

MARVEL



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JOEY VAZQUEZ

BLACK PANTHER

STUDY GUIDE

THE "REAL" WAKANDA

The Ethiopian Empire was a kingdom that spanned a geographical area in the current state of Ethiopia. It began with the establishment of the Solomonic dynasty from approximately 1270 until 1974, when the ruling Solomonic dynasty was overthrown in a coup d'état by the Derg. The only African country to never be conquered or occupied, it was one of the founding members of the United Nations in 1945. Points of interest:

- Ethiopia is the home of the Biblical Garden of Eden
- Ethiopia is the birthplace of humanity
- Ethiopia is the cultural center of one of the oldest forms of Christianity in the world
- The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has her own Pope
- The Ethiopian Orthodox Church claims to have the Ark of the Covenant at the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion in Axum, Ethiopia
- Ethiopia is the only African nation to never have been colonized by Europe

The Ghana Empire (c. 700 until c. 1240), known as Awkar (Ghana or Ga'na being the title of its ruler) had complex societies based on trans-Saharan trade with salt and gold since ancient time, but the introduction of the camel to the western Sahara in the 3rd century A.D. opened the way to great changes in the area that became the Ghana Empire. By the time of the Muslim conquest of North Africa in the 7th century the camel had created a trade network running from Morocco to the Niger river. The Ghana Empire grew rich from this increased trans-Saharan trade in gold and salt, allowing for larger urban centers to develop. In the 11th century the Cordoban scholar Abuof traveled



to the region and gave a detailed description of the kingdom, claiming that Ghana could “put 200,000 men into the field, more than 40,000 of them archers” and noted they had cavalry forces as well.

Kemet (Egypt)

Villages began to appear in Kemet (Egypt) around 7,000 years ago, with some of civilization’s earliest written inscriptions dating back 5,200 years. Many names were used for Egypt in ancient times, a common one was Kemet, which means the “black land.” There has been discussion among experts on whether the name came from the dark sediment left behind when the Nile river floods, or if it was because of the dark people that inhabited the region.

In 1974, the U.N. Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held a symposium in Cairo, Egypt, with 20 of the most prominent Egyptologists in the world attending. The question came up as to what “race” did the Egyptians belong to, and the committee asked all participants to submit working papers on the question. Of the twenty Egyptologists, there were two black scientists: Dr. Theophile Obenga, a linguist, and the late Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop. Dr. Obenga’s paper showed that the native languages had nothing in common with Asiatic, European, and Mediterranean languages, and in fact shared “root words” with Kemetic, Nubian, and Ethiopian languages, so that when they spoke to one another they understood one another. Dr. Diop had access to tissue samples from an ancient mummy, and he was able to conclude that the levels of “Melanin” found in the samples were just not found in [Asian and Caucasian] race groups. The UNESCO committee waited three days for a challenge to come, but one never materialized so they dismissed the papers from the other eighteen participants and declared that these ancient African people were from the black family group (from **African Origins To Civilization, Myth of Reality** by C. A. Diop).

The Songhai Empire was a state that dominated the western Sahel in the 15th and 16th century. At its peak, it was one of the largest states in African history. The empire was home to Timbuktu, home of the famed university of the same name. Under the rule of Sonni Ali, the Songhai surpassed the Malian Empire in area, wealth, and power, absorbing vast areas of the Mali Empire and reached its greatest extent.

Great Zimbabwe 11th Century – 15th Century

The Great Empire led by the Shona nation, was known for arts, sculpture, and amazing engineering. The Shonan traded with Arab and Ethiopia hundreds of years before Europe made their way to the continent and the so-called Middle East.

The University of Timbuktu

In the 12th Century, the University of Timbuktu, located in what we now call Mali, was the epicenter of learning in the world. The university, made up of 3 mosques, centered on teaching the Koran, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, physics, philosophy, geography, history, and art. Over 25,000 students attended this grand institution. Students traveled across the globe to learn from professors of this African university.



Libraries

Libraries were not born in Europe; library science was created in Africa. Ramses II was one of the leaders of ancient Kemet (Egypt) who invested in the construction of universities and libraries. The

University of Karnak and the University of Thebes were the largest universities in the ancient world. The collection was later moved to Alexandria when Rome invaded the northern portion of Kemet and the Library of Alexandria became the world’s largest library, consolidating three library systems from Africa.



Imhotep

Imhotep, the father of modern medicine, and a brilliant man of science, was also a priest who studied anatomy, performed heart surgery, was an astronomer, and an engineer of many Kemetic/Egyptian temples, palaces, and schools.

Mansa Musa

Before Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, Oprah Winfrey, and the fictional Tony Stark and Bruce Wayne, there was Mansa Musa. Scholars now agree Mansa Musa was and will forever reign as the richest man in human history. According to The Business Insider, the ruler of Mali had wealth we, today, have trouble calculating. His wealth was invested in gold, silver, salt, land acquisition, and yes, technology. The creation of tools for farming and other products made this African man the world's first trillionaire.

Queen Nzinga

Queen Anna Nzinga, also known as Njinga Mbande or Ana de Sousa Nzinga Mbande, was a 17th century queen of the Ndongo and Matamba Kingdoms of the Mbundu people in Angola. The great warrior Queen was the original Dora Milaje. Today, Queen Nzinga is remembered in Angola for her political and diplomatic acumen, as well as her brilliant military tactics. A major street in Luanda is named after her, and a statue of her was placed on a square in Kinaxixi in 2002, dedicated by President Santos, to celebrate the 27th anniversary of independence.



Sobekneferu

Sobekneferu was the first known woman reigning as pharaoh for which there is confirmed proof. She was the last ruler of the Twelfth dynasty of Egypt and governed Egypt for almost four years from 1806 to 1802 BC.



Black Panther: Behind The Scenes

Ryan Coogler, director

His first feature film, **Fruitvale Station**, won the top audience and grand jury awards at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival. His next film, the continuation of the **Rocky** film franchise, **Creed**, was an excellent follow-up and received critical acclaim. The **Black Panther** film has taken advantage of his fresh perspective, personal interest in the super hero genre, and directorial talent to deliver an incredible story to the big screen.



Joe Robert Cole, writer

Co-writer, along with Mr. Coogler, of the **Black Panther** film script, Mr. Cole is an Emmy-nominated writer. About this film he said, "For both my son and my daughter, this is a movie full of empowered men and women of color, people who are self-determining in terms of who they are. I'm really proud of that and excited for them to see it." He is a graduate of Marvel's in-house writers program.



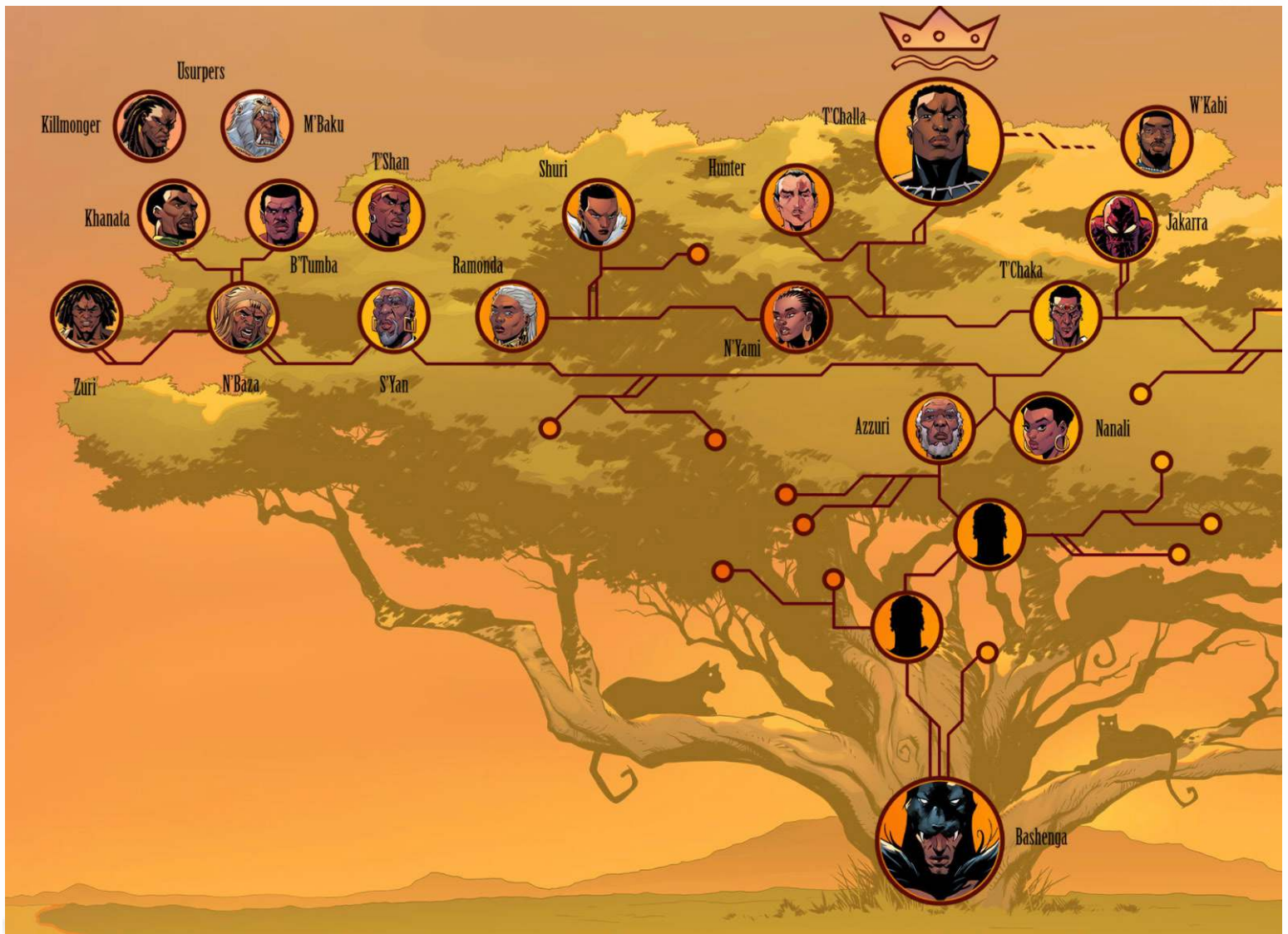
Ruth Carter, costume designer

Ms. Carter started her career with volunteering to do costumes for college plays, this blossomed into a love of the challenge and work. Soon she found herself after college interning with the Santa Fe Opera, and she was on her future path. She was the first African-American costume designer to be nominated for an Academy Award - for **Malcom X** and for **Amistad**.



Who is the Black Panther?

- The Black Panther is the royal leader of Wakanda, the richest, most powerful and technologically-advanced nation on earth.
- The Black Panther, T'Challa is empowered by the Panther's spirit. Directed by the ancestors, a modern translation is that the panther is a metaphor of the Holy or Divine spirit of God. T'Challa's power is not in his suit or the ancient herb that gives him strength, but his connection to the Spirit.
- Dora Milaje is the royal guard of Wakanda. Women who devote their lives to protect the nation. They use a special martial art to fight as one unit to defeat enemies. According to Wakanda lore, only women have the stamina, IQ, and spiritual sensitivity to reach the highest level of warrior excellence.
- Eric Killmonger, born in Wakanda but raised and influenced by the values of Europe, he is the nemesis of Black Panther, always functioning as an African out of touch with his spirit and his roots.

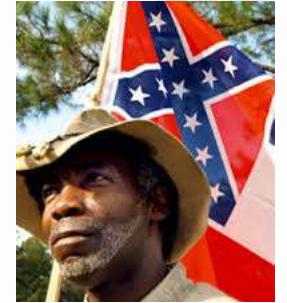


Cinematic Stereotypes

Since the film, *Birth of a Nation*, by D.W. Griffith, Hollywood has used tropes or stereotypes to define black existence. This was intentional to create fear in the hearts and minds of people of European descent about people of African descent. These tropes/stereotypes are used, even in the 21st century, to define black people as dangerous, ignorant, funny, cool, or magical.

Here are the most common cinematic stereotypes we witness:

- **Buck:** Wild, sexually dangerous, but desirable black man who must be controlled by white society.
- **Coon:** Designed for comic relief (can be a he or she), this character is a buffoon, intellectually foolish and inept, but at times, street smart. The coon appears on camera to reinforce the stereotype of black intellectual inferiority.
- **Uncle Tom:** This character supports the system and seeks to advance the needs of white characters.
- **Magical Negro:** This image appears as a street mystic designed to enlighten and help white characters discover their true selves. Uncle Toms and magical negroes are closely tied together in cinema.
- **Mammy:** Usually a loud, sassy black woman who is never seen in a romantic light, but is a fierce, fussy, strong character, many times played by a dark-skinned African American woman designed to keep order and also offer comic relief.
- **Tragic Mulatto:** Usually a light-skinned African American woman who is the sexual or romantic interest of the film. White writers tend to use lighter skinned African American characters who are always in danger and need a man to save them.



Questions to Consider

1. T'Challa seeks counsel from women in the film - the Dora Milaje, his mother, his sister, Shuri. Why is this simple addition important to Black images in film?
2. Like Ethiopia, Wakanda has never been colonized. How does the film demonstrate this idea through images and script?
3. Wakanda has vibranium, the most precious resource in the Marvel universe. How is this similar to Africa's relationship with Europe today?
4. What gives T'Challa his powerful leadership ability?
5. What are the forces that create Eric Killmonger? Do we have Eric Killmongers in our community today?
6. T'Challa is a king, a leader, a mentor, and a reflective spiritual individual. He has a responsibility to lead. Even without his powers, he is still an exceptional leader. Name the qualities a leader needs to serve the people.
7. Shuri, T'Challa's sister, is a scientist with all the Black Girl Magic. Why is Shuri such a successful scientist? What are the qualities demonstrated in her character, and how does the writer and director demonstrate Shuri's intellect through images?
8. The Dora Milaje, or the Royal Guard of Wakanda, work together for a common cause. Why is this image so powerful to those witnessing this film? How did you feel when you witnessed the Dora Milaje working together to defeat an enemy of Wakanda?





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