Soul

VIEWING GUIDE

teaching the film

Join us for an online screening of the newest Pixar Animations Studios film **Soul**, a beautiful and moving celebration of life. Then enjoy a fun and educational Q&A with the filmmakers and go behind the scenes to learn about the the making of the film.

Taught in conjunction with this guide, the film will encourage students to learn more about African American culture and Jazz, while also encouraging them to explore their own hopes and dreams and identify what makes them special. This study guide is intended to flexibly support educators and families alike. Please feel free to adapt and abridge the content as necessary to meet your unique learning objectives and circumstances.

Recommended for ages 7 and up. The film is rated PG by the MPAA for thematic elements and some language.

subject areas

- **African American Studies**
- **Social Emotional Growth and Development**
- **English Language Arts**
- **Mindfulness Studies**
- **Performing Arts/Music Studies.**

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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.

about the film

What is it that makes you…YOU? Pixar Animation Studios' all-new feature film **Soul** introduces Joe Gardner (voice of Jamie Foxx) – a middle-school band teacher who gets the chance of a lifetime to play at the best jazz club in town. But one small misstep takes him from the streets of New York City to The Great Before – a fantastical place where new souls get their personalities, quirks and interests before they go to Earth. Determined to return to his life, Joe teams up with a precocious soul, 22 (voice of Tina Fey), who has never understood the appeal of the human experience. As Joe desperately tries to show 22 what's great about living, he may just discover the answers to some of life's most important questions. Directed by Pete Docter,

Co-directed by Kemp Powers

Produced by Dana Murray

(USA 2020) English, 101 mins

Soul on Disney+

presenter bios

Pete Docter is the Oscar®-winning director of **Monsters, Inc.**, **Up**, and **Inside Out**, and Chief Creative Officer at Pixar Animation Studios. He is currently directing Disney and Pixar's upcoming feature film **Soul** with producer Dana Murray and co-director Kemp Powers, which is set to release November 20, 2020.

Starting at Pixar in 1990 as the studio's third animator, Docter collaborated and help develop the story and characters for **Toy Story**, Pixar's first full-length animated feature film, for which he also was supervising animator. He served as a storyboard artist on **A Bug's Life**, and wrote initial story treatments for both **Toy Story 2** and **WALL•E**. Aside from directing his three films, Docter also executive produced **Monsters University** and Academy Award®-winning **Brave**. Docter's interest in animation began at the age of eight when he created his first flipbook. He studied character animation at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia, California, where he produced a variety of short films, one of which won a Student Academy Award®. Those films have since been shown in animation festivals worldwide and are featured on the **Pixar Short Films Collection Volume 2**. Upon joining Pixar, he animated and directed several commercials, and has been nominated for eight Academy Awards® including Best Animated Feature-winners **Up** and **Inside Out** and nominee **Monsters, Inc.**, and Best Original Screenplay for **Up**, **Inside Out** and **WALL•E**. In 2007, **Up** also was nominated for a Best Picture Oscar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

presenter bios (cont.)

Kemp Powers (Co-Director/Story & Screenplay) began at Pixar Animation Studios in August 2018. Powers grew up in Brooklyn, NY. He attended both Howard University and the University of Michigan. Prior to Pixar, Powers was an award-winning playwright, television and film screenwriter, and journalist. His play **One Night in Miami…** received three L.A.Drama Critics Circle Awards and four NAACP Theatre Awards, and was nominated for the 2017 Laurence Olivier Award for best new play. He adapted it into a feature film, which is being directed by Academy Award®-winning actress Regina King. He was a writer for the television show **Star Trek: Discovery** and has toured nationally as a storyteller for the Peabody Award-winning series **The Moth**.

He resides in Los Angeles and Emeryville, Calif.

Dana Murray, p.g.a.(Producer) joined Pixar Animation Studios in June 2001 as a desk production assistant on **Finding Nemo**. She served as the art and technology coordinator on several short films,including **Boundin'**, **One Man Band** and **Lifted**. Murray was a lighting coordinator for **Cars** and held a variety of department manager positions on the Academy Award®-winning feature films **Ratatouille**, **Up** and **Brave**. Murray served asthe production manager for the Academy Award-winning film "Inside Out," and most recently produced her first short film, **LOU**, which released in front of **Cars 3** and was nominated for the Best Animated Short Oscar®. Sheis the producer on **Soul** with director Pete Docter and co-director Kemp Powers.

Raised in Placerville, Calif., Murray attended Sonoma State University. She resides in Oakland, Calif.,with her husband, their two girls and dog, Gracie.

discussion questions

1. What is the struggle for Joe at the beginning of the film? Was he brave to show up for the audition?

2. Have you ever been nervous about trying out for a team or performance? What things can you do to calm your mind, and help you keep focus?

3. What do you notice about the setting of the story in the beginning of the film? Describe the location with 3-5 sentences. Is this a rural, urban or suburban setting?

4. What are the struggles that Joe faces once he realizes he is no longer on Earth? What is he worried about?

5. What does he see once he decides that he does not want to go to the Great Beyond? Does the resistance create a solution? Where does he end up?

6. As the first African American lead character in a Pixar film, do you think this is an important step in representation of all people in film? Why do you think this is an important change?

7. What do you notice about the land that he enters after he escapes to the Great Before? Describe the setting.

8. When looking at all the guides named Jerry in the Great Before who take care of the small roly poly souls, what do you notice about their outlines? Are they shown as female? Are they shown as male? How do you know? Do they help the young souls get ready for being on Earth? How?

9. What does Joe discover when he walks through the Museum of his life? What would your highlights be for your life so far?

10. Why do you think 22 doesn't like anything? Is she scared to try things? Have you ever been scared to try new things, but then it ended up being great? Describe.

11. How does Joe help 22 in the Great Before? Is he patient and guiding to help her try things to find her special spark that makes her ready to go be a human?

12. If you could meet a famous person to be your mentor in the Great Before, who would you want to learn from, and what skill would they teach you?

13. What is your "special piece" that you have? Is it music, dance, sport, art, reading, writing, cooking, or something else? Is it kindness, perseverance, fairness, curiosity? What part of your life do you want to grow and develop? How do you plan to set a goal and grow that special part of you?

14. Have you ever helped out another person by teaching them and guiding them with your special skills? It could be a younger sibling, cousin, friend or classmate. What were they struggling with? What did you say to help them persist, and how did it make you feel to help someone else?

15. What does 22 learn about herself as she is searching for her meaning? What does she learn after she spends some time in Joe's body? What are some of her favorite things on Earth?

16. Joe tries to teach 22 to find her "one thing" or one purpose, 22 ends up feeling like she can't succeed. She joins the dark zombies that lost their souls with obsessions, who can't look up and move on. How does Joe save her and him at the same time? What does he do to make things right?

17. Have you ever had to take back words you said because they hurt someone? What is a good way to fix hurt feelings when you need to change how something happened? What could you say or do?

18. What is important to you? What are YOUR goals?

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

- Classic animation (e.g., Disney's The **Lion King**, most TV cartoons)
- Rotoscope (e.g., **Star Wars** lightsabers)
- Flip books
- 3D animation (e.g., Pixar's **Toy Story**, **Wall-E**, **Up**)
- Stereoscopic 3D (e.g., **Avatar**)
- Cut-out / Silhouette animation (e.g., **South Park**)
- 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 cells 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 featurelength 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).

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activities

Draw a timeline of things in your life that you are proud of and that you remember as highlights so far! Start with when you were born, and then think of things you have accomplished so far! Write the years and draw a picture above the timeline showing an image of that accomplishment. Don't forget to leave the end of the timeline open, you have a lot more to experience! It can read "To be Continued" !

Make a Dream Board and cut out pictures of things you like to focus on, and glue them to a large piece of paper or poster board. Try to cover the entire surface with images, words, and pictures. Putting your goals on paper in a visual format can actually help you work toward those goals! Seeing these goals in picture form can increase motivation, confidence, and even performance. Researchers found that, in athletes, visualization was almost as effective as physical practice. Create a board that helps you see what your goals would look like once you achieve them, and place it in a spot where you can see it, add to it, and change it. Look up vision boards online to see how some have created them, and then gather magazines or print out images that you connect with, and cut and paste them on the vision board.

Research an idol of yours who has a skill you would like to grow and develop. Watch interviews of this person, or team, and read about their work and experiences. Write 5 questions you would ask, and then see if you can find the answers by researching.

What do YOU think happened after the end of the film? What happened to 22? What happened to Joe? **Write a 1 page "What Happens Next?"** and tell the story. You can write a script form, or tell it in story format. Describe the settings, characters, and where they end up continuing their stories.

Explore behind the scenes of the film. You can find lots of informative videos on the Pixar YouTube Channel and listen to Co-Director Kemp Powers interview cast, creators, and consultants on the Spotify show Soul Stories.

Are you inspired to do a little drawing? Learn how to **make a flip book** with Director Pete Docter in this video. You can also learn how to make a Soul-inspired flip book with Pixar animator Cody Lyon in this video.

exploring jazz

Did you know that Jazz music is a musical genre that originated in the African-American communities of New Orleans? It's influences come from other parts of the world –primarily from Western Africa. Throughout the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, indigenous Africans were brought from Africa to the United States, particularly the South, and forced to work as slaves. Most of these people were taken from tribes in Western Africa. Jazz music was created by the descendants of those slaves in the late 19th and early 20th century, which is why the rhythm and repetition in Jazz comes from the origin of Jazz--African music.

1. Jazz music is sometimes described as musical notes that are "bent" to create turns in the music. Use this concept to create a sculpture while you listen to some jazz!

• **Art:** Using designs or concrete objects with foam, pipe cleaners, buttons, beads and feathers. or other bendable art wire, create an art figure that you think fits the song. It could be a figure dancing to the music, or an instrument, or how the music moves in your mind. Write a 6-10 sentence story about your figure, explaining the shape, colors, and how it would move if it came to life.

• **Tech Extension:** Use a recording device (iPad, Chromebook) read your explanation of the sculpture, and then play the music that you heard that inspired the art so viewers understand your interpretation. Don't forget to sign your art! You can staple it to a cardboard background or construction paper if you like.

2. Jazz bands can be unique in that they create rhythm from a wide variety of instruments. The rhythms can shift and change throughout the song. One important part of jazz is improvisation (improv), which is when the person or group play the song together and they make it up as they go along. You can often hear many independent rhythms playing at the same time in both types of music. Repetition is also common in African dances and drumming songs. This same characteristic is heard in American Jazz when you hear a drummer repeating the same drumming pattern or a pianist playing the same patterns.

• **Activity:** Create a percussion instrument out of a book bin, empty container, pencil case, or use pencils to drum on the table. Try to keep a consistent rhythm. THEN, change the rhythm to a different one, and see how the music sounds different. Try using different parts of your hand to make the sound, or different instruments to strike and see if the sound changes.

• **Reflection Writing:** After you listen to some music and add your own improvisation of the drum to the music, write your observations. How does it feel to create the music by adding your own special spice or sprinkles? Were you comfortable knowing what to add? Did it make you feel like you were risky, trying something unplanned?

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3. Jazz players all have their own instruments, and they make music together, often taking turns at being the lead player. Like a team that works together, everyone around them listens and adds their own music too.

- **Activity:** Read the story Stone Soup, or watch the story online as the book is read aloud.

- **Writing Activity:** How are the people who play Jazz and the people in the story similar and different? Use a Venn Diagram and try to think or 5 ways Jazz Music Groups and the Village in the story are different, and try to think of 5 ways they are similar.

4. Research Activity and Create a Slideshow

- When did Jazz music become popular? Create a timeline of Jazz music from 1910 until now. For each decade (Start in 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 , 2010 and now), create a Google Slides or Powerpoint Presentation on the decades. Research and include 3 facts for each slide, and at least three pictures for that decade about Jazz. You can include videos or gifs on the slides, and remember that you can change backgrounds and colors to fit the mood of the slides.

5. Jazz musicians encountered terrible racism and prejudice. They persisted and did not give up playing, even though there was risk of injury to themselves and others.

- **Writing activity:** Pretend that you could send them a letter from the future, and explain the Social Justice changes you see that people are supporting, and also explain ones that still need to happen in your opinion.

- **Activity:** Write a letter to a 1940's jazz musician from you today. Tell them about the things that you see today that give you hope for a better future, where protest and change is happening.

6. Have you ever played a game or been part of a team, and someone did something that was unexpected that worked out well? Like Jazz music, embracing the unexpected makes for exciting music that makes you think. *or* Have you ever made a mistake or wanted someone to help you when you did? How would you feel about a person who offered you support and cheered you on, even when others didn't? What would you want them to say to you?

7. **Activity Movement:** Choose one of these songs and listen to it for 30 seconds to 1 minute. What type of movement/dance would you put to this song? If you recorded the movement to put it online for others to see, what would you call it? Now teach it to one other person, and have them add to it. Collaborate to make it as long as you like!

- Dave Brubeck, "Take Five"
- Miles Davis, "So What"
- Duke Ellington, "Take The A Train"
- Thelonious Monk, "Round Midnight"
- John Coltrane, "My Favorite Things"

- **Writing**: If this sound had a color, what would it be? Why? How does this score make you feel when you hear it? What 3 words would you use to describe it?

common core standards

Standards grades 3–8
Comprehension and Collaboration:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.2
Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2.A
Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2.B
Develop the topic with facts, definitions, and details.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.A
Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.B
Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.

4th Grade Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2.B
Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2.D
Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.A
Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.B
Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

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common core standards (cont.)

Grades 6–8
Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.5
Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

Research to Build and Present Knowledge:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2
Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2.A
Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories as appropriate to achieving purpose; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2.B
Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6
Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2.C
Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2.D
Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2.E
Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2.F
Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

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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.

common core standards

MEDIUM
All Media Is Constructed.

• What is the message, how is it delivered and in what format?

• What technologies are used to present the message?

• What visual and auditory elements comprise the media content?

• What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?

CONTENT
Media Is A Language For Information.

• 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?

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?

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)?

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?