

# SANJAY'S SUPER TEAM



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## PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Join director Sanjay Patel and producer Nicole Grindle for an insightful peek behind the curtains of Pixar Animation Studio's latest short, **Sanjay's Super Team**. In the presentation the filmmakers will discuss the production process as well as the unique inspiration for this incredibly personal film that features superheroes like you've never seen them before.

The Bay Area is a wonderful melting pot made up of people from all around the world that is reflected in the diversity seen in its classrooms. We hope that by taking part in this presentation and hearing how Sanjay embraced his own heritage and family traditions to create this story your students will take a moment to examine their own family history and be inspired to share those stories with friends and classmates. This interactive multimedia program will also provide many opportunities for connections with STEAM curriculum.

{ Grades 3-8  
Suggested Subject Areas: Arts,  
Computer Science, English, Peer/  
Youth Issues, Religion, Social Studies }

S:FLM  
education



## ABOUT THE FILM

In “Sanjay’s Super Team,” the new short film from Pixar Animation Studios, accomplished artist Sanjay Patel uses his own experience to tell the story of a young, first-generation Indian-American boy whose love for western pop culture comes into conflict with his father’s traditions. Sanjay is absorbed in the world of cartoons and comics, while his father tries to draw him into the traditions of his Hindu practice. Tedium and reluctance quickly turn into an awe-inspiring adventure as the boy embarks on a journey he never imagined, returning with a new perspective that they can both embrace. Directed by Sanjay Patel and produced by Nicole Paradis Grindle, “Sanjay’s Super Team” is currently in theaters, in front of Disney•Pixar’s “The Good Dinosaur.”

## PRESENTER BIOS

Sanjay Patel  
Director  
Pixar Animation Studios

Sanjay Patel joined Pixar Animation Studios in 1996 as an animator on “A Bug’s Life.” Since then he has animated on many of Pixar’s feature films, including “Toy Story 2,” “Monster’s Inc.,” “The Incredibles,” “Ratatouille,” “Cars,” “Toy Story 3” and “Monsters University.” In addition to animating, Patel also storyboarded extensively for “Monster’s Inc.,” “The Incredibles” and “Toy Story 2.” For the Cars Toons “Mater’s Tall Tales,” Patel stepped up to act as the Animation Supervisor on many of the shorts in the series. Most recently, Patel made his directing debut with Disney•Pixar’s short film, “Sanjay’s Super Team,” which is currently in theaters in front of “The Good Dinosaur.”



Growing up in San Bernardino, CA, in a Gujarati family, Patel’s earliest artistic influences stemmed from two very different worlds: comic books and Saturday morning cartoons, and the Hindu gods and spiritual culture that came to define his upbringing. After pursuing his artistic interests at the Cleveland Institute for the Arts, Cal-Arts, and Pixar, Patel eventually turned his attention back to his roots, and began creating art, graphic novels and picture books that re-envisioned Hindu mythology in a modern, pop-culture way.

“Sanjay’s Super Team” is Patel’s personal story and a “mostly true” chronicle of his journey to understand the Hindu world so important to his parents.

Patel currently resides in Oakland with his fiancé and their son.



## PRESENTER BIOS



Nicole Paradis Grindle  
Producer  
Pixar Animation Studios

Nicole Paradis Grindle joined Pixar Animation Studios in 1995 as producer of the “Toy Story Activity Center” interactive computer game. Since then she has managed numerous departments on many of Pixar’s feature films, including “A Bug’s Life,” “Monster’s Inc.,” and the Academy Award®-winning feature “The Incredibles.” Grindle acted as the production manager on Pixar’s Oscar®-nominated short “One Man Band” and on Pixar’s Oscar®-winning feature “Ratatouille.” Grindle then moved on to serve as the associate producer for both “Toy Story 3” and “Monsters University.” Most recently, Grindle produced Pixar’s newest short film, “Sanjay’s Super Team,” which will screen in front of “The Good Dinosaur,” in November 2015.

Grindle came to Pixar with seven years of animation related production experience. At Colossal Pictures she worked on numerous projects including MTV’s “Liquid Television” as associate producer and “The Wish That Changed Christmas” as producer. She began her feature film career at Industrial Light and Magic on “Who Framed Roger Rabbit.”

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Grindle graduated from The University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and holds a Master of Arts degree in Documentary Film from Stanford University.

Grindle currently resides in San Francisco with her husband and two children.





## DISCUSSION AND EXERCISES

### POST-PRESENTATION DISCUSSION

#### Characters and Story

- 1) Did you enjoy this presentation? What were your favorite moments? What did you like best about Sanjay's Super Team?
- 2) What did you think about the characters in this film? Describe Sanjay's character. Can you relate to him? Describe Sanjay's dad. How is he like or unlike your parents?
- 3) Describe the conflict between Sanjay and his dad. Can you empathize with Sanjay's frustration when his dad turns off the TV? Why do you think Sanjay's dad wants him to pray? What does Sanjay discover when he gives his attention to the Hindu tradition?
- 4) Sanjay's Super Team is a story about family and heritage. Can you imagine telling a story like this about your own family? Is there anything that your parents value that you think is boring? Imagine if you adventured into your parents' world the way Sanjay did: what might you find there?

#### Context

- 5) As an Indian-American kid, Sanjay's character lives inside of two cultural traditions. He belongs to his parents' Indian heritage, and he also belongs to mainstream American culture. What struggles do you think Sanjay faces in navigating these two worlds? What benefits does Sanjay get from participating in two rich cultural traditions?
- 6) What did you learn about Hinduism through watching this film and listening to the presentation? Were you surprised or impressed by anything that you saw? Are you interested in learning more about Hindu religion and culture? (Visit the Supplemental Resources section of this guide for activities and ideas).
- 7) Did you like Sanjay's drawings of the Hindu deities? Describe the Super Team. How are the Super Team characters like cartoon superheroes? How are they like

Hindu gods? What did Sanjay achieve when he fused those two influences? How did the combination of tradition and modernity make the gods into superheroes?

8) What elements of Sanjay's Super Team are universal to all families? What elements are particular to the experiences of an Indian-American kid? Are there crossovers with the experiences of other minority cultures? What benefits do we gain as we bring stories like Sanjay's into the mainstream American narrative?

#### Style, Message and Media Literacy

- 9) Describe Sanjay's artistic process, both as a visual artist and as a filmmaker. When did he realize that his culture, religion and history could inspire his creative and professional work? How did he integrate those influences into his storytelling?
- 10) How do you think Sanjay's family felt when they saw the film? What risks and benefits does an artist encounter when making personal work? How do you think your parents would feel if you made a film like this about them? What steps could you take to make sure that you were respecting their feelings?
- 11) What did you learn about Nicole's background? What is the producer's job on a short animated film? How does someone become a producer? Do you think that's a job that you might like to do?
- 12) How did Sanjay and Nicole work together to make the film? Why is collaboration important to filmmakers? Can you think of a time in your life when you needed to work with other people? What are some of the challenges that we encounter when we work together? What are the benefits?
- 13) Why is it important to have people like Nicole and Sanjay leading the filmmaking process at Pixar? What unique experiences can they each bring to the films that they create? Do you think that Nicole and Sanjay are good role models for kids who want to be artists? Why is it important for kids to see women and people of color in starring roles, both onscreen and off the screen?



## DISCUSSION AND EXERCISES

### POST-PRESENTATION ACTIVITIES

#### 1. Create your own super team

Sanjay used his own family history and his cultural heritage to imagine and draw a story that is entertaining and insightful. Do you think you could do the same thing?

Imagine a character who reminds you of yourself, when you were a little kid. Name your character. You can give your character your own name, the way Sanjay did, or choose a new name.

Write a description of your character. What does he or she like to do? What challenges does your character face? Can you think of a situation that would push your character to face a great challenge? How does your character react when he/she gets pushed to the limit? Write a short story describing what happens.

Sanjay's story takes place in the living room, where his family's Hindu heritage mixes with American culture (think of the shrine, the TV and Sanjay's action figures). What pieces of cultural heritage do you see in your character's living room? What pieces of mainstream American culture are there?

Draw your character inside his or her living room, surrounded by the objects that are important to his or her story. If you want, you can also draw your character's family.

#### 2. Create your own animated story

The Khan Academy has partnered with Pixar to create Pixar in a Box, where you can learn the basic tools to animate your own characters. If you're really advanced, you can take it farther and learn the math behind computer animation.

Check it out for yourself:

<https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/pixar/animate>



## SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

### Sanjay Patel's Artwork and the Story Behind Sanjay's Super Team

Pixar Short Films, **Sanjay's Super Team** [http://www.pixar.com/short\\_films/Theatrical-Shorts/sst](http://www.pixar.com/short_films/Theatrical-Shorts/sst)  
Ghee Happy, Sanjay Patel's art website <http://www.gheehappy.com/>

### Books by Sanjay Patel

The Little Book of Hindu Deities  
<http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/298724/the-little-book-of-hindu-deities-by-sanjay-patel/9780452287754/>

The Big Poster Book of Hindu Deities  
<http://www.chroniclebooks.com/titles/the-big-poster-book-of-hindu-deities.html>

Ramayana Divine Loophole  
<http://www.chroniclebooks.com/titles/ramayana.html>

Ganesha's Sweet Tooth  
<http://www.chroniclebooks.com/titles/ganesha-s-sweet-tooth.html>

The Art of Sanjay's Super Team  
<http://www.chroniclebooks.com/titles/the-art-of-sanjay-s-super-team.html>

### Learn More About Hindu Religion and Culture

Asian Art Museum, Principle Deities of Hinduism  
<http://education.asianart.org/explore-resources/background-information/principal-deities-hinduism>

PBS, The Story of India: Tracking Early Hinduism  
<http://www.pbs.org/thestoryofindia/teachers/lessons/1/>

BBC Religions: Hinduism  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/hinduism/>





## 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).

*from Britannica Online for Kids*



## ABOUT PIXAR ANIMATION STUDIOS

Pixar Animation Studios, a wholly owned subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company, is an Academy Award®-winning film studio with world-renowned technical, creative and production capabilities in the art of computer animation. The Northern California studio has created some of the most successful and beloved animated films of all time, including “Toy Story,” “Monsters, Inc.,” “Cars,” “The Incredibles,” “Ratatouille,” “WALL•E,” “Up,” “Toy Story 3” and “Brave.” Its movies have won 30 Academy Awards® and have grossed more than 9.5 billion at the worldwide box office to date. “The Good Dinosaur, Pixar’s sixteenth feature, is currently in theaters worldwide.

