FAMILY SHORTS

A GLOBAL COLLECTION OF FILMS FOR YOUNGER AUDIENCES

CLASSROOM GUIDE

USING THIS GUIDE

ABOUT THE FILM

▶

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS &

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

▶

MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES

▶

TEACHING THE FILMS:

The **Family Films** program is a series of thought-provoking and imaginative short films, selected to engage a young audience. International in scope, the program includes animated and live-action films, with both narrative and experimental structures. The Family Films program will delight and entertain, while introducing its audience to the diversity of culture and technique that makes up today's global cinema. Taught in conjunction with this guide, the program will encourage young viewers to consider the processes involved in filmmaking and to approach the screen as critical thinkers.

USING THIS GUIDE

This study guide is intended to flexibly support educators in preparing for and following up on a class screening of **Family Films** program. Support materials are intended to facilitate group discussion, individual and collaborative creative exercise, subject-based learning and access to resources for further investigation of material. Educators are encouraged to adapt and abridge the content as necessary to meet their unique learning objectives and circumstances.

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SERIES DISCUSSION GUIDE

1) Which film in this series was your favorite? Why?

2. Which film in this series was your least favorite? Why?

3. Which film in this series do you think was the most challenging to make? Why?

4. These films were shot on everything from professional digital cameras to consumer cell phones. What does this variety of formats say about modern filmmaking technology?

5. One theme that recurs throughout this series of short films is learning. Where did you see evidence of learning in the film series?

> a. How does the bear in **I Want My Hat Back** discover who has taken his hat?
> b. How does the boy in **Boyhood** study for his math class?
> c. What does the pig learn about friendship in **The Dam Keeper**?
> d. What life lessons does Bory learn on her adventures in **Sprout**?
> e. Describe the process of trial and error that creates the alphabet in **The Numberlys**. Which letter do they discover first?
> f. What do the characters in **Silent** learn on their journey through the history of the movies?

6. Another theme that recurs throughout this series is animals. What different animals did you see in the short films program? Which were real animals and which were imaginary? How can you tell the difference?

> a. Which animals were most realistic in **I Want My Hat Back**?
> b. How does the boy interact with his cows in **Boyhood**? Were you surprised that he was all alone with so many animals?
> c. What kinds of animals are the characters in **The Dam Keeper**? In what ways are these characters like animals and in what ways are they like humans?
> d. Are the characters at all like animals in **My Mom is an Airplane**? How can an airplane be like an animal?
> e. What animals does Bory meet in **Sprout**?
> f. What kind of creatures are the factory workers in **The Numberlys**? Are they animals?

7. Many of these films feature characters who are alone. Some of them are lonely and make friends, and some of them are having their own adventures.
a. How do you think these filmmakers feel about individuality? Which characters were the strangest or the most unique?
b. Which characters do you think were happy to be alone, and which characters wanted a friend?
c. Do you think that it was a good idea for Bory to go out all alone in **Sprout**?

8. What words would you use to describe this series as a whole? What common themes can you find? Do you think these films were interesting to watch together? Did any seem out of place?

9. Did you enjoy the **Family Films** series? What more do you want to know about these films? What questions do you have about how they were made?

WHICH CHARACTERS WERE STRANGEST OR MOST UNIQUE?

I WANT MY HAT BACK

SYNOPSIS:

A bear goes in search of his missing chapeau in this animated rendering of Jon Klassen's classic children's book. (Galen Fott, USA 2013, 9 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1) Who is the main character of this story? In what ways does he behave like a real bear and in what ways does he act like a cartoon bear?

2) What other characters does the bear meet while in search of his hat? Are they realistic animals?

3) Did you like the animation and narration style in this film? What did you like or dislike about it?

4) How does the bear finally find his hat?

5) What happens when to the bunny who took his hat and why?

BOYHOOD

SYNOPSIS:

From herding cattle to learning arithmetic, witness a day in the life of a Maasai boy living in the Great Rift Valley of Kenya. (Jonah Rosenthal, USA 2013, 5 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1.) What do you think life is like for this young boy?

2.) How is his life different from yours and how is it similar?

3) What are his responsibilities?

4) What do you think of the landscape where he lives in Kenya? Would you enjoy wandering around there with a herd of cattle?

THE DAM KEEPER

SYNOPSIS:

tale of bullying, friendship, pollution and a very important but underappreciated pig, told through a beautiful blend of hand-drawn animation and digital painting. (Robert Kondo & Daisuke 'Dice' Tsutsumi, USA 2013, 18 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1) Who are the characters in this film? How do they change over the course of the story?

2) What are the pig's responsibilities as the only dam keeper?

3) What happens when the pig's feelings get hurt? How do his hurt feelings affect his performance as a dam keeper? What happens to the city?

4) What was the true story behind the fox's drawing? How did the two friends patch up the misunderstanding?

5) Did the misunderstanding between the pig and the fox seem realistic? Is this a kind of misunderstanding that could happen in your school or between you and your friends?
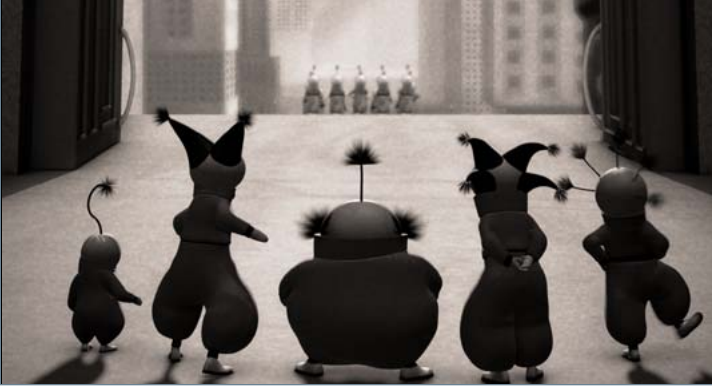
SOUP OF THE DAY

SYNOPSIS:

This lively musical morsel will be savored by anyone who has ever dined with a very picky eater. (Lynn Smith, Canada 2013, 4 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1) What did you think of the pictures in **Soup of the Day**?

2) Did you like the music?

3) Do you know anybody who is a picky eater?

4) Did you think this was a funny story?

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SPROUT

SYNOPSIS:

Unbeknownst to her family, seven-year-old Bory embarks on a solo mission through the streets of Seoul to secure bean sprouts for an ancestral ceremony for her grandfather, meeting some surprising characters along the way. (Yoon Ga-eun, South Korea 2013, 19 min) In Korean with English subtitles.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1.) Describe Bory. What kind of a little girl is she?

2) Describe the family in **Sprout**. How are they like or unlike your family?

3) What does Seoul (the city where Bory lives) look like? How is Bory's neighborhood like your neighborhood and how is it different?

4) Why does Bory go out into the streets? Do you think this was a wise decision?

5) What strange people and places does Bory encounter on her adventure?

6) Who does Bory meet in the end of her journey? What do you think this meeting means for Bory and her family?

MY MOM IS AN AIRPLANE

SYNOPSIS:

Everyone thinks their mom is the coolest, but one boy takes his maternal appreciation to new heights in this imaginative mix of aviation and animation. (Yulia Aronova, Russia/USA 2013, 7 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1.) Is this boy's Mom really an airplane? How do the animators make a person look like an airplane?

2) Do you think this boy is happy to have an airplane for a mother? What are the perks of having an airplane mom in this film?

3) Did you like the drawings in My Mom Is an Airplane? What did you like or dislike about them?

THE NUMBERLYS

SYNOPSIS:

The Oscar-winning directors of The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore (SFIFF 2011) reimagine the creation of the alphabet by a crew of factory workers living in a drab world filled only with numbers. (Brandon Oldenburg & William Joyce, USA 2013, 12 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1.) Did you like this film? Was it funny? Did it remind you of any other films you've seen?

2) What do these filmmakers think a world without the alphabet looks like?

3) How was the world improved by the addition of the alphabet?

4) What do you think this film says about the process of invention and innovation?

SILENT

SYNOPSIS:

Moonbot Studios and Dolby Labs team up to create this charming tribute to movie making as two cinema-loving entertainers discover how sound and picture work together to create movie magic. (Brandon Oldenburg, Limbert Fabian, USA 2014, 3 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1.) Did you recognize any of the movies that the characters visited in Silent?

2) Based on this short film, what were movies like in the very beginning?

3) What was the relationship between the soundtrack and the picture in Silent?

4) Were you happy to see these characters get so much applause?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITY:

1) Draw a Story

All movies are planned before they are made. Have each student fold a blank sheet of paper into 4 quadrants. Ask them to then create a storyboard—a sequence of drawings that together tell a story. The story can be anywhere from 4–8 quadrants long (using both sides). The story could be an experience or dream the student has had, something he/she has read, or something completely original. Then break the class into pairs or small groups and have each student present his/her story to the group members.

ALL MOVIES ARE PLANNED BEFORE THEY ARE MADE

MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES

SCREENING WITH MEANING

We live in a world where technology mediates a large portion of human interaction and the exchange of information. Every projected image, every word published on a page or a website, and every sound from a speaker reaches its audience through the medium, through the language of the device. The ability to parse the vast array of media messages is an essential skill for young people, particularly in a mainstream commercial culture that targets youth as a vulnerable, impressionable segment of the American marketplace. Most students already have a keen understanding of the languages different media use and the techniques they employ to inspire particular emotions or reactions, but they often lack the skill or awareness to fully deconstruct the messages they continuously receive.

Analysis of a media message—or any piece of mass media content—can best be accomplished by first identifying its principal characteristics:

(1) Medium: the physical means by which it is contained and/or delivered

(2) Author: the person(s) responsible for its creation and dissemination

(3) Content: the information, emotions, values or ideas it conveys

(4) Audience: the target audience to whom it is delivered

(5) Purpose: the objectives of its authors and the effects of its dissemination.

Students who can readily identify these five core characteristics will be equipped to understand the incentives at work behind media messages, as well as their potential consequences. Media literacy education empowers students to become responsible consumers, active citizens and critical thinkers.

{ CORE CONCEPTS OF MEDIA ANALYSIS }

MEDIUM **All Media Is Constructed.**
How is the message delivered and in what format?
What technologies are used to present the message?
What visual and auditory elements are used?
What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?

AUTHOR **All Media Is Constructed by Someone.**
Who is delivering the message?
Who originally constructed the message?
What expectations do you have of the content, given its author(s)?

CONTENT All **Media Is A Language.**
What is the subject of the media message?
What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content?
What tools does the author employ to engage the viewer and evoke a response?
To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?

AUDIENCE **All Media Messages Reach an Audience.**
Who receives the message?
For whom is the message intended?
What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message?
What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message?
How might others perceive this message differently? Why?

PURPOSE **All Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason**.
Why was the message constructed?
Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How?
To what extent does the message achieve its purpose?
What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?

ANIMATION OVERVIEW

What is Animation?

Animation is a process used to create motion pictures through the combination of still images (e.g., digital graphics, photographs of drawings, photographs of objects, etc.) which, when played in sequence, create the illusion of movement. All television cartoons, for example, are animations, and are made up of thousands of still images (drawn by hand or on a computer) that are played sequentially, along with a soundtrack, to tell a story.

Types of Animation:

2D Animation Techniques
• Classic animation (e.g., Disney's The Lion King, most TV cartoons)
• Rotoscope (e.g., Star Wars lightsabers)
• Flip books

3D Animation Techniques
• 3D animation (e.g., Pixar's Toy Story, Wall·E, Up)
• Stereoscopic 3D (e.g., Avatar)
• Cut-out / Silhouette animation (e.g., South Park)

Stop Motion Techniques
• Claymation (e.g., Nick Park's Wallace and Gromit)
• Puppet animation (e.g., Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas, Coraline)

Types of Animation:

The world's most famous animator, Walt Disney, began making short animated cartoons based on children's stories in 1923. In 1928 he introduced Mickey Mouse in the first animated sound cartoon, *Steamboat Willie*, which became an immediate sensation. Throughout the next decade, Disney would add such elements as carefully synchronized music (*The Skeleton Dance*, 1929),
Technicolor (*Flowers and Trees*, 1932), and the illusion of depth with his multi-plane camera (*The Old Mill*, 1937), a device that allowed for animated cels to be photographed against a three-dimensional background. Although not the first animated feature, Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) was the first to use up-to-the-minute techniques and the first to receive widespread release. The film's success can be attributed in part to Disney's willingness to use animation to create a profound dramatic experience. He strove for photographic realism in films such as *Pinocchio* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1942).

The success of television cartoons led to the virtual disappearance of animated shorts produced for theatrical release. Animated feature-length films, however, flourished, especially after the release of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* (1989), regarded by many as the studio's best animated feature in decades. Other Disney blockbusters followed, including *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *The Lion King* (1994) and *Lilo & Stitch* (2002).

The development of computer animation was another great advancement in the form and resulted in feature films of astounding visual sumptuousness. In 1995, *Toy Story* was the first film to use only computer-generated imagery (CGI). In 2001 the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences added a new Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film. The first recipient of the award was *Shrek* (2001). Other major animated features were *Toy Story* (1995) and *Toy Story 2* (1999), *A Bug's Life* (1998), *Monsters, Inc.* (2001) and *Finding Nemo* (2003).

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