



The Story Behind “Hair Love”

VIEWING GUIDE

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teaching the film

Join Director Matthew A. Cherry and Executive Producer Frank E. Abney III for a peek behind-the-scenes of their new Sony Pictures Animation short film **Hair Love**. The story of **Hair Love** was born out of seeing a lack of representation in mainstream animated projects, and also wanting to promote hair love amongst young men and women of color. During this interactive multimedia presentation, audience members will be able to view and engage with this heartwarming short film by getting exciting insights into the filmmaking process and having a chance to learn more about the film’s important themes of family and diversity.

We hope that the presentation will be particularly inspiring for any of our young audience members who come from communities that are traditionally underrepresented in the eyes of mainstream film and media, and will empower and show them that all stories are important and deserve to be seen and heard.

Grades 3-8

Content written by **Patricia Juri**. Designed by **Paola Rojas** and **Maddy Leonard**.

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.

More info at sffilm.org/education





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about the film

Directed by Matthew A. Cherry

(United States 2019) English, 5 min.

Kickstarter - From the Director - Book

Hair Love is a beautiful and refreshing story that touches on topics around family, self esteem, pride, style, identity and culture. Focusing through the lens of the often underrepresented black community, the film shares a young family's morning, showing the complexity of responsibility roles in traditional families that are ever changing in today's

busy society. Both main characters, Dad and 5 year old Zuri, learn to help each other through challenges presented when their regular routines are interrupted. They must learn to communicate and support each other through the very real and stressful challenges of everyday life. A touching portrayal of love and communication, woven like a braid into an everyday family moment.

subject areas

Visual/Performing Arts

Fashion and Design

Peer/Youth Issues

Social Emotional Development

Culture

World/Current Affairs

Black American Studies

English Language Arts

Matthew A. Cherry - Director

Chicago native Matthew A. Cherry is a former NFL wide receiver turned filmmaker who played for the Jacksonville Jaguars, Cincinnati Bengals, Carolina Panthers and the Baltimore Ravens.

In 2007 he retired and moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in entertainment landing work as a production assistant on over 40 commercials and as a director for over 20 music videos. In addition to directing music videos Matthew directed the short films **This Time** and **Forward**. Matthew also writes and directs web series, including the award-winning **Almost 30** and **Almost Home**.

Matthew is also a feature filmmaker and his first feature film, **The Last Fall** made its world premiere at SXSW and received awards at the American Black Film Festival and Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival. Matthew's latest feature, **9 Rides**, which premiered at SXSW in 2016, was shot on the iPhone 6s.

Most recently, Matthew directed episodes of the TBS series **The Last OG**, the CBS drama event series **The Red Line** and the hit new ABC action comedy series **Whiskey Cavalier**. Matthew was also an executive producer on the Academy Award-nominated **BlackKklansman** from celebrated director Spike Lee.



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discussion questions

Characters, Setting and Story:

- Take note of the beginning of the film. What is the setting? What things do you observe in the setting that are important to Zuri?
- Is the date an important one for her? How do you know from her behavior?
- Who is Zuri's "fashion consultant" on her hairstyle?
- Have you ever watched a video to help you learn something? If so, what was it? Was it as easy as the video showed? Why or why not?
- How does Zuri's Dad feel about trying to get her hair to look like she wants? How do you know this is how he feels, even though there is no dialogue?
- In the "battle" scene, why do you think Zuri's hair becomes a character? If you were going to name the character and give it some dialogue, what would its name be, and what would it say to Dad? What would Dad say back to it?
- When you find out about Mom, what present does Zuri have that is important? Describe what she brings with her, and why it might be such an important gift.



Identity and perception help you evolve and change as you grow into adults.

Context and Connections:

- Traditions are important in families, and in this film, one of the traditions is that the mother does the hair of her daughter. In your home who is in charge of helping kids with their daily routines? Why do you think that the job is done by that person? What are some struggles or challenges that you remember while getting ready in the morning?
- Beauty equals acceptance in our culture much of the time, but is that why you think it is so important for Zuri to be able to walk out the door feeling beautiful in the morning?

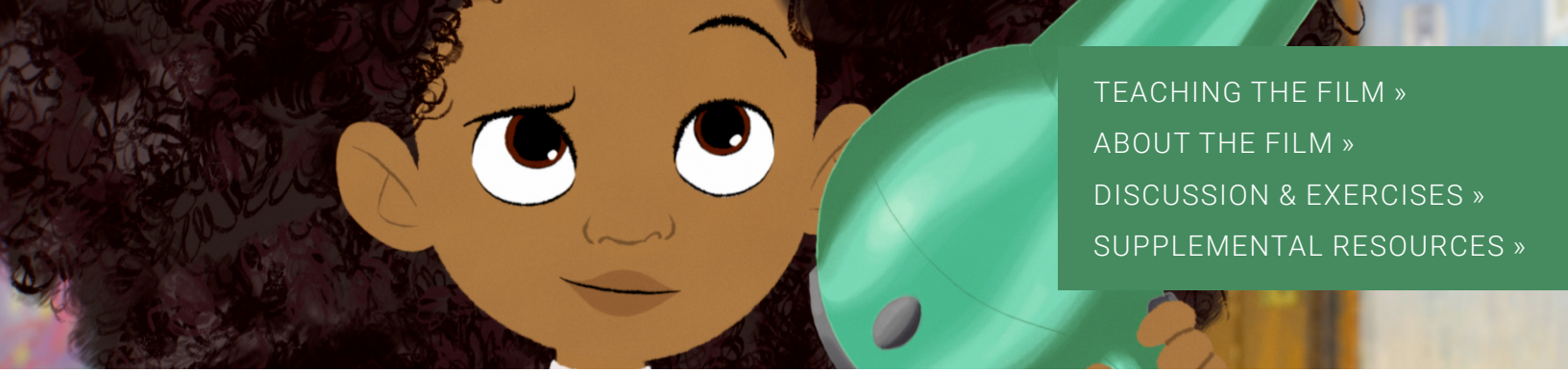


Frank Abney - Executive Producer

Frank began at Pixar Animation Studios in 2017 and worked as an animator on **Coco** and **Incredibles 2**. He began his career working in video games and television before entering the film industry at DreamWorks Animation and Walt Disney Animation Studios.

As an animator, Abney is responsible for breathing life into digital models, creating performances that are believable and sincere, inspiring moviegoers to connect with the characters.

Abney was raised in the Bay Area, and received a Bachelor of Arts from The Art Institute of California and a Certificate in Advance Studies in character animation from Animation Mentor. He currently resides in Antioch, California.



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discussion questions

Content and Connections:

- Can you connect hair style and culture? Does styling your hair a certain way connect to history or is it connected to the modern interpretations of beauty?
- Are there people in your life that you admire for their sense of style? If yes, give a specific example of why you admire them. Do you think it takes extra effort in order for them to achieve that appearance? Is the they spend on appearance done for others approval? Or do you think their appearance is created so that they feel content with the way that they see themselves?
- Have you seen any actors or important popular figures that you admire their connection to their own sense of style? Do you think it's related back to their own culture heritage? If yes, what about their sense of style do you admire the most? If not, why do you think that is? Does our culture in America have a lack of representation of people who also identify with their own cultures and experiences?
- The act of Braiding means bringing things, like hair parts, together in order to unify them. What are three parts of the film that seem like they are weaving together components of the relationship for the family?

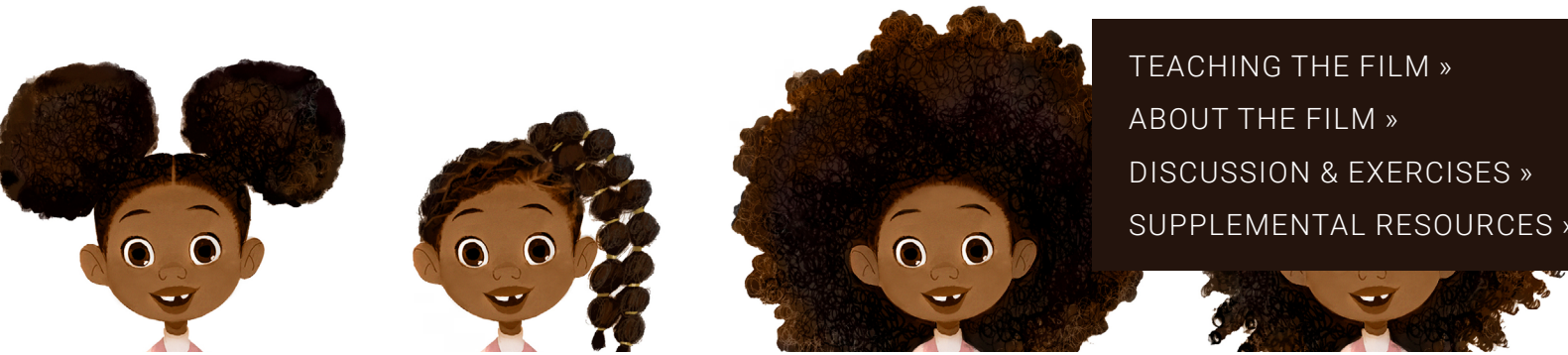
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Are there people in your life that you admire for their sense of style?

- Why is it so important for her family to help her achieve that acceptance with herself? How do you think she would feel if she walked out the door with her hair styled in a way that she would not like or approve? How would that affect her day?
- “Embracing the curls of life” can be a quote that talks about hair, and also the twisty and bendy parts that can be challenges in your day. What are some of the curls of your morning routine that make it challenging for you. What can you do in order to help yourself be more prepared so that your morning is not stressful before you head off to school?

activities

- It's OK not to know how to do something. Think of something that you had not been able to do before you did some research to figure it out. Give a specific example of how you learned how to do something so that you felt successful, whether it's academic or it's artistic like hairstyle and creation. **Draw a comic strip showing how you achieved your goal.**
- How is fashion, style, hairstyle and clothing connected to cultures in the world? Think of one particular culture and give an example of one style or appearance-based representation of that culture that you have seen. **Research and come up with three facts about the culture and see if you can find the origins of the importance of that representation.**



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activities

Create a comic!

Fold a piece of paper in half and then half again so you have four sections. Draw lines to create four graphic novel sections. **Draw a comic showing you doing something that was a challenge for you** (example: riding a bike, learning a sport, new art, skill). Model it after the movie, no words. Show the steps you went through to accomplish your new skill.

Sketch a style!

Research a specific hairstyle online from a different time period or culture. What are the origins of the style and when was it popular? Was it created for celebration, holiday, environmental or cultural influences? **Draw a sketch of the style.**

Make a friendship bracelet!

Braiding is an important part of hair culture, and can also be used in other ways. Create a braided friendship bracelet and practice your braiding! **More instructions here.**

Draw connections!

In early African civilizations, hairstyles were often a way to identify a person's family background, tribe and social status. "Just about everything about a person's identity could be learned by looking at the hair," says journalist Lori Tharps, who co-wrote the book *Hair Story* about the history of black hair. Some examples include men from the Wolof tribe (in modern Senegal and The Gambia) who went to war and wore a

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If you could write a non rhyming poem to your hair, **what would you say?** If your hair could write a poem to you, **what would IT say?**

braided style to signify their readiness to battle, and some styles were worn to show a person's feelings, like subdued style for mourning/sadness or elaborate styles for celebrations/joy. **What are some points in the film that reiterate the importance of hair style and how important it was to them?**

Write about it!

What inspires your hair style, the way you dress, or other things you wear like jewelry or accessories? **How would you describe your unique style?**

writing exercise

"Black hair is versatile and can easily go through numerous changes. From short to long, from wigged to weaved, from braided to beachy waves, from a blunt bob to waist-length ponytails, black women have been innovating hair and style for centuries. And all of that invention and flair absolutely belongs to us, whether we bought it from a store or grew it from our scalps."

Jolie A. Dogget, Style and Beauty Journalist Huffington Post

Do you agree with Jolie Dogget's comment on the evolution of black hair creation and style and fashion? Can you think of examples of different hairstyles that have reflected a time period? Was it important to a specific culture? What were some of the challenges during that time for achieving that sense of hair style? What are some inventions that were created in order to correct challenges of that specific style?

supplementary resources

The Will to Adorn - MoAD

Through the work and perspectives of museum, academic, and community scholars, community based cultural practitioners including artisans and designers from across the nation. This project explores the diversity of African American identities as expressed through the cultural aesthetics and traditional arts of the body, dress, and adornment. This ongoing collaborative research is shared through public programs including the 2013 Smithsonian Folklife Festival Program.

Museum of the African Diaspora is one of five museums collaborating with the Smithsonian on the The WTA 2017 project. MoAD, located in the Yerba Buena Arts District of San Francisco, California, is a contemporary art museum focused on the cultural expressions of the African Diaspora. MoAD's contribution to the project is focused on African American style and dress in the Bay Area. The project was overseen by Richard Collins, MoAD's School & Community Outreach Coordinator. He interviewed and hand selected six talented high school students to participate in the WTA project. The MoAD WTA team spent six weeks researching black fashion subcultures, documenting artifacts of style, and connecting with Bay Area artisans of style. Through research, interviews, meeting with local designers, street photography, and field trips, the students delved into various definitions of dress, and style, and identity through the lens of Bay Area African American communities.

Still Here - MoAD

Still Here explores stories of migration, displacement, and survival in films by eight artists that represent a spectrum of the African Diaspora. The works in this exhibition use moving images as conduit to highlight the rituals and traditions that persevere and evolve, despite the oppressive historical ripple effects of colonialism and the Transatlantic

Slave Trade. Through practices and tools of survival such as migrating, defending, dancing, gathering, praying, and claiming agency over one's body, the works in this exhibition demonstrate that black and brown bodies are not here for consumption of the white gaze, nor are they passive beings upon whom actions are done or inflicted. Instead, the film's subjects investigate and enact strategies to deeply connect with parts of their personal and collective narratives that have been overlooked or erased by dominant Eurocentric historical accounts. The stories illustrate a range of experiences with a focus on what was lost, what has evolved, and what is in danger of being erased; through these episodes, it is evident that a spiritual element always remains. The films tell the stories of people of color who use their intuition to create connections between their ancestral pasts and their complex present identities, forming an in-between state resulting from displacement and living in the western world. Still Here underscores the resilience of people of the African Diaspora, and how moving images can serve as a device to demonstrate how these communities have developed tactics, language, and strategies to assert their agency and sovereignty.



The films tell the stories of people of color who use their intuition to create connections between their ancestral pasts and their complex present identities.

california media literacy standards

common core standards

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Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications

- Grade 4: Standard 1.10 Evaluate the role of media in focusing attention on events and in forming opinions on issues.
- Grade 5: Standard 1.8 Analyze media as sources for information, entertainment, persuasion, interpretation of events, and transmission of culture.
- Grade 8: Standard 1.9 Interpret and evaluate the various ways in which visual image makers (e.g., graphic artists, illustrators, news photographers) communicate information and affect impressions and opinions.

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

- Grade 6: Standard 1.6 Support opinions with detailed evidence and with visual or media displays that use appropriate technology.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5

Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6

Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7

Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).

Reading Comprehension

- Grade 7: Standard 2.6 Assess the adequacy, accuracy, and appropriateness of the author's evidence to support claims and assertions, noting instances of bias and stereotyping.

Health Education Standards

Standard 7: The student will understand individual differences in growth and development.

For more information about media literacy standards in your state, visit:

- **MediaLiteracy.com**: resources for advancing media education, United States standards for media literacy education.
- **Frank W Baker's guide** to State Standards which include elements of media literacy.

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?

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 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).

history of animation

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).

about Sony Pictures Animation

Sony Pictures Animation produces a variety of animated entertainment for audiences around the world. The visually groundbreaking and critically acclaimed **Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse** is the studio's latest release, and the winner of the 2019 Academy Award for Best Animated Feature. The division is also behind hit film series such as **The Smurfs**, **Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs**, and **Hotel Transylvania**. Next for Sony

Pictures Animation are the original feature comedy **The Mitchells vs. The Machines** produced by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, and the studio's first-ever animated musical **Vivo**, featuring original songs by Lin-Manuel Miranda. Sony Pictures Animation, which was founded in 2002, is a division of the Sony Pictures Motion Pictures Group for Sony Pictures Entertainment, a subsidiary of the Tokyo-based Sony Corporation.

