

Country	Year	Length	Rating	
France (Martinique)	1983	103 min.	NR	

(This film is available at major DVD rental services.)

Synopsis

The story takes place in Martinique in the 1930s. José, a young boy, lives with his grandmother Ma Tine on a sugar cane plantation. Ma Tine is convinced that José can do better than working in the fields and is determined to provide him with a proper education. José obtains a modest scholarship to pursue his schooling in the city Fort-de-France. Despite a rocky start, Ma Tine and José settle in the city where the grandmother takes a job doing laundry in order to support her grandson. José's school results are so good that he obtains a full scholarship that should allow his grandmother to stop working. Unfortunately, Ma Tine dies while visiting her village.

Cultural Background

Martinique is an island in the Caribbean sea. To this day, it is an integral part of France. In 1635, the French started settling on the island. Although they lost the island to the British several times, it eventually became a French colony. During the same period, slaves were brought in from Africa. Slavery was finally abolished in the French colonies in 1848. After World War II, the status of Martinique and of its sister island Guadeloupe was changed from *colonie* to *département d'outre-mer*. This means that residents of Martinique have the exact same rights and status as other French citizens. Martinique is to France what Hawaii and Alaska are to the U.S. — an integral part of the nation. The currency used there is the euro.

The language commonly used in Martinique is *créole martiniquais*, a combination of French, Carib, and various African languages. What you will hear in the movie is not always comprehensible, even to a fluent French speaker.

Créole martiniquais glossaries are available on the Internet.

José is chosen among other students to receive a scholarship (*une bourse*). Even though public schooling is free in France, back in the 1930s, especially in overseas territories, poor families like José's needed all healthy bodies working in the fields or factories in order to survive. Receiving a scholarship alleviated the cost of supporting a schooled child and encouraged families to send their children to secondary school.

José's friend Léopold impersonates an obvious case of discrimination: his white father had him with a black woman. As Léopold's father is dying, he refuses to recognize his son or give him his aristocratic name because the child is not white.

Rue Cases-Nègres (*Sugar Cane Alley*)

Chapitre 1

À PROPOS DU FILM

Avant le film...

Résumé

José is a teenage boy who lives on the French island of Martinique in the Caribbean. His mother died and his grandmother takes care of him. Since José is a very good student, his elementary school teacher recommends that he go to secondary school in the main city, Fort-de-France. José's scholarship is meager and his grandmother has to struggle to support them both. She decides to move to the city with José to allow him to pursue his education, regardless of the sacrifice.

Les personnages principaux

José <i>the main character</i>	Monsieur Médouze <i>the old man</i>
Ma Tine <i>the grandmother</i>	Léopold <i>José's rich friend</i>
Monsieur Roc <i>the school teacher</i>	Carmen <i>the boat employee</i>

Quelques mots et expressions du film

une bonne note <i>good grade</i>	réussir à un examen <i>to pass an exam</i>
la biguine <i>Martinique music</i>	casser <i>to break</i>
tricher <i>to cheat</i>	un champ de canne <i>sugar cane field</i>
le certificat d'études <i>primary school graduation diploma</i>	les békés (or bétjés) <i>white people (in Martinique creole)</i>
une bourse <i>scholarship</i>	alade <i>sick</i>

Pour en parler...

une blanchisseuse <i>laundress</i>	un concours <i>competitive exam</i>
mourir <i>to die</i>	pauvre <i>poor</i>
l'esclavage (m.) <i>slavery</i>	riche <i>rich</i>
l'héritage (m.) <i>inheritance</i>	faire des bêtises <i>to do mischief</i>
mettre le feu <i>to set on fire</i>	une case <i>a hut</i>
l'école primaire <i>primary school</i>	survivre <i>to survive</i>
raconter <i>to recount</i>	se soûler <i>to get drunk</i>

Nom _____ Classe _____ Date _____

Rue Cases-Nègres (*Sugar Cane Alley*)

Chapitre 1

ACTIVITY MASTER

(See p. 4 for useful words and expressions.)

Viewing

1 Indique les choses que tu as vues dans le film *Rue Cases-Nègres*.

_____ une salle de classe	_____ un laboratoire
_____ un bateau	_____ un devoir
_____ une gourde	_____ un lit
_____ une tente	_____ une salle d'informatique
_____ un cinéma	_____ un cheval

2 Vrai ou faux?

	VRAI	FAUX
1. Il y a un lycée dans le village de José.	_____	_____
2. La grand-mère de José est très riche.	_____	_____
3. M. Médouze parle de l'Afrique.	_____	_____
4. José apprend à écrire à son ami Carmen.	_____	_____
5. Léopold ne doit pas jouer avec ses camarades.	_____	_____
6. À un moment, les gens du village font la fête.	_____	_____

3 Questions

1. Que fait on avec la canne à sucre ?

2. Pourquoi est-il important d'aller à l'école ?

3. Pourquoi José et sa grand-mère vont-ils à Fort de France ?

4. Quelle est la différence entre la vie à la campagne (Petit Bourg) et la vie en ville (Fort de France)?

Post-viewing

- 4** Choisis des verbes pour compléter l'histoire de José et mets-les au temps du passé (*past tense*) et à la forme logiques selon le contexte.

être	faire	pouvoir	mettre	aller	avoir
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Pendant l'été, José et ses amis _____ souvent des bêtises.

Une fois, ils _____ le feu au village. Les adultes

ne/n' _____ pas contents et les ont punis. Plus tard, José

_____ à l'école. Il a passé un concours et

_____ de bonnes notes. Donc, il _____
aller au lycée de Fort-de-France.

- 5** Dis quel personnage de *Rue Cases-Nègres* tu préfères et explique pourquoi.

- 6** Mettez les phrases suivantes dans l'ordre:

- _____ A. Médouze meurt.
_____ B. José va à l'école pour la première fois.
_____ C. Les enfants s'amuse pendant que les parents travaillent.
_____ D. La grand-mère meurt.
_____ E. José obtient une bourse pour étudier.
_____ F. José réussit le certificat d'études.
_____ G. Les enfants doivent travailler dans les champs de canne.
_____ H. José et sa grand-mère vont habiter à Fort de France.
_____ I. Les enfants mettent le feu à une case.

- 7** Pourquoi ce titre ? Quelle est l'importance de la rue Cases Nègres ?