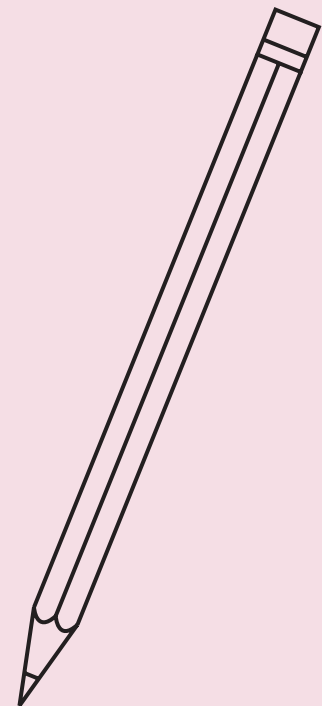# Turning Red

STUDY GUIDE

Content written by **Patricia Juri**.
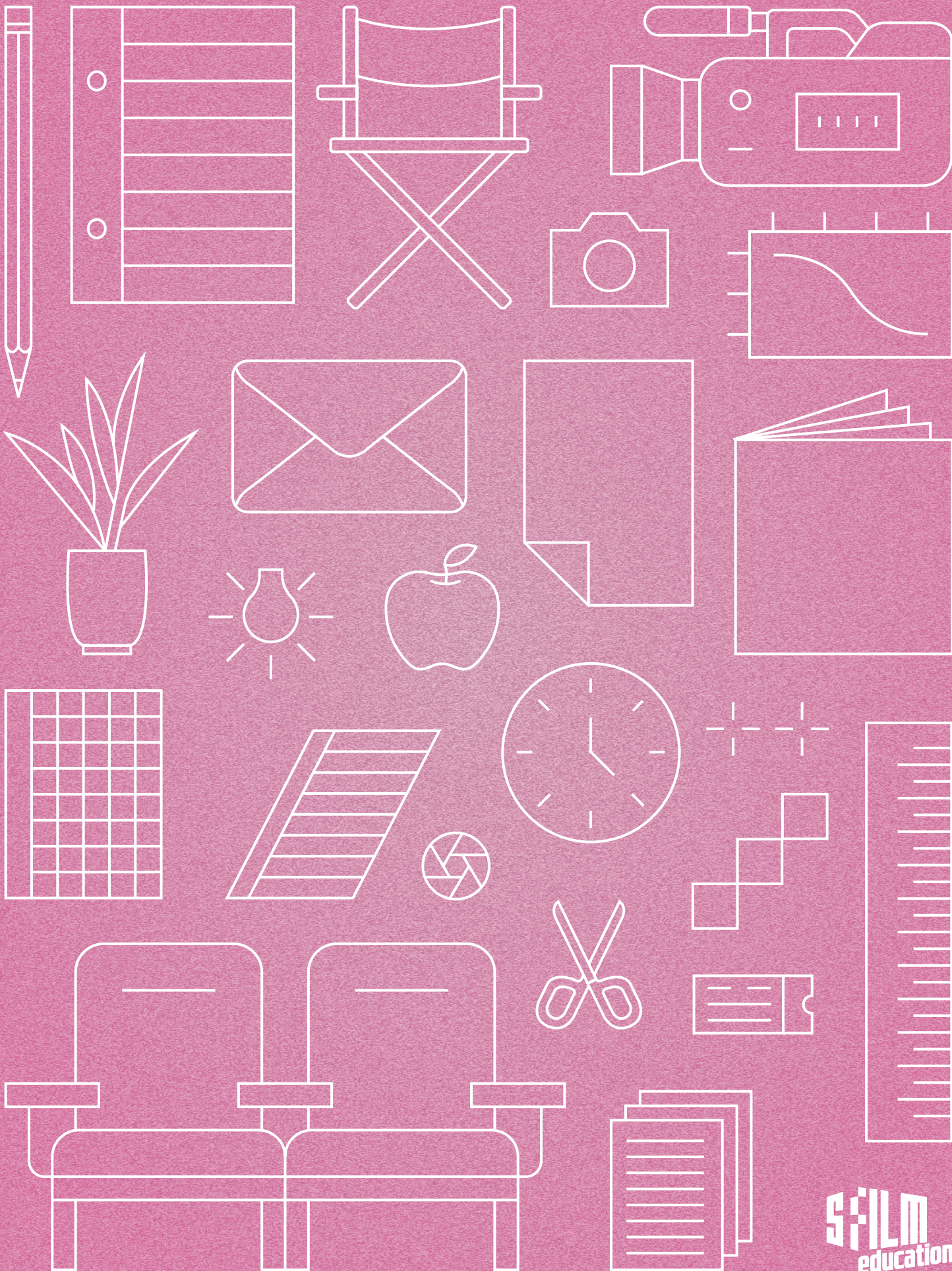Designed by **Ankoor Patel**, **Camille Gwise** ,**Keith Zwolfer** and **Qilu Zhou**

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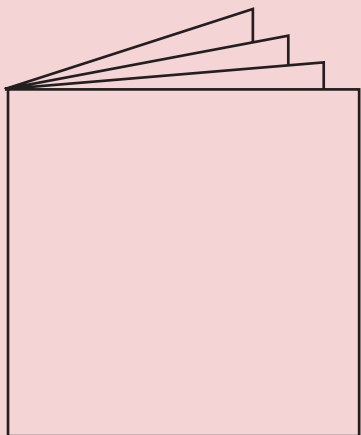
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About the Film

Disney+'s and Pixar's Turning Red introduces Mei Lee (voice of Rosalie Chiang), a confident, dorky 13-year-old torn between staying with her mother's dutiful daughter and the chaos of adolescence. Her protective, if not slightly overbearing mother, Ming (voice of Sandra Oh), is never far from her daughter—an unfortunate reality for the teenager. And as if changes to her interests, relationships and body weren't enough, whenever she gets too excited (which is practically ALWAYS), she "poofs" into a giant red panda! Directed by Academy Award® winner Domee Shi (Pixar short Bao) and produced by Lindsey Collins.

Subject Areas

- **Arts/Media**
- **Asian Studies**
- **Drama/Acting**
- **English Language Arts**
- **Peer/Youth Issues**
- **Women/Gender Studies**

Recommended Grades: 4 – 12

Teaching the Film

Teaching this film provides an opportunity to explore a wide range of topics that face young people today. The socioemotional elements of the film address many different rites of passage that people can experience, from anatomical change to emotional wellness. This film provides an opportunity to discuss many questions that often are unsaid and can be challenging for many. Using the guide with the film can help adults and older role models guide the discussions many young people want to have, but are unsure how to approach. The prompts show support for the challenging roles and changes that pre-teens and teens face heading into adulthood. Use this guide in class, or home, as an opportunity to introduce human development stages and lessons, healthy coping strategy conversations, and comparative studies about biology. The lessons can also be tailored for younger groups to include cross species comparisons of stages of life between animals, and all will greatly appreciate a deeper dive into the lessons about friendship, skill building, and teaching safe ways to communicate with friends and family.

Presenter Bios

DOMEE SHI (Directed by/Story by/Screenplay by) began as a story intern at Pixar Animation Studios in June 2011, and was soon hired as a story artist on the Academy Award®-winning feature film "Inside Out." Since then, she has worked on the feature films "The Good Dinosaur," "Incredibles 2" and the Academy Award®-winning "Toy Story 4." In 2015 she began pitching ideas for short films, and soon was green lit to write and direct "Bao" which won the Academy Award® for best animated short film. In her role as a creative VP, Shi is involved in key creative decision-making at the studio and consults on films in both development and production.

Shi graduated from the animation program at Sheridan College where she was fueled by her love of anime/manga, Disney, and Asian cinema influences that can be seen in her work to this day.

Shi was born in Chongqing, China and resided in Toronto, Canada most of her life. She currently lives in Oakland, Calif., and notes that her love of animation is only rivaled by her love of cats.

Discussion Questions

Post-Screening

- What grade do you think the group of friends are in the film? What makes you say so?
- Do the students each have their own style? What style do you think is the best and why?
- Who is your favorite band or what is your favorite song?
- How does music make you feel when you want to express your feelings? How does music help you feel calm? How does music make you feel powerful?
- What about the movie surprised you? Why?
- If you could write an alternate part of the movie, what would you write? Create a paragraph changing one portion and how would that affect the rest of the movie?
- Which character are you most alike? Why?

Socioemotional Lessons

- Why do you think the creator chose for Mei's "out of control" character to be a Red Panda?
- Describe the steps you see Mei going through physically when she is about to "change".Use sequence words in your sentences: First, Then, Next, After, Finally.
- What character would you choose to represent you when you feel overwhelmed and stressed? Why?
- What are things that you want to hear when you need some support? What things can you say to others when you see them needing support?
- What does it mean to be your own person?
- How does the main character show her power?
- How do the friends show their support for each other? What do you do to show support for your friends?
- What are some responsibilities that you have at home?
- How is the main character different at home and at school? How are you different at home and school?
- How does it feel when your family doesn't know your friends very well? Have you ever had a problem with your family not liking a friend, and what did you do about it?
- How could the main character help herself calm down when her Mom embarrassed her?

- How does the main character change physically? How does she change mentally?
- What are some things you saw from the movie that showed the character OUT of control?
- What were some things she could do to be in control of her feelings that you know about?
- What are some of the pressures that you think pre teens and teenagers have? Name 3.
- What are some ways you can manage your stress at this age?
- What can you do to help your friends when they are overwhelmed and stressed?
- When Mei feels stressed, she finds that she can calm down when she focuses on something else. For her, when she focuses on math, she can calm down. What things can you think about that calm you down when you are overwhelmed? Draw a picture.
- What roles do the family members play compared to the friends? How are the family members supportive? How are her friends supportive?
- When Mei feels embarrassed by her family's behavior, she has trouble explaining that and it is stressful for her and her family. What advice would you give to Mei to help her explain to her family that she would like more independence?
- What are some choices that Mei made that you think could have been handled differently? What other options do you think would have had a better outcome?

Discussion Questions

Cultural Studies

- What rituals do you see that are celebrated in the story? Research one that you find interesting and create a comic strip illustrating the information from your research.
- What are some traditions you know about that help people honor family ancestors?
- What are recipes that your family makes that remind you of home? Who makes the food in your family? Find out the recipe and write it down.

Science

- Red Panda's are unique animals. Research the species, and find out five things about them.
- Draw a comic strip of the life cycle of the Red Panda.
- Red Panda's live in a specific habitat. Research where they live, and draw a picture of it. Label the parts of it to show what the Red Panda needs to survive.

Activities

Draw a comic strip of the life cycle of the Red Panda.

Red Panda's live in a specific habitat. Research where they live, and draw a picture of it. Label the parts of it to show what the Red Panda needs to survive.

Create a "Tool Box" of things that you can do in order to help deal with stressful situations. Think of physical things you like to do, relaxation tools, and social tools you can do alone or with others, and create a drawing of a toolbox with things that you use to help yourself feel in control when things are stressful. Examples:

Physical tools

- Drawing
- Dance it out
- Organize your Room

Relaxation tools

- Listen to music
- Bath or shower
- Brushing hair

Social tools

- Team sports
- Texting a friend
- Having a meal with someone

Fold your paper in ½. Draw a picture of you, and then draw a picture of the animal version of you that you identify with when you are feeling embarrassed/ overwhelmed on the other ½ of the paper. Then write a letter to yourself explaining some of the ways that create the reactive version of you, and how you can use your toolbox and power to help yourself regain your sense of peace and feel more in control.

Research age appropriate positive role-models that encourage body acceptance and a healthy lifestyle. What are 5 things kids can do to help keep their mind and body healthy during the transition from childhood to adulthood?

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).

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.3.3
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.

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).

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).

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.B
Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

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.

Media Literacy Resources

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?

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
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?

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?