

## Spaghetti Western Unit

**Q:** What is a Spaghetti Western and how are they different from other Western genre films?

**A:** The Spaghetti Western was born in the first half of the sixties and lasted until the second half of the seventies. It got its name from the fact that most of them were directed and produced by Italians, often in collaboration with other European countries, especially Spain and Germany. The name 'spaghetti western' originally was a depreciative term, given by foreign critics to these films because they thought they were inferior to American westerns. Most of the films were made with low budgets, but several still managed to be innovative and artistic, although at the time they didn't get much recognition, even in Europe. In the eighties the reputation of the genre grew and today the term is no longer used disparagingly, although some Italians still prefer to call the films *western all'italiana* (westerns Italian style). In Japan they are called Macaroni westerns, in Germany *Italowestern*.

In general spaghetti westerns tend to be highly symbolic and are more action oriented than their American counterparts. Dialogue is sparse and some critics have pointed out that they are constructed as operas, using the music as an illustrative ingredient of the narrative.

The most famous Spaghetti Western film was *A Fistfull of Dollars* directed by Italian Sergio Leone in 1964. It starred Clint Eastwood and was both a commercial and critical success.

### Lessons in this unit:

1. Students will watch the the film *High Plains Drifter* directed by Clint Eastwood (1973).

- Identify the use of **symbolism** and **allegory** in the film.
- Write a scene analysis (SCR).

2. Students will watch *Django Unchained* by Quentin Tarantino (2012).

- Students will complete an 4 square (Avid) web quest over the film.
- How is Django Unchained an homage to Spaghetti Westerns? What elements of the Spaghetti Western do we see in Django Unchained?
- Respond to timed writing over violence and language in film.

3. Students will watch the satire *Blazing Saddles* by Mel Brooks (197\_)

- Define **satire**.
- Read a short story that is an example of **satire**.
- Identify satirical elements in *Blazing Saddles* and discuss/write what director Mel Brook's goal is for the film.
- Watch interview with Gene Wilder / Mel Brooks.

