

FIREBURN

THE SCREENPLAY

STUDY GUIDE



ANGELA GOLDEN BRYAN

FIREBURN THE SCREENPLAY

- STUDY GUIDE -

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design services by
FILMMAKERWEBSITES

with funding from
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES



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FOR THE
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SYNOPSIS

Bryan's historical fiction is a tribute to the "Queens" who rose to leadership by taking a fiery stance against the unfair labor conditions that existed for the emancipated Laborers on the island of St. Croix, in the Danish West Indies on October 1, 1878. Her story weaves a tale of passion, purpose, and revenge as we follow the lives of these women leading up to, during, and immediately following the labor revolt known as the Fireburn. Bryan's story delivers an electrifying and visceral experience to the reader as it takes you through vivid descriptions, historical references, and turbulent relationships.

TOPICS

- Activism
- Civil Rights
- Ethnic Studies
- Labor
- Post Emancipation
- Race Relations
- Regional Studies
- Women's Studies
- History: US, Virgin Islands, Caribbean, Danish, African Diaspora

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

ANGELA GOLDEN BRYAN

I warned you in my preface and I'll warn you here again... *Fireburn the Screenplay* is not a historical document. This is a fictional screenplay inspired by history. If you are looking for a history book, this is not for you. It is my hope that you will be entertained and inspired to research the rich history of the Virgin Islands, or perhaps you'll write your own story, create some art, or write a song to tell an important story. This is a fictional tribute presented as artists do—in their own rendition.

In addition to being a tribute to my ancestors who took part in the Fireburn, along with the other brave men, women, and children - Fireburn is a call to action.

ANGELA GOLDEN BRYAN (CON'T)

The actions of those that took part in the Fireburn, as they stood up for basic human rights, are just as relevant today, as they were back in 1878. "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes" wrote Mark Twain, and I say, "It is this "rhyme" that we must seek to annihilate." We see the rhymes in prejudice and bullying and it is up to us to refuse to allow the rhymes to persist.

Additionally, Fireburn is symbolic of what you must sometimes do in order to realize your dreams. Figuratively speaking, there may be "sugar cane" fields of fear and oppression that will need to be burned down in order for you to rise above limitations. I am not encouraging you to literally destroy property or persons, but I am encouraging you to find your passion and go for it. Align yourself with a team of likeminded people and fulfill your dreams. As Henry David Thoreau wrote, "Go confidently in the direction of your dreams! Live the life you've imagined..." As you do this, you will find that doors will open to opportunities even beyond your imagination. And, as you stay true to your dreams and to yourself, you will inevitably leave this world a better place than you found it.

May your personal Fireburn ignite your passion and help you rise to new heights. Fireburn!

FACILITATING A DISCUSSION

QUESTIONS

1. What incident encouraged Mary to take a stand against the unfair treatment that she and the other Laborers were receiving?
2. What was most shocking or surprising to you as you read this book?
3. If you were going to tweet a summary of *Fireburn The Screenplay's* main point, what would you write?
4. If you were going to tell a friend about *Fireburn the Screenplay*, what would you say?

FACILITATING A DISCUSSION

QUESTIONS (CON'T)

5. What moment in this book was particularly inspiring or disturbing?
6. A month from now, what do you think you'll remember about this book?
7. In a word, how did the book make you feel?
8. What surprised you about this book?
9. What was familiar about the content?
10. Why do you believe "ordinary" people become activists?
11. How are the conditions that existed in 1878 similar and different to today?
12. What contemporary issues are similar to the Fireburn? How are they being addressed?
13. How was the role(s) of women, during the Fireburn, similar to the present time? In what ways do they differ?
14. There is power in numbers. How does this relate to oppressors vs oppressed?
15. In your opinion, what factors paved the way for the Fireburn to occur?
16. Choose one detail in the book and provide a different narrative that you heard or read. What or who was your source?
17. What other stories have you heard about the Fireburn?
18. What did you learn from *Fireburn The Screenplay* that you wish everyone knew? What might change if everyone knew it?
19. What similar contemporary issues are being addressed through non-violent group action? How is this similar or different from the Fireburn?
20. What similar contemporary issues are being addressed through violent group action? How is this similar or different from the Fireburn?

ACTION STEPS

Depending on the goals of your class, incorporating activities into reading *Fireburn the Screenplay* can be a helpful way to counter cynicism or any feelings of frustration that may arise. Activities are also useful for celebrating the rich heritage of the Virgin Islands, as well as a means towards diving deeper into the material. There are many ways to engage with the book's content depending on personal interests and levels of creativity. Here are a few ideas to explore.

IDEAS

1. Discuss the book with family and friends – sometimes dialogue in itself can be transformative.
2. Create a piece of artwork or jewelry that is symbolic of what the Fireburn means to you.
3. Write a poem, song or short story that tells your version of the Fireburn.
4. If you live in the Virgin Islands:
 - a. Contact local historians in your community and invite them to present a lecture or workshop regarding the Fireburn.
 - b. Identify people in your community who have family stories, memories, diaries, and artifacts from the Fireburn and ask them if they would be willing to share their stories.
 - c. Act out portions of the screenplay or use it to memorize a monologue – if done publicly be sure to give credit to the author for copyright protocol.

THE SCREENPLAY'S SUCCESS

TRIVIA

- Amazon #1 Bestseller July 2019
- *Fireburn The Screenplay* made it to the #1 spot on Amazon.com in Screenplays, beating "Save the Cat" by Blake Snyder and "The Quite Nice and Fairly Accurate Good Omens" by Neil Gaiman
- *Fireburn The Screenplay* made it to the #22nd spot in Performing Arts, beating old-time classics such as "The Crucible" by Arthur Miller and the infamous "Julius Caesar" by William Shakespeare. *Fireburn The Screenplay* reached spot #1,862 for all books sold on Amazon. Top 2000 amongst millions and millions of books available.

OTHER OFFERINGS (BY)

ANGELA GOLDEN BRYAN

(click item to purchase)

- Film: *Fireburn the Documentary*
- Children's Book: *James and the Fireburn*
- Card Deck: Madras Inspirational Card Deck

THE END