The International Children’s Media Center (ICMC) creates interdisciplinary programs that advance 21st century learning and protect children from the dangers of digital devices.

1. **Screen SmartTM** – Accelerated learning techniques that close the achievement gap by improving literacy, focus and empathy.

2. **ICFilmFest – Movies Make You SmarterTM** – In-school, multicultural film screenings teach children “How to Watch a Movie with Your Mind Awake.”


4. **Mindful ViewingTM** - Values-focused media education for churches, families, community groups and faith-based organizations.

Contact us at info@icmediacenter.org and find out how teaching children healthy screen habits can boost academic achievement. We’re here to help!
When youth truly exercise the capacity of reflection in regard to any audiovisual text it is often revelatory. It’s not expected, it’s not what most people do, and it is an incredibly powerful developmental step. When we’re watching audiovisual texts, we are constantly responding and there are hundreds of things that go through our minds.

Paying attention to those things allows us monitor our own responses and to keep a healthy distance between ourselves and what we’re seeing on the screen. As a child (or an adult) distance allows me to activate critical thinking, frame questions, make new meaning, and reflect on the relative credibility of what I’ve seen. But to start those sophisticated thinking processes and keep them moving, I have to recognize that what’s happening on the screen is not the same as what’s happening in my mind.

Over the course of the screenings, Movies Make You Smarter™ accomplishes many specific cognitive and developmental objectives with its evidence-based approach:
1. Higher order thinking skills – During each session, facilitators will teach youth to view electronic screens mindfully, instead of mindlessly.

2. Meta-cognition – Screen Smart™ methodology of “watching a movie with your mind awake” teaches youth to notice their responses to media, think about their feelings and thoughts and act on them following reflection.

3. Advancing social-emotional learning – By learning to think through and articulate their feelings about the media-messages they encounter, youth build the self-confidence and trust to examine and share their experiences.

4. Improving communication skills – Because all youth love movies and media, they eagerly engage in discussion about “what they watch” and thus learn the mechanics of discourse. Skills strengthened include peer-to-peer discussion, active listening skills, focusing and framing sequential responses.

5. Augmenting vocabulary – The post-screening discussions provide youth with the vocabulary needed to discuss media, and ties that vocabulary to the vocabulary and intellectual constructs of literature and stories. This creates a powerful learning synergy that accelerates participants’ grasp of the basic structures and components of literature.

6. Teaching 21st century skills – Participants begin to “process” and question the media they consume every time they engage an electronic screen. Given the extraordinary volume of media young people consume and the 1,400 hours they spend with electronic screens, experiences in Movies Make You Smarter™ is both essential and transformative.

7. Positive engagement with global culture and diversity –
Participants who attend screening sessions will become emotionally and intellectually open and aware of global culture and gain an appreciation of the world’s rich cultural opportunities, including the chance to experience the diversity of cultures inside and outside the US.

8. Inculcate pro-social behavior by making and sharing text-to-self connections after watching films about people facing challenges with dignity.

Participating in an ongoing MMYS program also builds skills that prepare participants for successful careers. In each viewing session instructors will reference the ways that skills being developed in the program are skills required for obtaining employment. For example, participation in an ongoing long-term project demonstrates reliability, dependability, and consistency in work habits. Film discussions also foster respectful, professional communication skills such as inclusiveness and “active listening” crucial to gaining employment. Curating sessions teach problem-solving, team building and appreciation for others’ opinions. Hosting public screenings and acting as peer-to-peer facilitators will build public speaking skills, confidence and self-esteem.

Instructors: Remember, this is meant to be fun, so keep it light, and positive and inflect up. You might want to lead with “I found some interesting short movies on YouTube and Vimeo that I bet you haven’t seen – I’d love to know what you think of them.”

Just for fun, here are strategies other parents and counselors have used to get the MMYS ball rolling:

- School Credit: This is something cool you can do for school credit – maybe ask your teacher if you can write a reaction paper or a media report about one of the films;
- Film Festival: Family film festival! We’re going to watch, then vote on the films.
- Empowerment: I’m concerned about what your young sibs are watching and would love your input

**Overview of Resources & Themes**

The 60+ films included in this book have been through the ICMC’s rigorous three-tiered jurying process. They have been seen, rated and discussed by the ICMC submissions coordinator, a Selection Committee of 8-10 film professionals, and the ICMC’s curriculum specialist.

For each film, we have provided key identifying information (title, country, description, etc.), a description, brief contextualizing information that we call “Remarks" and a series of open-ended questions to prompt dialog. In addition, we have identified themes and topics addressed within each film and provided a list of those themes underneath the Remarks.

Here is a list of themes and topics identified for the films included in this book:

- Body Image and Identity
- Self Esteem and Personal Agency
- Bravery and Courage
- Bullying and Abuse
- Coming of Age
- Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural or Gender Bias
- Elevating Empathy
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Family and Relationship Dynamics
- Friendship Stories
• Global Culture, Diversity, and the Immigrant Experience
• Inclusiveness
• Magic and Whimsy
• Technology in Modern Life

This eBook is intended for use in conjunction with the techniques outlined in *Movies Make You Smarter™ – Digital Viewing Guide for Teachers and Parents.*
CHAPTER ONE
Films: “Alienation” through “The Book Mobile”

**AlieNation**
2014, Germany 6 mins.
Directed by: Laura Lehmus
An animation short about puberty, based on real life interviews with teenagers.

Remarks: *AlieNation* is a German short film that uses animation and aliens to depict what it feels like to go through puberty. This film is narrated by the true stories of teenagers, recounting their feelings about their changing bodies and what it feels like to grow up in the current age.

Themes:
Body Image & Identity
Self Esteem & Personal
Coming of Age
Magic & Whimsy
**Questions:**

- This short film features a ton of different styles of animation, all showing the kids as ugly aliens. What do you think was the purpose of this choice?
- What story resonated with you the most? Why?
- How did this film portray girls and boys? What were the differences and similarities?
- Discuss the quote at the end about how when you’re a teenager, you have to be a kid and adult at the same time. Is this true to you? Why or why not?

**Almost Everything**

Switzerland, 2017 24min.

Directed by: Lisa Gertsch

Leandra is advised to place her husband, Paul, in a retirement home due to his early-onset Alzheimer’s. Paul, only 47, refuses and suggests a vacation instead. Grasping at normalcy, they embark on a road trip to the sea. In French with English subtitles

**Remarks:** *Almost Everything* is a film from Switzerland depicting the complex and often painful relationship of a couple dealing with the husband’s Alzheimer’s disease. Pay attention to the way Leandra and Paul interact and treat each other throughout the film and consider their love and support that they have for one another, even if it is unconventional.

**Themes:**

- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
Ethical Dilemmas
Family & Relationship Dynamics

Questions:

- The filmmaker keeps the knowledge of Leandra and Paul being husband and wife for the first bit of the film. Before you knew that they were married, how would you describe their relationship? Was this technique effective?
- Leandra tells Paul to not be afraid. What does she mean by this?
- Describe the overall mood of this film. Do you find it funny, bleak, sad, dramatic? Other than the dialogue and acting, how do you think the filmmaker developed the tone of this film?
- Do you think Leandra is helping Paul by taking him on vacation?
- What is the importance of Paul’s dream and how does it relate to their real lives?
- Overall, despite the obvious fractures, did you find Leandra and Paul to have a healthy relationship? Why?
- Leandra looks at out the ocean at the end of the film as Paul walks away from her. What do you think the ocean was meant to represent or symbolize in this film?
- In your opinion, how do you think this film dealt with the issue of Alzheimer’s and mental health in general? What did the film excel at? What could it have done better?

Anatomy of Assistance
2013, Canada 13 mins.
Directed by: Cory Bowles

15 year-old Talia is defiant, refuses the system, and thinks she’s got it all figured out. When she challenges the assistance envelope given to her by her school, she’s suddenly thrust in to a daisy chain of errors that lead her to face a larger system: growing up.

REMARKS: Anatomy of Assistance follows Talia, a teen who spends the assistance money given to her by her school recklessly, and how that decision causes a whirlwind of unexpected events. This film is funny, dramatic, poignant, and overall a thought provoking short film about growing up and making difficult decisions.

THEMES:
Self Esteem & Personal Agency
Coming of Age
Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender Bias
Elevating Empathy
Ethical Dilemmas

QUESTIONS:

• Why do you think Talia is so opposed to taking the assistance money given to her?
• What does she end up doing with it after eventually taking it?
• Talia and her friends are busted in the park for drinking. How does Talia treat the police officer she’s talking with? What does Talia accuse her of being?
• Describe the music and editing used in this film? What
kind of mood did it create? Did you like the choices that were made?

- What does the police officer do with the money? Why do you think she chose to do so?
- What happens immediately after the police officer puts the money inside the jar?
- Talia is almost hit by the police car and the officer and her have a short interaction after that. What does the police officer do for Talia? Do you think it was the right thing to do?
- Where does the money finally end up?
- The next time Talia is offered assistance money, she takes it willingly. Why do you think she has changed her stance on the money?

**Aphasia**

2014, USA 12 mins.

Directed by: Luke LoCurcio

Emily is your average 20-something. She texts her friends, talks to people on Facebook orders things online and uses GPS to get where she’s going. Until one day, suddenly, she comes face to face with the consequences of living a digital life.

Remarks: *Aphasia* is a short film following Emily, a young woman consumed by technology. This films displays to us the good and helpful side of technology, but also serves as a cautionary tale about when the reliance on technology goes one step too far.

**Themes:**

- Body Image & Identity
- Technology in Modern Life
Questions:

- Discuss the opening shots of the film. Why do you think the filmmaker chose to open the film with multiple surveillance camera footages? What kind of mood did this create?
- Describe Emily’s home and surroundings. What is her apartment like? What do you think she does most of the time judging by the scene in her apartment?
- How did Emily and the delivery man greet each other?
- What does Emily send to her Facebook friend after they agree to meet up the next day? What does this say about her as a person?
- Discuss the other people seen in the film as Emily is walking to the coffee shop. What kind of world does this film take place in? What is everyone around her doing?
- What happens when Emily meets Austin and tries to greet him? Why do you think this happens?
- What do you make of Austin telling Emily that this is happening to other people as well and hopefully they can find a cure?
- After the encounter, the editing changes to really fast and jarring cuts that appear to be scenes from Emily’s life. Was this filmmaking practice effective? What kind of mood did it create in the film?
- What is the main message you are taking away after viewing this film? What do you think the filmmaker is trying to convey through the film?
**Asteroid**

2015, Canada 11 mins.

Directed by: Kristina Mileska

A young girl’s fantasy adventure with her grandfather allows her to come to terms with his illness.

**Remarks:** Asteroid is a short film from Canada that shows how a young girl uses the power of imagination to cope with her grandfather’s demise. Pay attention to the real vs. fantasy world in this film and how Astrid uses fantasy to escape from the harsh truth of her current situation.

**Themes:**

Family & Relationship Dynamics
Elevating Empathy

**Questions:**

- Think about the tone and mood of this film. How would you describe it? What elements of the film (color, music, camera angles) help create this feeling?
- Who do you think the girl is talking about when she asks the older man “How long has it been since you last saw her?”
- After the girl’s grandpa doesn’t wake up, how does this change the space fantasy in her head? What happens?
- Why do you think she begins seeing the adults as aliens? What could this mean?
- How does the space world compare to the real world? What is different about them?
What happens in the real world when the girl takes her grandpa’s space helmet off?

What does the little girl imagine on the way home from the hospital?

What did you think of this ending? Do you think that it is a happy or positive one? Why?

**The Ball**

2010, UK 11 mins  
Directed by: Katja Roberts

Lonely misfit Amy Jones has noticed a new boy on her street. While playing football alone in the back lane she catches his attention and he begins to reach out to her in his own quirky ways.

**Remarks:** *The Ball* is a short film that depicts Amy, a girl used to playing all by herself, and a new boy on her street who catches her attention with charming, yet odd ways of communicating.

**Themes:**

- Body Image & Identity,
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency  
- Bullying & Abuse  
- Elevating Empathy  
- Friendship Stories  
- Inclusiveness

**Questions:**
• How does Amy react the first time that she sees the boy watching her?
• Does it seem like Amy has very many friends? What happens when two girls approach her as she’s playing soccer?
• How do Amy and the boy across the way from her communicate at night?
• What kind of personality would you describe the boy as having?
• What does the boy leave for Amy on the street the next morning?
• Amy tries to get the boy to open the gate, but he won’t. How do you think this made her feel based on the way she reacted?
• How does the boy react when he sees a larger group of girls come up to Amy and start bullying her?
• What did you think of the reveal about the boy at the end? Why was he shy and why didn’t he talk to Amy before?
• How does Amy react after this? Did you like the way the film ended?
• What takeaway message would you say the film has?

**Before the Bomb**

2015, USA 23 mins.
Directed by: Tannaz Hazemi

10-year-old Elsa takes matters into her own hands when Child Services plans a visit that could separate her from her brother.

**Remarks:** *Before the Bomb* is about two siblings living a seemingly carefree and happy life, though it is far from the truth. Think
about how Elsa and Morris live their lives, and how they resist change, and how the ultimately realize that they need it.

**Themes:**
- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Family & Relationship Dynamics

**Questions:**

- From the first few shots of this film, we are able to learn a lot about the home life of Elsa and Morris. What is their home life like and how does the filmmaker show us this?
- How does the mood change when Elsa and Morris hear a call from CPS?
- What does the boy at school say to do when CPS visits Elsa and Morris?
- Why do you think the filmmaker chose the song that plays while Elsa is on her way to buy food? How does it relate to the story that is being told?
- Why do you think Elsa told the woman in the store that she had a boyfriend?
- What happens that night when Elsa and Morris try to go to sleep?
- What do you think of Eileen? Do you think she treated Elsa and Morris well?
- Why do you think the kids chose to call Eileen rather than let their mom in the house? What was the final straw?
- Think about the title of the film. What do you think it means in relation to the film and story?
**Beneath the Embers**

2015, Mexico 10 mins.

Directed by: Verónica Jessamyn López Sainz

Isabel, a young woman from the sierra mountains of Guanajuato, is motivated by the love of her family and has learned that to achieve her dreams she must sacrifice her present, to be able to value tomorrow's success.

**Remarks:** *Beneath the Embers* is a short film about a young woman named Isabel who moves away from her small town to pursue an education and a job. Think about why she makes the choices that she does, and how her family reacts to those decisions.

**Themes:**

Self Esteem & Personal Agency,
Family & Relationship Dynamics,
Global Culture, Diversity & the Immigrant Experience

**Questions:**

- What kind of person is Isabel?
- How is Isabel different from her parents and the rest of her farm town?
- What did her dad not want her to do? Why?
- Why do you think the filmmaker chose to include the scene about working in the cold on a farm?
- Why does Isabel cry on the bus?
- Towards the end, Isabel says “The world is more than
just your surroundings.” Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

- What would you say is the main message the filmmaker is trying to send through this film?

**Beverly**

2015, UK 25 mins.
Directed by: Alexander Thomas

Beverley follows a mixed-race girl’s struggle to carve out a sense of identity in a confusing, shifting cultural landscape, Leicester in 1980.

**Remarks:** Beverly depicts a teenage girl’s relationship between herself and a group of young, racist white men in her neighborhood. This film deals with identity, self-discovery, and what it means to be true to yourself and your family.

**Themes:**

- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Bullying & Abuse
- Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender Bias
- Elevating Empathy
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Inclusiveness

...
QUESTIONS

- Think about the very first shot of this film. Why do you think the film opens with a shot of that doll in particular?
- Why does Beverley’s mother tell her and her siblings they must stay inside?
- What does the older man tell Beverley when she says that she’s “half and half”? What do you think about this?
- What do you think causes Beverley to want to become friendly with the group of boys in the neighborhood?
- How does the situation with the next-door neighbor resolve after he gets mad at Beverley and her sister?
- Why do you think Beverley chooses to stick around the boys despite their constant racist jokes?
- What was the turning point for Beverley to realize these boys are dangerous?
- What did you make of the ending? What does the boy tell Beverley in the last scene? How does she react to this?

BIRTHDAY

USA, 2017 9min.

Directed by: Aisha Horns, Leonna Powell, Paris Walker, and Deja’Nae Williams

A powerful documentary that shows the harsh realities of poverty and being homeless.

Remarks: Birthday is a documentary short about the perils and difficulties of being homeless. Though at times bleak, this film
ultimately offers insights into how being kind and compassionate toward others has the potential to literally save a life.

**Themes:**

- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Elevating Empathy
- Inclusiveness

**Questions:**

- How was poverty and homeless displayed in general during this film?
- How did the filmmaker choose to structure this film and was it successful?
- Which story stood out to you the most in this documentary and why?
- What were the similarities in each story told? What were the differences?
- What is the significance of the title “Birthday”?
- Think about how this film describes love and compassion. Do you agree with the people in the film? What is love and compassion to you?
- What do you think the filmmaker was trying to achieve when choosing to film these stories for this film?

**The Bookmobile (AN)**

2016, USA 3 mins.

Directed by: Julie Zammarchi
At eight years old, Storm Reyes was already working full time with other migrant farm workers in the fields outside Tacoma, Washington. One day, a bookmobile arrived and brought her new worlds—and hope.

**Remarks:** *The Bookmobile* is a short-animated film about the power of books and how they changed a young girl’s life for the better.

**Themes:**
- Coming of Age
- Elevating Empathy
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency

**Questions:**

- Describe Storm’s conditions on her farm. What did she have to look forward to when she was young?
- What did she learn to do before riding a bike?
- In the film, the worker on the bookmobile tells her “The more you know about something, the less you fear it”. Do you agree?
- What did books and reading do for Storm and her life after the farm?
CHAPTER TWO

Films: “Charlotte” through “The Hunt”

Charlotte
2015, USA 11 mins.
Directed by: Angel Williams

Alex, excited to have befriended the popular girl at school, will do anything to stay in her good graces. When her new friend wants to play house, Alex innocently plays along and discovers feelings she doesn’t understand.

Remarks: Charlotte is a short film about Alex, a teenage girl who finds herself questioning the nature of her friendship with another teenage girl Charlotte, after the two hang out alone together. Think about how both of the girls act toward one another, and how Alex reacts when she realizes she may have had the wrong idea about their friendship.

Themes:
Body Image & Identity
Ethical Dilemmas
Self Esteem & Personal Agency
Friendship Stories

Questions:

- At first glance, what kind of relationship do Alex and Charlotte have? How do you know?
- What do the two do at Charlotte’s house?
- What does Charlotte do that makes Alex reconsider if they are friends or not?
- How does Alex act after going over to Charlotte’s house? Does she seem happy?
- What happens the next time she goes to Charlotte’s?
- Did you expect this ending? Why or why not?
- Can you relate or empathize with Alex in her situation? Can you see where she might be coming from?
- How did you view the ending of this film and why? Was it positive or negative? Explain.

Clumsy Little Acts of Tenderness
2015, Finland 9 mins.
Directed by: Miia Tervo

A weekend father wants to show his teenage daughter his love by taking her to a carwash, but instead, they end up on a life-changing adventure in the supermarket, at the endless sanitary towel shelf. They get "help" from a lady who overshares her stories.

Remarks: Clumsy Little Acts of Tenderness is a Finnish short film that shows the outlandish and funny behavior of a father trying to
help his daughter after she gets her first period when spending the weekend with him.

**THEMES:**
- Body Image & Identity
- Coming of Age
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Magic & Whimsy

**QUESTIONS:**

- How did the color and aesthetic of the film shift your opinion of it, if at all? Was the style of the film effective in helping set the tone?
- How would you describe her dad on first sight in the car?
- As he film goes on, what kind of dad does he appear to be? Nice, supportive, mean, rude?
- What would you consider the most important event in the film to be?
- What was the purpose of the woman in the supermarkets scene? Did you like it?
- What was your opinion of the closeup shots of the character’s faces as the woman was helping them out?
- How did this film leave you feeling? What did think of the ending and the quick scene after the credits are shown?

**Dynamic Double Standard**
Directed by: Luke Patton

Zoey’s first night as a superhero is nearly ruined when she’s given a sexy and impractical uniform.

Remarks: Dynamic Double Standard is a hilarious and relevant short film that follows Zoey, a newly ordained superhero sidekick and how she deals with a not-so-practical costume she’s given to wear by her male counterpart.

Themes:
- Body Image & Identity
- Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender Bias
- Magic & Whimsey

Questions:

- How does Zoey react when first approached by the superhero?
- What are her feelings about becoming a sidekick? Is she excited, nervous, hesitant?
- Describe the costume she’s given to wear. How practical is it for fighting crime?
- What are Zoey’s major issues with the costume?
- What is the condition that Zoey sets at the end of the film?
- How does this film speak to double standards and body image that women face today?
- Did you like the approach of making this film funny?
and comical to talk about what could be interpreted as a more serious topic?

**Flying**

Germany, 2016 18min.

Directed by: Marcus Hanisch

It’s Nadia’s 15th birthday. Instead of celebrating with her friends she takes care of her drug addict mother. Trapped between responsibility and the thoughts to escape, Nadia’s loving care is put to the test. In German with English subtitles

**Remarks:**

*Flying* is a German film that depicts and explores the volatile yet loving relationship between a mother who is addicted to drugs and her daughter. Be sure to pay close attention the roles that both Nadia and her mother play within their relationship, and consider the theme of escape and longing within the film.

**Themes:**

Coming of Age
Elevating Empathy
Family & Relationship Dynamics

**Questions:**

- Think about the program that Nadia listens to on tape throughout the film. What is the importance Nadia listening to tapes about travel and escape? How does it connect and relate to the title of the film?
• Take note of Nadia’s boss in the film and her demeanor toward Nadia. How would you describe their relationship with each other?

• Based on the first scene with Nadia and her mother in the tub, what can we infer about the general status quo of their lives together and their relationship?

• Why do you think Nadia keeps her piggybank in a hidden spot? What is she saving for?

• Compare Nadia’s mother with the other character in the film, Nadia’s boss. How are they different? Similar?

• Nadia and her mother dance together to a song together called “It’s The End of The World”. Considering the title and the lyrics, why do you think this song was chosen for this scene? What could it represent?

• How does the story that Nadia’s mother tells relate to the relationship that the two have?

• In the beginning of the film, Nadia’s boss gives her two wishes on her birthday candle. In the end of the film, Nadia blows out a birthday candle that relights itself two more times. What does the theme of multiple wishes mean or represent in the context of the film?

• Despite her actions in the film, do you think Nadia’s mother is a good parent in some way? Do you think she has genuine love and care for Nadia? Discuss.

**Freeze**

2014, Netherlands 15 mins.
Director by: Maria Peters

The bullied girl Anna finds a bottle containing a written note. It’s a spell that gives her an extraordinary power. She can freeze people for a brief moment. But then the bottle and its spell fall in
the hands of her bullies who are up to no good. How can Anna get the bottle back without getting frozen?

Remarks: Freeze is a short film about what happens when a young girl named Anna finds a bottle containing a magic spell on the beach. Funny, moving, and heartwarming, Freeze shows how this magic spell can be used for both good and bad and how the characters are changed by encountering the spell in the first place.

Themes:
- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Bullying & Abuse
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Magic & Whimsy

Questions:
- How does the group of boys treat Anna in the opening scene?
- How does Anna initially react when she finds out the bottle holds a magic spell? How does she use it?
- What does her Dad do for a living and is he good at it?
- What happens to the bottle when the group of boys sneaks in Anna’s home?
- How do the boys use the spell?
- How does the spell actually end up helping Anna’s father?
- What does Anna do with the bottle when she gets it back? Why do you think she does this?
- What is the overall message from this film?
**French**

2016, France 21 mins.
Directed by: Josza Anjembe

At seventeen, Seyna, a teenager from Cameroon is passionate about French history, the country where she was born and where she is deeply in love. Her diploma in hand, and approaching her majority, Seyna aspires only to one thing: getting French nationality. But her father Amidou is fiercely opposed to it.

**Remarks:** *French* is a short film that deals with the broad themes of national identity and coming of age through a precise and personal story of Seyna, a teenager who has just graduated. Think about why Seyna and her father, Amidou, disagree about her getting her French identity and why they both might feel so strongly about their opinions.

**Themes:**
- Body Image & Identity
- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Coming of Age
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Global Culture, Diversity & the Immigrant Experience

**Questions:**

- Why do you think the first few scenes of the film showed Seyna’s father going to work and cutting roses?
• What do you think Seyna was pricking her father’s finger for?
• What does Seyna need in order to get her French ID?
• Why do you think Seyna’s father is extremely opposed to her getting a French ID?
• Think about the conversation Amidou and Seyna’s mother have in the other room. Does this shed more light on why Amidou is opposed to this idea?
• How does Seyna react when her father objects?
• What does Seyna do the next morning?
• Think about and reflect on what Seyna having to cut her hair means and symbolizes?
• The film ends with Seyna coming home after cutting her hair for the photo and hugging her father. What do you think about how this movie ends?

A Girl’s Day

2014, Germany 15 mins.
Directed by: Rosa H. Ziegler

An emotional and strongly subjective movie about the question of what “happiness” is. At 19, Yasmin is in search of her own happiness and trying to understand her life, as well as the difficult relationship with her mother, a former heroin addict.

Remarks: A Girl’s Day is a short German film detailing the life of Yasmin, a young woman struggling to make sense of life and achieve a sense of happiness despite being estranged from her mother and her brother. Pay close attention to the way Yasmin talks about and describes happiness, and how she attempts to find it throughout the film.
THEMES:
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Coming of Age
- Family & Relationship Dynamics

QUESTIONS:

- How would you describe Yasmin? What is her demeanor like? Does she seem generally happy, sad, bubbly, laidback?
- What kind of jobs is Yasmin recommended to pursue? How does she react to these suggestions?
- What are Yasmin’s overall thoughts on happiness? How does she see and view the journey to becoming truly happy? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
- Describe the relationship with Yasmin and her mother. What kind of relationship do they have?
- Think about the filmmaking choices during the film. For instance, what do you think the filmmaker was trying to show when he paired the scene of Yasmin clubbing with the audio of the phone-call with her mother?
- Think about the ending monologue and scene of Yasmin. What do you think this film is trying to say about happiness through Yasmin?

GO STRAIGHT HOME
2013, Bangladesh/Sweden 11 mins.
Directed by: Iga Mikler, Maud Nycander
Reba’s dream is to go to school and get an education. That’s a
big dream for a girl in Bangladesh, but the obstacles are many: the boys on the street corners who keep shouting after her, and what the neighbors might think of it, and perhaps she will be forced to marry.

**Remarks:** *Go Straight Home* is a short film chronicling the effects that violent catcalling and daily sexual harassment have on the young women who are trying to get an education in Bangladesh.

**Themes:**
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Bullying & Abuse
- Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender Bias
- Global Culture, Diversity & the Immigrant Experience

**Questions:**

- How common is catcalling on the street where Reba is growing up?
- What are the consequences of protesting against being called at on the street?
- What is the advice given to Reba by her mom for avoiding this?
- What did the girl in Reba’s class say about her friend? What did her mom do to shelter her from being accosted?
- The teacher says if they can stop sexual harassment it will lead to less of what in their country?
• What does Reba’s mom wish for her?
• What did you think about this film in general? Were you aware of this issue before watching this film?

**Herd Leader**

2012, Canada 13 mins.
Directed by: Chloé Robichaud

Clara's overwhelming family can't understand her solitary life, wishing she would find someone to grow old with. Following her aunt's sudden death, Clara is put in charge of her pet. Little does she know that these are the first steps to an unlikely, but empowering friendship.

**Remarks:** *Herd Leader* is a film about Clara, a woman who is unhappy and bored with life and what happens when she falls into custody of her aunt's dog. This film is dark yet sweet, and shows us how something like a few days with a pet can change the entire way you interact with the world around you.

**Themes:**

Body Image & Identity
Family & Relationship Dynamics

**Questions:**

• How does Clara’s family treat her? What do they call her that makes her feel insecure?
• What happens at the dinner table and what does Clara get because of it?
• How does Clara treat the dog? Is she good at taking care of her?
• What does the dog instructor tell her to do?
• When is the first moment it seems Clara is beginning to actually enjoy having the dog?
• What happens after they go for a car ride? What happens to Jackie?
• What does Clara do when her brother tries to feed her? What do you make of this?

**How Long, Not Long (AN)**

2016, Denmark 5 mins.
Directed by: Michelle and Uri Kranot
A visual journey in an age of xenophobia.

**Remarks:** *How Long, Not Long* is a short animated film depicting different scenes and moments of political turmoil through collage and painted images. This film is short, but packs a powerful punch and asks the viewer to think about how these images are related and what this film is reflecting back at its viewer.

**Themes:**
- Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender Bias
- Global Culture, Diversity & the Immigrant Experience,
- Technology in Modern Life

**Questions:**
• What did you think of the animation style used in this film? What kind of emotions did it make you feel?
• What part of the film was most moving and/or meaningful to you? Why?
• A lot of images and scenes are shown in this film and some of them can seem unrelated to one another. Why do you think the filmmaker chose to include scenes of many different political issues such as race, climate change, protesting and so forth?
• What messages do you think the filmmakers were trying to get across in this film?
• Think about the title of this film. Why do you think the filmmakers chose this quote as the title of their film?

**Humanexus (AN)**

2014, USA 11 mins.

Directed by: Ying-Fang Shen

The human race has long searched for meaningful interpersonal connections. Tools and technologies have made it easier to reach out and share ideas, but each presents a new, unforeseen challenge. We must always ask: “Is this what we want? What do we want?”

**Remarks:** Humanexus is an artistic short film showing how the human race has evolved through communication, technology, and sharing new ideas, for better ....and for worse.

**Themes:**

Ethical Dilemmas
Magic & Whimsy
Technology in Modern Life

Questions:

- Why do you think the filmmakers chose to open with an error screen and sound?
- What is the first scene of the film? How does it show ideas and information being passed on in that time frame?
- What are the other forms of communication shown in this film after the first scene?
- What is the mood of the film as we progress farther in to the future? Explain.
- We get to the modern era, and we are shown someone with their head inside a computer. Describe this scene and what you think it is trying to say?
- What was the most affecting or powerful part of the film for you?
- Discuss the ending? What do you think it meant with the bodies rising up in to the clouds? What was the filmmaker saying with this shot?

The Hunt (AN)
2013/14, Canada 1 min.
Directed by: Celina Hulshof

The Hunt follows the story of an imaginative young girl who, when confronted with piles of cookies, has a decision to make.

Remarks: The Hunt is a short and sweet film about a young girl
dealing with the inner battle of deciding whether to take cookies from the kitchen despite being told by her mother not to.

**Themes:**
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Magic & Whimsy

**Questions:**
- Discuss the cuts between animation styles? What did you think of the drawn one vs. the stop motion?
- What do you think the cuts between characters and animations styles is supposed to symbolize?
- What happens after the girl takes the cookies?
- What is the message of this film in your opinion? Does it have one?
CHAPTER THREE

Films: “If I Ruled” through “Nothing About Moccasins”

If I Ruled
2015, Finland 9 mins.
Directed by: Aino Suni
Six girls tell their stories and imagine how their problems would be solved.

Remarks: If I Ruled is a short film detailing the wishes and dreams that six young girls have for their present and future selves.

Themes:
Body Image & Identity
Self Esteem & Personal Agency
Bullying & Abuse
Coming of Age
Friendship Stories

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QUESTIONS:

- How did you like the structure of this film? Did you enjoy the multiple stories from different girls?
- Which story did you resonate most with?
- Why do you think the filmmaker chose to include only girls in this film? What does this film say about growing up as a girl?
- When the girls talk about their hopes and wishes for their future selves, what is something they said that stood out most to you?
- After watching this film, what feelings and emotions did it leave you with? Why?

**If Mama Ain’t Happy, Nobody’s Happy**

2014, Netherlands 25 mins.

Directed by: Mea de Jong

A mother and daughter embark on a journey together to make a portrait about the four generations who all managed without a man. A mysterious family tradition slowly emerges. One the mother is proud of, but the daughter has her doubts.

**Remarks:** *If Mama Ain’t Happy, Nobody’s Happy* explores the lives of four generations of women within one family and their opinions on men, motherhood, and finding happiness.

**Themes:**

- Body Image & Identity
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Coming of Age
Questions:

- What is the trend that has taken place over four generations in this family?
- The second woman spoken about taught the filmmaker’s mother a valuable piece of advice. What was it?
- Describe the filmmaker’s mother based on the interviews with her. What kind of person is she? What is her personality?
- At what point is the title of the film referenced? What does it mean in the context of the story being told?
- What does the filmmaker’s mother have to say about men in general? What did you think about her thoughts on it?
- The mother describes her thoughts on relationships as realistic vs. pessimistic. How did you react to her opinion? Did you agree that it was realistic, or did you find her outlook pessimistic?
- What did the mother say the best time in her life was?
- The daughter confesses that she feels guilty. Why does she and can you see where she is coming from?
- What does this film say about womanhood and motherhood? Did you find it compelling? What message is the filmmaker sending with the film?

In Our Country
Germany, Spain, 2016 30min.
Directed by: Louisa Wagener
Nineteen-year-old Eritrean refugee Teklebrhan has a hard time adapting to his new life as he tries to help his family back home with financial problems. In order to help them Tekle decides to become the next Jerome Boateng and joins the local soccer team in Bavaria. In Spanish with English subtitles

Remarks: In Our Country explores the powerful journey of Tekle, a young man trying to become a successful soccer star. This film focuses not only on the struggles of war and poverty, but on the reaffirming nature of friendship and working together as a team.

Themes:
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender Elevating Empathy
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Friendship Stories
- Global Culture, Diversity & the Immigrant Experience
- Inclusiveness

Questions:
- When watching the film, consider the title of the movie. Why do you think the filmmaker chose to name the film “In Our Country”?
- From the opening few scenes of the film, what can we infer about Tekle’s life and upbringing?
- Tekle is told that he must focus on an employment test for his future. Do you think it is realistic for him to focus on the test as well as practice soccer? Explain.
Why do you think most of the other plays are hesitant to accept Tekle on their team?

Was the use of flashbacks in this film effective in your opinion? Did it build suspense or curiosity?

Why do you think the memories of Tekle’s brother were holding him back from excelling? How does Tekle overcome this obstacle?

What do you think this film says about masculinity and the nature of masculine relationships?

What is the symbolism of the very last scene of the film when Tekle is now dressed up and leaving his brother’s shoes under the bed?

Jada
2016, USA 16 mins.
Directed by: Doug Roland

A little girl like Jada is a disparate face among the customary tourists, vagrants, and odd balls populating Venice Beach’s gritty boardwalk. Unusually self-possessed for her age, she fends for herself by selling handmade stick people and out-witting local shopkeepers.

Remarks: Jada chronicles the creativity and adventures of young girl who lives by herself on Venice Beach and a man who tries to help change that. While watching, think about the man who tries to help Jada and why he eventually is unable to help. What does this say about the system we currently have in place to help children who live on the streets?

Themes:
Questions:

- After seeing Jada's missing person poster and Jada roaming free on the beach, what can we infer about her life?
- Does Jada seem happy with her current situation? Why or why not?
- How does Jada make money while living on the beach?
- Discuss the scene with Jada and the cigarette. What was the importance of showing this interaction?
- We see a man watching Jada on the beach and he eventually confronts her. Who did you think he was and what did you think he wanted with Jada?
- Jada begins to make new stick people but then gets angry and starts calling them stupid. Why do you think she did this?
- What did the case-worker mean when she said “It’s a marathon, not a sprint” in reference to Jada’s case?
- Why do you think the man looked away and let Jada leave the office?
- What is this film trying to say about our current system of foster care and missing children?

Last Night In Edinburgh
2015, UK 21 mins.
Directed by: Bita Shafipour
When two teen sisters discover that their family holiday abroad is really a plan by their parents to deliver them both into forced marriages, the girls flee home to find their own ways of remaining in Edinburgh, testing the limits of their bond and the resolve of the adults who control their futures.

**Remarks:** *Last Night In Edinburgh* examines the relationship between two sisters who learn they are going to be set up in an arranged marriage, and what they do to try and prevent it from happening.

**Themes:**
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Coming of Age
- Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Global Culture, Diversity & the Immigrant Experience

**Questions:**

- From the opening few scenes of the film, how would you describe the relationship between the two sisters?
- How would you describe their parents and the relationship that the sisters have with their parents?
- How do the parents act about the marriage situation? Do they seem confident in their choice or do they seem anxious about it?
• What does the mother say to the older girl when she sees a picture of the man on her bedside table?
• Why do you think the older sister tells the younger sister to stay behind?
• While they are away, what does each sister do? How does it symbolize transformation for each of them?
• How do their parents react when they come home? What do they say they are going to tomorrow?
• What does the mother do before going through the metal detector?
• Were you aware of the spoon campaign before this film? Do you think the film is a good tool for advocating this initiative? Did it do a good job illustrating the issue of arranged marriage? Why or why not?

Lookout
2014, Israel 18 mins.
Directed by: Noa Gusakov

Timmy is a look-out in the military. As a diversion from her tiring frame of work, she creates an imaginative, childish world, which sets her apart in a mundane routine. When she has to deal with the real military world for the first time, her own world is shattered and undermined.

Remarks: Lookout is an Israeli short film about how a young woman copes with terrible loss on an army base. The film also depicts how fantasy and escapism work to help Timmy through the tough and challenging reality of working on a military base.
 THEMES:
 Body Image & Identity
 Ethical Dilemmas
 Friendship Stories

 QUESTIONS:

 - What is Timmy’s job on the army base? Does it seem like she likes it?
 - What does her boyfriend give her as a present?
 - When she goes home the first night, what does she dream of?
 - Did you like the dream sequence in the film? Was it effective in your opinion? What did you like or dislike?
 - What does Timmy see on screen when she is working?
 - What happens with the men on screen and what are the consequences of this incident?
 - How does she change after this incident?
 - How does the film end? What do you think it means or symbolizes?

 **Love is Love (AN)**
 USA, 9min.
 Directed by: Christiana Jackson, Dajae Patrick, Shania Haynes, Mia Rhone
 A short documentary about two LGBT teens trying to find love in today’s society. In English

 **Remarks:** *Love is Love* is a short documentary filmed in Chicago about three LGBTQ teens and their experiences with coming
out. Pay attention to each story and how the choice to come out or not affects the way the teens think, feel, and live.

**Themes:**
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Bullying & Abuse
- Elevating Empathy
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Inclusiveness

**Questions:**

- The filmmakers open the film with many different photographs of historic moments in LGBTQ history. From there, we hear three specific stories from LGBTQ teens in Chicago. Did you like the choice to juxtapose landmark moments for the community and personal stories? Was it effective?
- At one point, one of the teens says that “even though there is a lot of media about LGBT people, the media that is about us a lot of times is in a joking way”. Do you agree?
- Some of the teens grapple with feelings of loneliness and not being able to connect with others because they are not out yet and therefore cannot be their truest self. Did this film shed light on issues, such as lack of connection with others, that you were not aware of in the LGBTQ community?
- What did you think of Dejah’s relationship with her
mother? Did you find their relationship healthy, troubling, complicated?

- Religion is a point of interest for this film. Do you think the choice to include the teen’s problems with it was interesting?
- What did you think of the pastor’s thoughts on LGBTQ people the end of the film?
- What do you think the filmmaker is ultimately trying to say by sharing these three stories of LGBTQ youth?
- Why may the process of coming out be easy for some but very difficult for others? What are the factors that an LGBTQ youth must consider when deciding whether they want to come out or not?

**Miss Todd**

2013, UK 13 mins.

Directed by: Kristina Yee

It’s 1909, and the whole world is waking to the possibilities of flight. Miss Todd dreams of flying, but she’s got more than gravity holding her down. This is the story of her determination, her perseverance, and her passion.

**Remarks:** Miss Todd is an animated musical film that chronicles the efforts of E. Lilian Todd as she tries to build an airplane. Fun, emotional, and inspiring, this film shows us what kinds of obstacles women were up against in the 1900’s, and how Miss Todd overcame them.

**Themes:**

Body Image & Identity
Self Esteem & Personal Agency
Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender Bias

Questions:

- This film features a unique style of animation. What did you think about it? Was it effective?
- What kind of woman is Miss Todd? What kind of personality does she have? How can you tell?
- Why could Miss Todd not get into any schools? What does she do instead?
- Think about the recurring theme of Miss Todd watching birds fly. What do they symbolize for her and how do they help her in her quest to build and flying an airplane?
- How does Miss Todd end up flying her plane?
- What happens after she safely is able to land the plane? What did you think about this?
- What does this film have to say about women’s rights and the fight for equality?
- Do you consider the ending to be a happy ending? Why or why not?
- Which song stuck out as the most important to you and why?

My Stuffed Granny (AN)
2014, UK 10 mins.
Directed by: Effie Pappa
Little Sofia loves her grumpy granny: even though she is
always hungry and eats what little food they can buy. Her pension is the only thing keeping her and her father alive. To what extremes will they go to once granny is no more?

**Remarks:** *My Stuffed Granny* is an animated short film about what happens to a family when their grandma unexpectedly passes, and they need to figure out how to earn money with her gone. Sometimes silly and sometimes sweet, this film shows us a unique and memorable family relationship and how they overcome the challenges presented to them.

**Themes:**

- Ethical Dilemmas
- Family & Relationship Dynamic
- Magic & Whimsy

**Questions:**

- How did you enjoy the animation style of the film? What kind of tone or mood did the stop motion style of animation add to the story?
- What kind of conditions do Sofía and her family live in?
- What does Sofía do to help her family get more food?
- Why do you think the dad tried to make the grandma appear as if she was still alive?
- What happens to the grandma in the pension office?
- When the family realizes that the grandma is sprouting branches, what does Sofía do?
- Think about what Sofía says at the end of this film about making oranges into marmalade. Why do you
think the filmmaker chose to end on this note, and did you like the way it ended? Why or why not?

**My Three Grandmas (AN)**

2013, Hungary 16 mins.
Directed by: Katalin Glaser

Women do learn a lot from their grandmothers, each of whom could have real effects on their grandchildren’s lives, just as their parents have.

**Remarks:** In *My Three Grandmas*, a narrator describes and illustrates who her three grandmothers were and why they were important in her life. This film talks about marriage, children, and family all through a whimsical and ultimately touching lens.

**Themes:**
- Body Image & Identity
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Magic & Whimsy

**Questions:**

- Discuss the animation used in the film? Did you like or dislike it? Did it add to the mood and tone of the film or not?
- What did her first grandmother do every day despite working in a factory?
- What kind of woman does the first grandmother seem
like based off of the stories that the narrator tells about her?

- What happened to her and her husband?
- How would you describe her second Grandma based on the stories that she tells us about her?
- What does her second grandma do for the very first time in her life when she is 69 years old?
- What kind of impairment did her third grandma have?
- How was the third grandma different than the first two?
- What did you think of the ending? What was the narrator trying to leave us thinking about with the ending?

**Naomi’s Secret**

2016, Netherlands 16 mins.

Directed by: Saskia Gubbels

For the first time, Naomi is taking her best friend Sam to visit her mother who lives in a locked institution. Naomi explains that she also uses drugs in addition to being psychotic. When she is going through old photos with her aunt, we discover that Naomi has been living with her since the age of four. It gradually becomes clear that the situation has had a considerable impact on Naomi’s life. A testimony to hope and love, a sincere portrait of the strong young woman that Naomi has become thanks to the unconditional support of the people around her.

**Remarks:** *Naomi’s Secret* is a documentary that details the life of a girl named Naomi, whose mother is currently in an institution for mental illness. This slice of life film looks at Naomi’s daily struggles of having to live without her birth mother while also showing
the positive nature of her relationship with her Aunt and best friend Sam.

**Themes:**
- Coming of Age
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Friendship Stories
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency

**Questions:**

- Why do you think the film is called “Naomi’s Secret”? What do you think the secret is? Who is she keeping it from?
- How does Naomi’s mother act toward her? What kind of person do you think she is from what we are shown?
- Think about Naomi’s aunt. Does she seem like a good role model and guardian? Why?
- In general, how does Naomi act and feel about her mother’s circumstances? How can you tell?
- How did you feel about the choice to splice in short scenes of animation? Was it effective?
- Why do you think that Sam was not allowed in to see Naomi’s mom?
- Why do you think the director included the scene toward the end about Naomi being born with twelve fingers? What does this scene show about Naomi and Sam’s relationship?
11-year-old Mike feels secluded in his new school and develops an obsession to buy a fancy augmented reality toy that the other kids are playing with together. His single mother cannot afford to buy it, so Mike sets out on a quest to collect the funds to buy it on his own, so he can finally make friends at school. In English

Remarks: New Boy is a film about Mike, a young boy struggling to save money for a virtual reality headset after seeing the kids at his new school playing with it. Consider how Mike goes about saving money, the mistakes he might make, and how he tries to fix them.

Themes:
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Technology in Modern Life

Questions:
- Why do you think the kids playing on the headset made Mike feel so left out?
- For the most part, the film is nonverbal. Do you think this choice works?
- What causes Mike to start saving money? How does he begin to work toward it?
- Talk about the scene where Mike steals food. Why do you think he chooses to do this?
- Why do you think Mike’s mother eventually gives him money?
What did you think of Mike buying his mother a bike instead of the headset?

Discuss the ending. What do you think the filmmaker is trying to say by showing Mike having fun playing basketball with the other children at the end?

**Night Glow**

Switzerland, 2017 14min.

Directed by: Fabienne Andreoli

Lea is a talented figure skater. As she’s preparing for an important competition, her willpower is put to the test. In German with English subtitles

Remarks: *Night Glow* is a Swiss film showing the internal and external pressures that a young figure skater faces when preparing for a competition. Pay special attention to the scenes where Lea is alone, and how they illustrate her internal conflicts and frame of mind while leading up to her skating routine.

**Themes:**

Body Image & Identity
Self Esteem & Personal Agency
Coming of Age
Family & Relationship Dynamics

**Questions:**

Does Lea seem to enjoy figure skating? Why or why not? How do you know?
• What do you think of Lea’s mother? Does she have Lea’s best interest at heart?
• Discuss the cuts between Lea figure skating and Lea vomiting. Was the technique successful in provoking thoughts and what did you think the filmmaker was trying to say about the character in this sequence?
• What was the filmmaker trying to express by including a short scene of Lea in the shower after making herself vomit?
• This film has many sequences of Lea skating alone in an empty ice rink. Why do you think these were included?
• Do you think Lea was proud of herself as a skater?
• What did you think of the end? What kind of ending was it and do you think overall it was positive?
• Lea and her mother have a complex relationship. Discuss what this film has to say about mother-daughter relationships, or parent-child relationships in general.

**Nothing About Moccasins**

Canada, 2016 3min.

Directed by: Eden Mallina Awashish

When her grandmother refuses to allow her to shoot a film about moccasins, the director playfully reconstructs the idea of cultural loss and creates a record of the resolve to protect Atikamekw tradition. In French with English Subtitles

**Remarks:** *Nothing About Moccasins* is a Canadian short film about cultural history how to preserve it. Though only three minutes
long, this film examines the “disconnect” between older and younger generations and the importance of valuing history.

**Themes:**

- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Global Culture, Diversity & the Immigrant Experience

**Questions:**

- Did you like the meta narration used in this film? Did it add to the story or distract from the story?
- What did the filmmaker mean by “I have a story to tell that can’t be told.”? At least not to just anyone.”
- Why do you think the filmmaker felt so compelled by the story of the moccasins?
- Why might the grandma be afraid of “selling her knowledge”? Can you understand where she’s coming from?
- Do you agree with the filmmaker about there being a distance between young people and their roots? Why or why not?
- Discuss the meaning and symbolism behind the filmmaker deciding to not continue making a movie about moccasins, but instead to keep wearing them and making them?
CHAPTER FOUR
Films: “On Beauty” through “Sing”

On Beauty
2014, USA/Kenya 31 mins.
Directed by: Joanna Rudnick

From Emmy-nominated filmmaker Joanna Rudnick (In the Family) and Chicago’s Kartemquin Films comes a story about challenging norms and redefining beauty. On Beauty follows fashion photographer Rick Guidotti, who left the fashion world when he grew frustrated with having to work within the restrictive parameters of the industry’s standard of beauty. After a chance encounter with a young woman who had the genetic condition albinism, Rick re-focused his lens on those too often relegated to the shadows to change the way we see and experience beauty.

Remarks: On Beauty is a documentary chronicling the lives of children and young adults with genetic disorders like albinism, and the life of Rick Guidotti, a photographer who seeks to change the way that these individuals are viewed by the media.
and society. This film deals with themes of oppression, injustice, hope, and self-acceptance in a fascinating and uplifting manner.

**Themes:**
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Bullying & Abuse
- Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender Bias
- Elevating Empathy
- Global Culture, Diversity & the Immigrant Experience
- Inclusiveness

**Questions:**

- What did Sarah find so appealing and comforting about motocross?
- What kinds of photos did Rick take before switching to photographing children with genetic disorders? Why was he disillusioned with his previous work?
- Is Sarah’s condition just physical? What complications could her condition cause?
- How was Sarah treated while growing up in school?
- What kinds of oppression to people with albinism face in Kenya? Why is it dangerous to live with albinism in the country?
- What kind of media presence do albinos have? Negative or positive?
- Why was Rick so distraught at the way children with disabilities were photographed? What did he do to change this?
• How has Rick impacted the lives of these children and their families? What do they say about Rick and his photos?
• What kinds of misconceptions did this documentary change for you? Did you learn anything new? What was the most surprising or compelling moment in this film for you?

**Phenomenal Woman**

2015, USA, 5 mins  
Directed by: Elizabeth Masucci

Woman takes a day trip to the beach in NYC and comes across a young girl that needs help flying her kite. The poem “Phenomenal Woman” by Maya Angelou is the backdrop.

**Themes:**
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency

**Remarks:** *Phenomenal Woman* is a short film that shows a woman going about her day while Mata Angelou’s poem “Phenomenal Woman” is read by a narrator. Simple but effective, this film radiates positivity and empowerment for women old and young.

**Questions:**

• Did you like the choice of the narration? Did it help add meaning and depth to the film in your opinion?
• Had you heard this poem before watching this film?
Why do you think the filmmaker included shots of a basketball game? Why do you think the filmmaker included shots of butterflies on flowers?

Why do you think the filmmaker chose to end the film at the beach by the water?

What do you think might be the message of the woman helping the young girl fly the kite?

How did this film make you feel after you had finished watching it? What was the takeaway message from the film?

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**A Present**

2016, Kurdistan, Turkey 9 mins.

Directed by: Muhammed Seyyid Yıldız

One day, a small girl sets out to buy a present for her guests. She comes back to her home but she doesn’t buy a present like she wants exactly. She goes to the corner where she waits for her guests; but there is a change, she has grown up.

**Remarks:** *A Present* depicts a seemingly small inconvenience that ends up shifting a young girl’s view of the world around her forever. Pay attention to how the adults in this film act, and what lessons the girl learns throughout.

**Themes:**

Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand

Bullying & Abuse

Coming of Age

Ethical Dilemmas

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QUESTIONS:

- Who is the girl buying a present for?
- What does the girl say to her mom when she tries to take the money away?
- What does she get at the market?
- How did the music in this film affect the way you were watching? Did it help build tension or change the mood of the film?
- What happens when the girl confronts two women in the apartment complex about the person who stole the kiwis?
- What does she get in return for the kiwis?
- Think about the ending of this film? Why does it end on a shot of the apples?
- Do you think this experience has changed the girl in some way? Will she look at the world a little differently after this exchange?

**Primavera**

2014, Mexico 18 mins.
Directed by: Tania Claudia Castillo

Elba, an introverted, lonely 14-year-old, wants to bond with her sister Fernanda before she leaves home.

Remarks: *Primavera* is a short film showing the complicated yet undoubtedly strong bond between two sisters, both at crossroads in their lives.

Themes:
Questions:

- Describe Elba in a few words. What conclusion can we draw about her from the opening scene at the bus?
- Now, describe her older sister. How are they different? Similar?
- What is the importance of the scene with Elba looking in the mirror and the jacket?
- Why do you think Elba rejects the offer to smoke?
- What causes Elba to want to bond with her sister?
- How would you say their day at the beach goes? Was it a good day for them? Why?
- What does Elba’s sister reveal to her about what their father told her?
- Shots of birds flying appear more than once in the film? Why and what do you think it symbolizes?
- The pace of this film is slower, but packed with many details and subtle emotions. Is this filmmaking effective to you? Why or why not?

Princess

2013, France 10 mins.
Directed by: Marie-Sophie Chambon

7-year-old Loïs shares the same dream than every other girl: being a princess. One day, her father takes her to a costume store, where she discovered with amazement a marvelous Cinderella
dress. While she tries it, she realizes that with her little belly, she is far from her dream...

Remarks: *Princess* is a French film about a young girl who desperately wants to be a princess, even if her peers try and tell her she can’t be. This film focuses on girlhood and body image, as well a healthy and supportive relationship between a daughter and father at a crucial time in the daughter’s upbringing.

Themes:
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Elevating Empathy
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Magic & Whimsy

Questions:
- How would you describe Loïs?
- How would you describe her father? Do they have a positive relationship or not?
- Why do you think her dad bought her candy after the woman said it would make her fat?
- What do you think a princess dress symbolizes to Loïs? Why do you think she is drawn to it?
- What is this filmmaker trying to say about girlhood in general?
- What was the most important scene in this film for you and why?
- The moment where Loïs grabs the bauble on the Merry Go Round is a big deal, aided by the dramatic
music and the scenery changing behind her. Why do you think the filmmaker made this moment such a show stopping one?

- Discuss the ending of this film. Why do you think after everything Loïs and her dad went back to buy the astronaut suit?
- How does this film depict father daughter relationships? Did you feel that their relationship was a positive representation? Why or why not?

**Q.U.E.E.N.**

2014, USA 16 mins.

Directed by: Brittany "B.Monét" Fennell

Imani uses writing as her muse to say all the things she is too afraid to express. Through self-discovery and a little bit of courage, she faces her biggest fear at a rap battle.

**Remarks:** *Q.U.E.E.N.* is a short film about a teenager named Imani who uses rap as a way to work through and uncover past trauma. Pay attention to Imani’s actions and mood throughout the film leading up to the rap battle and think about what kinds of emotions she might be experiencing while gearing up to perform the rap in front of the audience.

**Themes:**

Body Image & Identity
Self Esteem & Personal Agency
Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
Bullying & Abuse
Elevating Empathy
Family & Relationship Dynamics

**Questions:**

- Why do you think that Imani didn’t have that great of a time at her birthday party?
- Describe Imani’s friend. How do you think their relationship is with one another?
- Was the usage of short and rapid flashbacks an effective filmmaking technique in your opinion?
- Imani uses rap to deal with her inner trauma and feelings. Why might it be hard for her to share these thoughts with other people just by talking with them? Can you relate to this at all?
- Why do you think Imani stormed out of class?
- At the rap battle, describe Imani’s demeanor and mood. Is she confident? Anxious? Happy? Scared? How do you know?
- What did you think of Imani’s rap?
- Discuss the final moment with her and her mother. What do you think the filmmaker was trying to show us in that scene?

**Rhonna and Donna**

2016, UK 15 mins.

Directed by: Daina O. Pusić

Rhonna and Donna are conjoined twin teenage sisters who are having their biggest fight to date. Donna is playing Juliet in their school’s production of "Romeo and Juliet" while Rhonna wants nothing to do with it...
Remarks: *Rhonna and Donna* is a humorous short film about conjoined twins and their complicated relationship of loving one another but also longing to be apart. Pay attention to how their relationship grows within the story, and the setbacks that they both face as well.

**Themes:**
- Body Image & Identity
- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Family & Relationship Dynamics

**Questions:**
- Describe Rhonna and Donna. How are they different? Similar?
- What does Rhonna take issue with during the rehearsal of “Romeo and Juliet”?
- How does the rehearsal end? What happens?
- What does Donna tell Rhonna when they get home? Why do you think she is so affected?
- Describe their mother? Does she seem to be a good mom or a positive role model in their lives? Why or why not?
- What does Rhonna do during the play?
- How does their relationship grow and evolve from the beginning of the film to the end of the film?

**Rise Up**
2016, USA 11 mins.
Directed by: Tay’rece Wise, Franshay Lopez, Deja Flanagan,
Shawntel Smitherman

This powerful short documentary follows four teen girls who have been personally affected by violence in Chicago. In telling their intimate stories, their wish is to allow other to feel the humanity of their experience rather than brushing it off like a statistic or evening news story.

Remarks: *Rise Up* is a short documentary film about four young girls and their experience with violence in Chicago. Each girl shares an equally powerful story of how violence has changed their life and how they continued to live positively after being faced with violence in their own community.

Themes:
- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender Bias
- Elevating Empathy
- Family & Relationship Dynamics

Questions:

- How are the stories from each girl different? What similarities do they share?
- What do the each of the girls do to better themselves and keep their mind off of the violence? What extracurriculars are they involved in?
- What was the reason of the girls started boxing? What was the reason one of the girls joined JROTC?
- Do you feel that the way this documentary was presented (focusing on personal stories, intimate
details) was effective? Can it make you relate or empathize with the girls more easily?

- What do you think the main message is that the filmmaker wants to leave the viewer with when the film ends?

**Rising Dust**

2014, New Zealand 13 mins.
Directed by: Jack Woon

Rising Dust is a bold and visually exciting street-dance drama that follows Mako, a teenager on the cusp of adulthood over in the rural hills of the Hokianga. With the help of his ancestors, Mako teaches his younger brother that the one left standing isn’t always the one who wins the fight.

**Remarks:** *Rising Dust* is a short film dealing with themes of loss, family dynamics, abuse, and the ability to carve your own path in the world despite being held back. This film also includes many dance scenes, which add another layer of aesthetic interest to the story-telling

**Themes:**
- Bravery & Courage
- Bullying & Abuse
- Coming of Age
- Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender Bias
- Elevating Empathy
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Global Culture, Diversity & the Immigrant Experience
Magic & Whimsy

Questions:

- How does this film open? What kind of tone is set from the opening scene? Whose grave can we assume Mako is visiting?
- What does Mako see in the field as he is walking home?
- How does dance serve the story and progress the plot within this film? Did you enjoy the dance sequences throughout the film? Why or why not?
- Describe the relationship between Mako and his brother? Are they close?
- What does Mako ask his brother to do with him? Does his brother agree?
- What makes Mako turn around to go back home after he left?
- Discuss and analyze the fight scene with Mako’s father. How does the dancing elevate or add to the scene? Who wins the fight? Who do you think the figures surrounding Mako are supposed to be?
- How does the film end and what is the takeaway message?

#Selfie

Germany, 2016 7 mins.
Directed by: David M. Lorenz

A couple on holiday in Berlin. Everything is perfect, but then he wants to take a selfie... The ending of a relationship as seen through a mobile phone.
REMARKS: #Selfie is a German film that shows how technology influences and interferes with the relationship of a young couple. Pay close attention to Marc and Jenny’s relationship and how it morphs over the course of the film due to the technology being present.

THEMES:
- Bullying & Abuse
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem and Personal Agency
- Technology in Modern Life

Questions

- Did you think the choice to show this film through an iPhone screen was effective? How did this view make you feel when you were viewing it?
- When did we begin to get the feeling that there’s something “off” about this guy?
- What tells us that he’s a bit over the top?
- How many times does the filmmaker make that point?
- How does she respond – is she sticking up for herself?
- What’s the breaking point -- for both of them?
- What do you think about the ending? Is she compromising? Can you predict what will happen in this relationship after the end of the movie?
- Is this just a “modern” problem or do women of all ages and races face this kind of treatment?

**Selling Rosario**

2014, USA 16 mins.

Directed by: Michael Winokur & Iana Simeonov

A family of migrant workers sends their 12-year-old daughter and her outlaw cousin into the night on the promise of a stranger. Selling Rosario is the story of a young girl growing up in a migrant labor camp and her parents’ risky plan to get her out of an unsafe, squalid environment. They believe almost any place else would be better for her to grow up. We meet Rosario and her family on the day this plan will either succeed or fail.

**Remarks:** Selling Rosario is a tense and mysterious short film that details a family making arrangements to send their daughter off with a stranger. Pay close attention to how this film builds expectations and how the ending of the film subverts them.

**Themes:**

- Coming of Age
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Global Culture, Diversity & the Immigrant Experience

**Questions:**

- What is your first assumption about what the people surrounding Rosario are planning to make her do?
How did the film making techniques used in this film make you feel while you were watching it? What was the overall tone and feel of this movie?

What did you think the men in the strip club are planning?

What kind of girl is Rosario from what we can see? What are the conditions of her family and home life?

How is Rosario’s family acting as they prepare to send her away? Excited? Nervous? Anxious?

Describe the men in this movie. Do you think they have Rosario’s best intentions at heart?

Think about the final reveal in this film? Where was Rosario actually being sent to and what did she end up doing on stage?

What does this ending say about what Rosario’s family?

Do you think the way that this story was told was effective and exciting or not? Why?

**Sing**

2016, Hungary 25 mins.

Directed by: Kristóf Deák

Zsófi has found it challenging to fit in at her new school, but her outlook begins to change when she is admitted to the school’s famous choir. That is, until she learns that the choir director may not be the inspirational teacher she is touted to be. It will take Zsófi and her new friend Liza to uncover the dark truth and teach their teacher a lesson.

**Remarks:** Sing is a short film about Zsófi, a young girl who joins the choir at her new school, only to find out that the choir director has other plans for her. Exploring themes or fairness and
friendship, this film is gripping and surprising, forcing the viewer to examine what they think is right and fair in the context of the situation.

THEMES:
Body Image & Identity
Self Esteem & Personal Agency
Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
Ethical Dilemmas
Friendship Stories

QUESTIONS:

- What is Zsofi initially drawn to in the hallway when she is on a tour of the school?
- Who is allowed to join the choir?
- What causes Zsofi and Liza to become friends?
- How would you describe the choir teacher? What are the other student’s feeling about her?
- What does the choir teach tell Zsofi after the first rehearsal?
- Does Zsofi eventually tell Liza? What does Liza say?
- When the choir director explains her reasoning to the class for having people mime the words, can you understand where she’s coming from? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
- What happens at the choir concert? Do you view it as a success?
- In the end, do you think that Zsofi and Liza did the right thing? Do you think their teacher was wrong for telling students to mime singing?
CHAPTER FIVE

Films: “A Single Life” through “Wintry Spring”

A Single Life

2014, Netherlands 2 mins. (AN)
Directed by: Job, Joris & Marieke Hooghiemstra
When playing a mysterious vinyl single, Pia is suddenly able to travel through her life.

Remarks: *A Single Life* is a short-animated film about a girl who receives a record in the mail, only to find it has the ability to transport her to different points in her life. Sometimes funny and sometimes shocking, this film depicts life in a humorous and unique way.

Themes:
Magic & Whimsy
Body Image & Identity
Self Esteem & Personal Agency
Questions:

- Did you like the animation style used? Why or why not?
- What was the overall tone of this film?
- How did you feel about a record being used to represent life? Did you like it, find it clever, unexpected?
- Is there an overall message of this film in your opinion?
- Did you think the ending was funny or sad? Somewhere in between? Why?

Snatched (a l’arrache)

2016, Belgium 23 mins.
Directed by: Emmanuelle Nicot
Raïssa and Alio (17 and 18 years old) have shared the same room in a foster home since childhood. One evening as she returns to the foster home, Raïssa discovers that Alio has left the place without telling her.

Remarks: Snatched (a l’arrache) is a Belgian short film about the volatile yet loving relationship between two friends. Pay attention to how Raïssa views Alio and how their relationship changes throughout the film.

Themes:
Coming of Age
Family & Relationship Dynamics
Friendship Stories
QUESTIONS:

- Why do you think Raïssa is initially hurt and worried that Alio left?
- Describe Alio’s current situation? Who is she living with? Does it seem safe and healthy?
- What does Lenny reveal about Alio?
- What is the main issue when they are trying to schedule an appointment with the doctor?
- Why do you think that Raïssa acts out at Madame Saïda?
- How does the filmmaker portray the relationship between Alio and Raïssa? Do they seem like close friends? Is their relationship a positive one? How do you know?
- Why do you think Alio hugged Raïssa after Raïssa hit her?
- What do you make of the ending? What feeling are you left with after Alio tells Raïssa that she needs to grow up by herself?

Solace

2010, USA 9 mins.
Directed by: Tchaiko Omawale

Sole finds comfort in her secret binges, and one day she discovers her neighbor, the beautiful and popular Jasmine, but people are never as perfect as they seem.

REMARKS: In Solace, a young teenager named Sole envies her neighbor’s seemingly perfect and glamorous life. Pay attention to how Sole grows as a character throughout this film, and how she
comes to realize that her neighbor, Jasmine, might not have the most perfect life after all.

Themes:
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Elevating Empathy
- Friendship Stories

Questions:
- After Sole eats the potato chips in the beginning, how do you think she feels? How can you tell this?
- What do you think Sole is thinking while watching her neighbor dance?
- When Sole goes to get food from the restaurant that Jasmine works in, Jasmine seems upset by news she gets from her friend. Why do you think this is?
- Sole is clearly envious of Jasmine and looks up to her as a role model. What is it about Jasmine that Sole admires?
- Describe Jasmine as the film goes on? What is her secret?
- How are Sole and Jasmine different by the end of the film from how they seemed in the beginning?
- What do you think the main message is from this film?
- Did you think the ending was positive or negative? Both? Explain.

The Sound of Crickets (AN)
Switzerland, 2014 6min.
Directed by: Justine Klaiber
A young girl has to find the strength to fight for freedom and independence from her tyrannical mother. Nonverbal.

**Remarks:** *The Sound of Crickets* is about a young girl trying to find solace within art and nature from her mother’s abuse. As the film progresses, think about how the main character begins to culminate strength and courage to stand up to the abusive force within her life.

**Themes:**
- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Bullying & Abuse
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Family & Relationship Dynamics

**Questions:**
- Overall, what do you think crickets represent in this film?
- Did you like the choice to animate this film? Did you think the animation was effective? Explain.
- Notice the times when the girl’s mother abuses her. What is the girl doing at these times? Why is it significant?
- What do you think the black smog in between scenes represents?
- When the girl escapes the black smog and faces her mom, what do you think this was trying to symbolize?
- How did you feel about the end? Was it hopeful, sad, enlightening? Explain why.
- Overall, why do you think the mother held such resentment for her daughter? Was there a reason? Does it matter?

**Speed Dating**

2014, USA 11 mins.
Directed by: Meghann Artes

Desperate to find the man of her dreams, sweet and plain Ava tries a last-ditch effort, speed dating. But the absurd cast of characters she encounters makes her wonder if being single is not so bad after all.

Remarks: *Speed Dating* is a quirky rom com film about Ava, a woman who attempts to find love at a speed dating event, only to find that the crowd is less than appealing. Pay attention to the way the film is shot and the technique of stop motion being used, and think about what kind of atmosphere it creates in this film?

Themes:

- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Magic & Whimsy

Questions:

- What did you think of the choice to have this film
feature real people, but film it as stop motion? Did you like it? Was it effective for the story? Explain your reasoning.

- What can we tell about Ava from her apartment? What kind of person is she? What is her personality like?
- What were the rules for the speed dating? How does Ava react when she sees them?
- What was wrong with the third guy she saw who at first glance looked perfect?
- How does Ava initially act around the last guy she sees?
- What does he make for her when he sees she’s cold?
- Why do you think Ava chooses him despite having a massive beard?

**STEALTH**

2014, USA 22 mins.
Directed by: Bennett Lasseter

Sammy is a transgender child. She was born a boy but is living in stealth as a girl with the support of her mother and a doctor. At her new school, Sammy finds the friends she has always dreamed of having and tells them her secret in confidence. When the threat of a betrayal arises, Sammy must decide whether to run or to live as her whole self.

**REMARKS:** *Stealth* is a film that follows Sammy, a young transgender girl at a new school and the stresses that go along with living in “stealth”. This film portrays the realistic and ultimately inspiring story of the courage that it takes to live as your absolute true self. 

...
THEMES:
Body Image & Identity
Self Esteem & Personal Agency
Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand,
Bullying & Abuse
Coming of Age
Confronting and Overcoming Racial, Cultural and Gender Bias
Elevating Empathy
Family & Relationship Dynamics
Friendship Stories
Inclusiveness

QUESTIONS:

- Describe Sammy’s personality. What are some words you would use to describe her?
- How does Sammy end up making friends?
- How does the visit to the doctor’s go? What is Sammy disappointed about and could you understand why she felt like that?
- How does Sammy generally fit in with the two girls she is now friends with?
- Why doesn’t Sammy’s mom want her to go to the sleepover?
- What happens at the sleepover? How did Sammy’s friends react to her secret?
- Describe the relationship Sammy has with her mother. What kind of mom is she?
- How does the film end? What is the overall message the film is trying to portray to the viewers?
Sundays at Noon

2014, USA 15 mins.

Directed by: Ka’ramuu Kush

An absentee father is granted joint custody of his estranged daughter after 12 years.

Remarks: *Sunday at Noon* is a powerful film about the relationship between a daughter and her dad as he tries to come back in to her life after being absent for 12 years. Take notice of how the dad acts and treats his daughter, as well as how (and why) the daughter’s feeling about him shift throughout the course of this film.

Themes:

- Elevating Empathy
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency

Questions:

- Describe the Mother-daughter relationship present within the film.
- What is the Mother making her daughter do?
- How does the Mom feel about the Dad? How do you know?
- Now, describe the Father. What kind of person does he seem like from the first couple of scenes he's in?
- Think about the filmmaking techniques and the editing in the film. Were they effective? Why or why not?
- During the fight between the dad and his daughter,
were you able to see both sides of the argument or just one? Why?

- How does the dad get her to stay?
- Why does she wear her hair curly in the next scene?
- How had the relationship between the dad and daughter changed from the beginning of the film to the end? What was the turning point for their relationship?

**Super Girl**

2014, India 16 mins.

Directed by: Vaani Arora & Hemant Gaba

Ten-year-old Nadia is all set to conquer the world. She loves superheroes and believes she can be one. As she goes about trying to achieve this through science experiments with the aid of her grandfather, she discovers the most important quality of a superhero – the superpower of kindness!

**Remarks:** *Super Girl* is about a young girl determined to find her superpower despite facing multiple setbacks. When watching, pay close attention to how Nadia deals with obstacles and how she treats others around her even in times of struggle.

**Themes:**

- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Elevating Empathy
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Friendship Stories
- Technology in Modern Life
QUESTIONS:

- Which super hero does Nadia look up to the most?
- What do her parents seem to think of her obsession with super heroes?
- What family member can Nadia turn to when wanting to speak about becoming a super hero?
- How does Nadia’s first invention work?
- What does Nadia do for the woman in the store who comes up to her and her friend?
- How does Nadia’s attempt of making her bike float go? Does she give up?
- What does Nadia’s friend tell her as she is fixing the bike?
- What does Nadia do for her friend after they talk? Why does she do it?
- At the end of the film, what is the superpower Nadia realizes she had all along?
- Did you find this film empowering or inspiring? Why is Nadia a good role model or someone for other young girls to look up to? Explain.

THAT’S NOT ME

2016, USA 8 mins.

Directed by: Kamiya Sims, Johnnetta Walker, Shaniah Cruz, Zaria Clark

Two teenaged girls from Chicago talk about why they bullied others. In this honest account, they confront their conscience after seeing the effects of bullying on their siblings, friends, and peers.

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Remarks: *That’s Not Me* is a Chicago documentary about teens telling the stories of both bullies and the bullied. The film explores what makes bullies do what they do, and the consequences bullying can have on their victims.

Themes:
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Bullying & Abuse
- Coming of Age
- Elevating Empathy

Questions:

- Did you know about any of the statistics featured in the film? What did you think of the numbers that were being shown?
- What were some of the reasons that the bullies felt compelled to make fun of others?
- How did the kids who were getting bullied describe how they felt? Did you empathize with them?
- What made the bullies stop bullying? What had to happen for them to realize what they were doing was harmful to others?
- Why did the filmmakers choose to name the film the title that they did?

The Loudest Silence
Argentina, 2016 9min.
Directed by: Eduardo Bertaina
Mara, who lives with her grandmother, is initially excited when her mother comes to pick her up from school and take her to an appointment. But as the day goes on, Mara is reminded that her mother isn't necessarily who she wants her to be.

Remarks: *The Loudest Silence* is an Argentinian film about a mother-daughter relationship and how, sometimes, family members do not live up to our expectations, no matter how much we love them. Pay special attention to the small interactions that Mara and her mother have with each other, and how every interaction no matter how small can inform how a young person views their parent.

Themes:

- Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Family & Relationship Dynamics
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency

Questions:

- What can we infer about Mara’s mother based on Mara’s excitement to see her and the teacher’s comments about her mother never picking her up at school?
- What kind of relationship do Mara and her mother have? What moments in the film lend insight into their relationship?
- How does Mara’s mother react to her hearing test at the doctor’s office? Why?
- Analyze the conversation that Mara has with her
mother when they are getting coffee. Pay attention to her comment about Mara’s coat and the pencil. How do you think these comments made Mara feel?

- What can we infer from Mara’s accident? What caused it?
- Mara ends the film by running away from her mom while she is having an argument with a waiter. Taking into consideration the entire film, what do you think Mara’s feelings toward her mother are? Does she love her, want to live with her, just want to be kept at a distance?
- How does Mara’s problem with hearing relate to the title of the film and the film in general? What was the filmmaker trying to say with this choice?
- How do you think this film speaks to broader themes of hope and expectations? What is the film trying to illustrate through Mara’s relationship with her mother about these themes?

**Two Left Feet**

2015, Italy 6 mins.

Directed by: Isabella Salvetti

In a neighborhood of Rome, Mirko is playing soccer with his friends. He meets Luana, sitting nearby. The two twelve year olds initially hit it off, but find they differ in their support for their favorite soccer teams.

**Remarks:** *Two Left Feet* charts an interaction in a park between two tweens who resolve a surprising misunderstanding.
THemes:
Body Image & Identity
Self Esteem & Personal
Bullying & Abuse
Elevating Empathy
Family & Relationship Dynamics
Inclusiveness

Questions:

- Think about the title of “Two Left Feet” and how it relates to the story. Why do you think the filmmaker chose to name the film this title?
- How did you like the filmmaking in this film? What did you think of the way the soccer scenes were shot?
- How does Mirko originally try to hit on Luana?
- What is the big reveal in this film? How does Mirko react?
- What did you think of the ensuing conversation between Mirko and Luana?
- Why do you think the film ends with Luana smiling? What do you think it means? Why was she happy in the end?

Vow
2015, Israel 28 mins.
Directed by: Netalie Braun

Tamar is a lonely, overweight eleven-year-old girl. Going through puberty and taking insults for her looks is her daily burden. This, however, seems to be the least of her worries. As an only child to a remote, restrained mother, and a father who’s sexu-
ally charged relationship with her is manifested in a nightly routine, Tamar takes a vow of love: she resolves to re-arrange her home environment and regain her powers – this time as her mother’s protector.

Remarks: *Vow* follows the life of Tamar, a young girl who struggles with her weight and a home life that is far from perfect. Pay attention to Tamar’s parents, how they act around her, and what Tamar thinks of both of them.

Themes:
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Coming of Age
- Ethical Dilemmas
- Family & Relationship Dynamics

Questions:
- How would you describe the relationship between Tamar and her mother?
- What do you think was the significance of including the short scene with the radio broadcast about violent and nonviolent demonstrators?
- What is Tamar’s father’s nighttime ritual? What do you make of it?
- Why do you think Tamar vows to “save” her mother?
- What does Tamar’s mother think about her weight issue?
- What does the superman suit represent to Tamar? Why do you think she chose to wear it?
• When Tamar’s mother finally apologizes to her, what is she apologizing about?
• Think about the ending scene on the swing. What do you make of the ending? Was it uplifting, sad, ambiguous?

**W.A.L.K.**

2014, Canada 11 mins.
Directed by: Anna Sikorski

During a lazy Montreal summer day, preteen Clara decides to master the art of walking in high-heel shoes. It would probably be an easier undertaking if she didn't have to take the dog, Eddie, along for the ride.

**Remarks:** _W.A.L.K._ is short Canadian film about Clara, a teen girl who decides to debut her new pair of high heels while on a walk with her dog. During the film, think about why she decides to dress the way that she does on her walk and what kind of feedback it gets from the people that she encounters.

**Themes:**
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Friendship Stories

**Questions:**
- What is Clara hiding under her bed?
- Describe how she gets ready to take her dog on a walk?
• How would you describe Clara as a person?
• Why do you think she dresses the way she does when walking her dog? Why do you think she wanted to wear the heels?
• How does the walk go for her?
• How does the film end? What does it say about her and her friends? Was it a positive end in your opinion?

**Winter Solstice**

*Germany, 2017 13min.*

Directed by: Simon Schneckenburger

A sister and brother meet up at a place significant to their childhood. Over the course of the conversation, the image of a strong young woman in the midst of a broken family is formed. She ends at a conclusion that could, at the same time, also be a beginning. In German with English subtitles

**Remarks:** *Winter Solstice* shows us the strained relationship between a sister and a brother after the passing of their father. The film explores themes of parental abuse through the eyes of two siblings trying to cobble their relationship back together after the brother decides to run away from home.

**Themes:**

Bravery & Courage: Taking a Stand
Coming of Age
Ethical Dilemmas
Family & Relationship Dynamics

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QUESTIONS:

- What does the story of the caterpillar told at the beginning and end of the film mean in the context of this story? What is it representing?
- Talk about the look and aesthetic choices of this film. How does the filmmaking elevate or lend to the story?
- What kind of relationship do you think the brother and sister have? What kinds of clues or dialogue led you to your answer?
- Why do you think the forest was a safe haven for the two siblings in their youth?
- Do you think the sister is right to be upset with her brother? Can you understand the brother’s side of the situation?
- The brother apologizes in the end to his sister for abandoning the home. Do you think she try accepted it or not?
- Did you feel a sense of hope or joy at the end of this film? Could it be considered a happy ending? Why or why not?

**Wintry Spring**

2015, Egypt 15 mins.

Directed by: Mohamed Kamel

Nour, is a schoolgirl who lives alone with her father. She goes through a crisis with the unexpected arrival of puberty. Suddenly, she becomes a woman and cannot tell her father. Unfortunately, her dad cannot understand this change that occurred in her life, and tension grows between them.

...
Remarks: *Wintry Spring* depicts the tricky and confusing situation of growing up as a woman without a maternal figure to help you through all of the changes along the way. Pay attention to how Nour tries to hide this information from her father, and how her father reacts to Nour’s secretive behavior.

Themes:
- Body Image & Identity
- Self Esteem & Personal Agency
- Coming of Age
- Elevating Empathy
- Family & Relationship Dynamics

Questions:
- Think about and discuss how the school assignment of caring for a caterpillar was part of this story? What could it represent?
- How would you describe the relationship of Nour and her father based on their first scene together?
- What happens to Nour that sets up the main conflict for this story?
- How does she handle what happens to her?
- How does the relationship between her and her dad start to crumble?
- What does her dad catch her doing?
- Think about what the scene between Nour and the women in the kitchen could mean. What was the filmmaker trying to show with that scene?
- By the end of the film, how is Nour’s relationship with her father? What does he do as a peace offering? Do you think it was the right thing to do?
CHAPTER SIX
Rating Sheet: Questions & Design

I frequently tailor rating sheets to the goals of the agency, the viewing group and the individuals involved in the program. Below, you will find a list of some of the most effective questions for helping youth to organize their thoughts.

The rating sheet should also include (a) the Film’s Title (b) the Country of Production, (c) the name of the person rating the film, and (d) a reminder about the rating scale. We normally use a five point scale with one being low and five being high.

At the bottom of the form, it’s wise to leave room for comments and an overall recommendation concerning special virtues or significant weaknesses of the film. Youth who are sometimes shy about speaking in a group may surprise you with their written insights.

Movies Make You Smarter™ - Youth Jury Rating Sheet
**Film Title**

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**Country of Production:**

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Please give the film a rating for each question, using a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).

**Production Quality:** Is the pacing suitable to the story? Is the production technically proficient?

**Artistry:** Is the production original, creative, or aesthetic? Do the artistic elements work well together?

**Cinematography/Editing:** Are the shots well executed? Did the sequence of the shots flow well and contribute to the story?

**Acting:** Was the production well cast—did the casting fit the filmmakers goals? Were the actors believable and effective in all/most situations?

**Script:** Was the text/dialog effective for the story being told? If the film had no dialog, did the images tell the story well?

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SOUND DESIGN: Was the sound interesting and creative? Did sound/music help to communicate important elements of the story?

YOUTH RESPONSE: Will young people like the film/video? Does it entertain? Is there potential for repeat viewing?

QUALITY OF STORY/CONTENT: Does the story’s structure and style (conflict, character, setting, resolution) work well? What is the impact?

RELEVANCE OF CONTENT: Is the story accurate, authentic and suitable for youth? Does the film address issues that are important or meaningful to youth?

HUMANISTIC VALUES: Are human values affirmed? Are there positive modeling behaviors demonstrated with the relationships?

INCLUSIVENESS: Is the film respectful of culture, race and gender?

VIOLENCE & LANGUAGE: Is conflict handled well? Is cooperation and understanding well promoted?

ATTITUDE TOWARD AUDIENCE: Does the production
respect the critical thinking skills of youth and their emotional capacities? Does the film stimulate creative responses?

PARTICIPATION EFFECTIVENESS: Is there potential for discussion and for interested participation? Does the story motivate further inquiry or offer insight into difficult subjects/concepts?

JUROR NAME: ____________________________

JUROR’S RECOMMENDATION YES NO

NOTES/COMMENTS concerning special virtues or significant weaknesses of the film, irrespective of its rating
Nicole Dreiske is the Executive Director of the International Children's Media Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to transforming the way children use, view and engage electronic screens. An education innovator with more than 40 years of experience, Nicole teaches neuroscience-based approaches that fight screen addiction while boosting academic achievement and student engagement. Her “rapid scaffolding” techniques to accelerate learning were designed to close the achievement gap and support diverse learners.

Nicole does educational consulting and conducts teacher in-service workshops and parent workshops for school districts across the country. Her field-tested pedagogies have been presented at numerous conferences, symposia, universities and theaters including NAEYC, CMAEYC, the Chicago Board of Education, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Huffington Post Parent Conference, Literacy for All, the Partnership for Media Education, the World Summit on Media for Children, ISTE and scores of others.

An expert in children’s media, Nicole also founded the first juried, competitive children’s film festival in the U.S and was the
first festival director world-wide to get the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to recognize a children’s event as an “academy qualifying” festival. Her achievement meant that winners of a children’s film festival could compete for the Oscars® for the first time.

Dreiske is the author of six books:

- *THE UPSIDE OF DIGITAL DEVICES: How to Make Your Child More Screen Smart, Literate and Emotionally Intelligent* won the National Parenting Center’s Seal of Approval. *UPSIDE* was released in 2018 by Health Communications, Inc. publishers of the acclaimed “Chicken Soup for the Soul” series. The book details Screen Smart™ strategies for using narrative media to improve early childhood learning, character development and empathy.

- *Screen Smart™ - Five Day Intensive Curriculum*
- *Mindful Viewing™ - Facilitator’s Guide - Female Focused Films for Ages 14+
- *Mindful Viewing™ - Resource Guide for Group Leaders and Parents*
- *Movies Make You Smarter™ - Digital Viewing Resources for Teachers and Parents*
- *Movies Make You Smarter™ - Films for Youth Ages 14+

To book Nicole Dreiske for talks or workshops, please call 773-528-6854 or email her at: nationaloutreach@icmediacenter.org