



FAMILY SHORTS

A GLOBAL COLLECTION
OF FILMS FOR
YOUNGER AUDIENCES

USING
THIS GUIDE ▶

ABOUT
THE FILMS ▶

DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS &
POST-VIEWING
ACTIVITIES ▶

MEDIA LITERACY
RESOURCES ▶

SUPPLEMENTAL
RESOURCES ▶

TEACHING THE FILMS:

The smallest members of your family, the young at heart, and everyone in between will find something to love in this exciting lineup of films. This eclectic collection has the power to connect us with storytellers in far-off destinations, from China and South Africa to our own backyard. Works from emerging filmmakers are placed alongside those by veteran artists, including Oscar-winner Patrick Osborne, Festival alum Julia Pott, and Pixar Animation Studios, here presenting its latest work.

Total runtime 65 min

USING THIS GUIDE

This study guide is intended to flexibly support educators in preparing for and following up on a class screening of the 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.

All SFFilm Education materials are developed in alignment with California educational standards for media literacy.

SFFILM Education welcomes feedback and questions on all printed study materials. Please direct all comments and queries to Keith Zwölfer, Associate Director of Education:

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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. The films incorporate a wide range of storytelling styles, from documentary to animation to narrative fiction. Which film's style was the most interesting to you? What techniques did it use that set it apart from other films?
5. Many of these films are stories about learning. What were some of the most important lessons that characters in this program learned? What different experiences promoted learning?
 - a. What does the main character learn about playground behavior in Lou?
 - b. What does the girl learn from her father in Pearl? How does she react to these lessons at different stages of her life?
 - c. What does the seagull teach the old man in Perched?
 - d. What does the young boy learn in Scrap Dolls? What does the old man learn?
 - e. What does Oscar learn about himself in Summer Camp Island?
 - f. What do the young skaters learn at Indogo Skate Camp?

6. Another theme that recurs throughout this series is friendship. Which different kinds of friendships did you see in this series? Which of these films told the most interesting story of friendship?

- a. What does the young boy learn about friendship in Lou?
- b. What forms the basis of the girl's friendships in Pearl? How do her friendships connect with her family's values?

WHICH FILM IN THIS SERIES WAS YOUR FAVORITE?

- c. What does Oscar learn about himself and his friendship with Hedgehog in Summer Camp Island?
- d. What friendships exist between the boys in Valley of a Thousand Hills?
7. Many of the films in this series are animated. Do you like animation? What kinds of stories are best told through animation?
 - a. Which films had the most beautiful animation? Which had the funniest looking characters?
 - b. Animation is a method for telling a story that is magical or extraordinary. Which of these stories did you think was the farthest from reality? In which stories did the animators use their craft to talk about something real?
 - c. Which was your favorite animated character? What was your favorite animated scene?
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?



FATHER AND DAUGHTER:

SYNOPSIS

Not many children who dream of a career in sports go on to find success. The rare few who do commit to a life of sacrifice and devotion. In this beautifully hand-drawn tale, a young girl dedicates her life to reach the top in the competitive world of gymnastics. Throughout all the trials and tribulations, her adoring father is always there by her side.

(Xie Chenglin, China 2016, 5 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) The main character in this animated film. What kind of a girl is she? What are her goals?
- 2) What kind of a dad is this girl's dad? What do you admire about him?
- 3) What does this film have to say about the importance of family? How can the support of family help young people to achieve their goals?

THE INSPECTOR AND THE UMBRELLA:

SYNOPSIS

Inspector Frigg is ready to tackle another day in the big city. With rain in the forecast, an umbrella will certainly be a required accessory. Unfortunately, no one informed the umbrella.

(Maël Gourmelen, France 2016, 2 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Who is Inspector Frigg? What do you know about him?
- 2) What do you think of the animation style used to tell the story? Do you like this style?
- 3) What happens in the end of the story? Did the ending of this story make you laugh?

LOU:

SYNOPSIS

The latest gem from Pixar tells the story of an overbearing young schoolboy who constantly pesters his classmates during recess. A hidden adversary to the playground nuisance lies patiently waiting in the bottom of the lost-and-found box, formulating a plan. (Dave Mullins, USA 2016, 7 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What happens in Lou? Summarize the story.
- 2) What do you think of the characters in this film? How are they like people you know and how are they unlike people you know?
- 3) How does the main character grow and change during this film? What helps him to learn?

PEARL:

SYNOPSIS

Recently nominated for an Academy Award, this musical road movie follows a girl and her dad as they crisscross the country, growing up, and chasing their dreams, all from their home inside the family car, a beat up hatchback.

(Patrick Osborne, USA 2016, 6 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Who are the characters in this film? What do they care about? What choices do they make?
- 2) How does music help to tell this story?
- 3) What happens to this family at the end of the film? Were you happy to see the changing relationship between this girl and her dad?



PERCHED:

SYNOPSIS

A reclusive old man lives a life of seclusion inside his submarine balanced precariously atop a mountain. A visit from an unwelcomed feathered visitor sends his carefully managed existence into a tailspin, allowing him to see things from a whole new perspective. (Liam Harris, United Kingdom 2016, 11 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Describe the main character at the beginning of this film. What is his personality like? What is his life like?
- 2) How does the old man feel about the bird in the beginning of the film? How does he feel in the end of the film? What changes?
- 3) Could this film have a larger, metaphorical meaning beyond its literal meaning? What could this film be about?

SCRAP DOLLS:

SYNOPSIS

On the east side of Detroit, an 11-year-old boy grieves over the recent loss of his best friend. A chance encounter with a short-tempered folk artist, who makes sculptures out of abandoned objects, provides him with the inspiration to come up with a creative way to honor the memory of his pal. (Aude Cuenod, USA 2016, 14 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you know about the main character of this film from the opening sequence? What has recently happened in his life?
- 2) How does the main character first meet the artist? Describe their first interaction.
- 3) What do the artist and the boy think of each other when they first meet? How do their opinions of one another change during the course of the film? Why do they change?
- 4) What does this film suggest about the importance of art?

SUMMER CAMP ISLAND:

SYNOPSIS

At this summer camp, pajamas can talk, marshmallows can sing, and there are no parents, but all Oscar wants is to spend a normal night with Hedgehog, his friend and summertime crush. (Julia Pott, USA 2016 9 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Describe some of the weird and funny things that happen at camp.
- 2) What does Oscar think he wants from his sleepover party with Hedgehog?
- 3) How does Oscar learn about his feelings? How does it feel to have a crush?
- 4) How do you think the rest of the summer will turn out for Oscar?

VALLEY OF A THOUSAND HILLS:

SYNOPSIS

Deep in the rural South African village of Isithumba, a group of Zulu boys growing up with a vastly different outlook on life from their elders, have been learning to skateboard through the Indogo Skate Camp enrichment program. (Jess Colquhoun, South Africa/United Kingdom 2016, 11 min)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Describe the kids in this film. What are their lives like? What do they care about?
- 2) Were you surprised to see skaters in Africa? How are they like skaters in your community and how are they different?
- 3) What does skating give to these kids? Is the Indogo Skate Camp just about skating, or does it teach other things too?



CLASSROOM GUIDE

ABOUT THE FILM
USING THIS GUIDE
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES
MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES
SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITY:

1) Create Your Own Story:

Drawing inspiration from the films, choose a moment in your life or a story you have heard, and transform it into a plan for a short film.

- Write a logline—a brief outline of the plot, meaning and message of your film (3 sentences)
- Decide on a genre for your film. You might choose to make narrative fiction, like *Scrap Dolls*; animation, like *Pearl* or documentary, like *Valley of a Thousand Hills*. A story can be told in many ways, so think carefully about which format is right for your subject.
- Make a list of the characters who appear in your film. Include a brief description of each character.

As a homework assignment, students might write scripts or create storyboards for their films. If time and interest allows, they may be encouraged to film a short clip from each story idea, using phone cameras or available resources.



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	<p>All Media Is Constructed.</p> <p>How is the message delivered and in what format?</p> <p>What technologies are used to present the message?</p> <p>What visual and auditory elements are used?</p> <p>What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?</p>
AUTHOR	<p>All Media Is Constructed by Someone.</p> <p>Who is delivering the message?</p> <p>Who originally constructed the message?</p> <p>What expectations do you have of the content, given its author(s)?</p>
CONTENT	<p>All Media Is A Language.</p> <p>What is the subject of the media message?</p> <p>What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content?</p> <p>What tools does the author employ to engage the viewer and evoke a response?</p> <p>To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?</p>
AUDIENCE	<p>All Media Messages Reach an Audience.</p> <p>Who receives the message?</p> <p>For whom is the message intended?</p> <p>What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message?</p> <p>What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message?</p> <p>How might others perceive this message differently? Why?</p>
PURPOSE	<p>All Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason.</p> <p>Why was the message constructed?</p> <p>Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How?</p> <p>To what extent does the message achieve its purpose?</p> <p>What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?</p>



THE ANIMATED FILM 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*)

HISTORY 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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