at 34:42.

ACTIVITIES

1. Oil Discovery: Ghana

Show **Clip 1**. Invite students to discuss their thoughts about the Jubilee field discovery. Ask students to:

- Analyze the relationship between Kosmos Energy and the Ghanaian government.
- Predict what will happen next.

(10 minutes)

2. The History of Oil Production in the United States

Show **Clip 2**. Provide students with copies of “Oil Industry” from History.com <http://www.history.com/topics/oil-industry/print>.

- Ask for volunteers to take turns reading excerpts from the article aloud or the full article, if time allows. (As an alternative, the article can also be assigned as homework prior to the lesson.)
- Ask students to discuss how the history of oil production in the United States might affect the relationship between Kosmos Energy and the Ghanaian government.
- Invite students to think about the U.S. oil industry’s development over time. In what ways might other countries develop their oil industries in the next 100 years? In the future will private companies dominate oil production or will government-owned companies control oil production?

(15 minutes)

3. The Oil Industry: Privately Owned vs. Publicly Owned Companies

- Before class begins, create a pros and cons chart on the board similar to the one below:

Privately Owned vs. Publicly Owned Oil Companies

Pros of Privately Owned Oil Companies	Pros of Publicly Owned Oil Companies
Cons of Privately Owned Oil Companies	Cons of Publicly Owned Oil Companies

Provide students with copies of the article “The Long Shadow of the Invisible Hand.” Invite students to take turns reading excerpts from the article aloud (Paragraphs 1, 3, 5, 6).

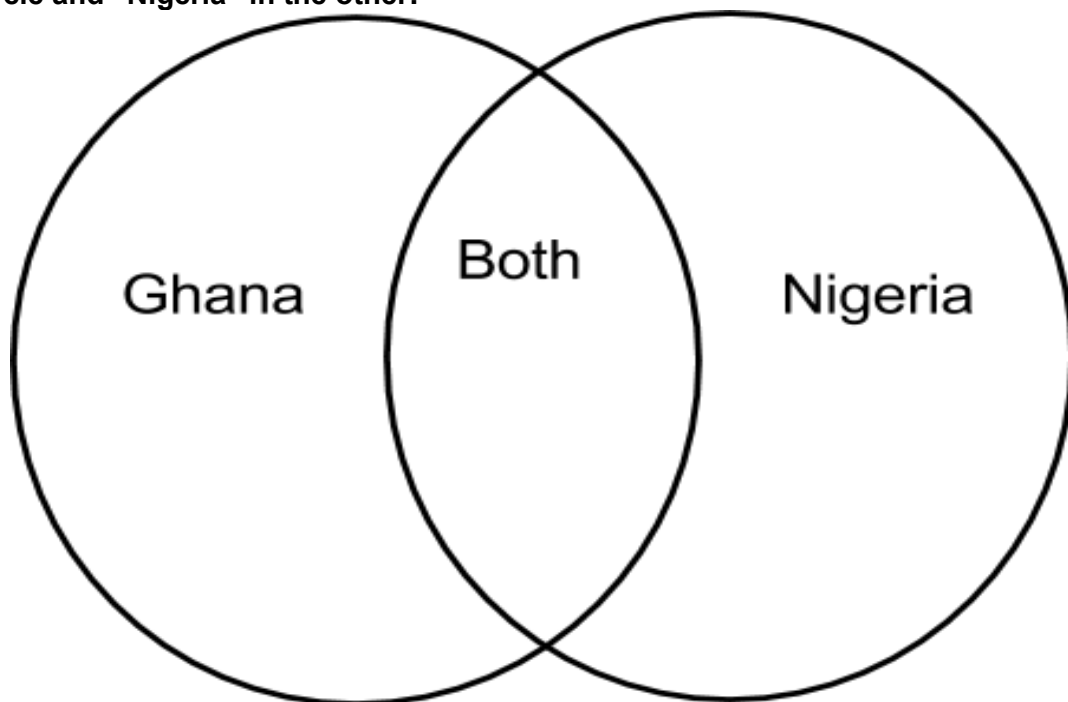
- Show **Clip 3**. Ask students to copy the chart into their notebooks. Ask students to work in groups of three or four to determine the pros and cons of privately owned and publicly owned oil companies. Write the following questions on the board to help students discuss their ideas:
 1. What are the benefits and drawbacks of each model?
 2. Using examples from the film clips and the article, determine how each model might be vulnerable to corruption.
 3. Who should control oil and who should benefit from the revenues?
 4. What kind of regulations are needed in each model?

(25 minutes)

EXTENSION

Nigeria: A Case Study

- a) Before class begins, create a Venn diagram on the board with “Ghana” in one circle and “Nigeria” in the other:



Ask students to copy the diagram into their notebooks and use the Venn diagram to identify what they know about oil production in Ghana and Nigeria.
(10 minutes)

b) Distribute copies of the *Guardian* article “Oil in Nigeria: A History of Spills, Fines and Fights for Rights” (August 4, 2011) by Adam Vaughan
<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/aug/04/oil-nigeria-spills-fines-fights>. **Divide students into groups of three or four and invite each group to read the article. Ask students to determine the main idea of the article and to identify three supporting details. Invite each group to share its results.**
(15 minutes)

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

(http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf)

RI.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RI.9-10.2

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.11-12.2

Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.9-10.3

Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed and the connections that are drawn between them.

RI.11-12.3

Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

RI.9-10.7

Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

SL.9-10.1, 11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.9-10.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

SL. 9-10.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis and tone used.

McREL (www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/) a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)

Economics

Standard 1: Understands that scarcity of productive resources requires choices that generate opportunity costs.

Standard 2. Understands characteristics of different economic systems, economic institutions and economic incentives.

Standard 3. Understands the concept of prices and the interaction of supply and demand in a market economy.

Standard 4. Understands basic features of market structures and exchanges.

Standard 10. Understands basic concepts about international economics.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephanie Joy Tisdale is an educator and the associate editor of *The Liberator Magazine*. She has spent the last 10 years teaching elementary, middle and high school students. She now works as a curriculum writer and consultant.