

Shorts 6: Family Films



VIEWING GUIDE

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teaching the film

Sometimes the key to growing up is staying young at heart. These inventive and touching stories imagine unsuspecting friendships and clever innovations, while capturing the joy and sadness universal to all. Travel with the whole family to Brazil, the moon, and even your own backyard in this lively and heartwarming collection of stories. Works range from new student work to Academy Award- and

Emmy-nominated shorts, represented by noted studios like Cartoon Saloon and Google Spotlight Stories.

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

Grades 1-5

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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.

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series discussion

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. Which film made you want to be part of it? Why?

- Which character would you want to be?
- How would you change the film to end with your own ending?

6. Which film touched your heart and made you think?

- What part made you feel connected to it?

- Do the characters or situation remind you of anything?

7. Which character would you take out of one short and insert into another short?

- What would they see, do, or say?
- How would that change the film?

8. What was your least favorite film? Why? Be specific: was it too sad, too slow?

- As a director what would you change?
- As an editor what would you take out of the film?
- As a writer what would you write into the film to make it more likeable in your opinion?

9. Which character would you want to sit next to in class? Why? What do you think they would bring in their lunchbox for lunch?

10. 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?

11. 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?

Which character would you want to sit next to in class?

Which film touched your heart and made you think?



discussion questions

Back to the Moon

Hélène Leroux, USA/UK 2018, 3 min

A charming illusionist, an adventurous queen of hearts and an evil green man journey through early cinema, celebrating the artistry and magic of George Méliès.

- What did you notice about the animation in *Back to the Moon*? How is it similar/different from other animated films you've seen? (Note: it is the first ever VR/360-degree animation)
- What are some of the different story events you noticed in *Back to the Moon*? Which stood out the most to you? Why?
- What is the tone of the film? How do the colors in the film contribute to the film's tone?

Belly Flop

Jeremy Collins, South Africa 2018, 5 min

Penny, a fearless young girl learning to dive, is unperturbed by a talented diver who keeps stealing the spotlight.

- Describe the setting of *Belly Flop*. What is happening around Penny as she attempts to dive?
- What is Penny's motivation to dive from the diving boards?
- Describe a time when you persevered in order to accomplish a task.

In Bloom

Ross Stewart, Ireland 2018, 5 min

Tending to the last thing his love gave him, a man toils to make a delicate

flower flourish and grow

- What does the flower represent?
- Why does the man tend to the flower so carefully?
- Describe the ending of the film. What do you think it means when the man turns into flowers and floats away?

Lost & Found

Andrew Goldsmith and Bradley Slabe, Australia 2018, 8 min

In this touching short, two stuffed animal pals put it all on the line in the name of friendship.

- Who are the two characters? What are they like?
- What challenges does dinosaur face when attempting to save Fox?
- Summarize the film. Describe the problem and solution. How does it end? What do you predict will happen next?

One Small Step

Bobby Pontillas and Andrew Chesworth, USA/China 2018, 7 min

A dream that takes seed in Luna's heart when she was young takes on new meaning with experience and age in this Oscar nominated short.

- What is Luna's dream? How do you know?
- How does Luna's father show his love for her?
- What challenges does Luna face throughout the film? How does she overcome them?

post-viewing activity: theme

Some common themes across the films: Longing, friendship, perseverance, bravery, independence, grief, and kindness.

Choose one of the films and write a paragraph describing one of its themes. Use evidence from the film (dialogue or visual observation) to support your statements.

post-viewing activity: comparison

- Which two (or three) films were similar? How were they similar? Consider characters, problem/solution, and setting.
- Compare *Rooftop Kitters* and *The Pen License*. How are the film styles similar/different? What strategies did the filmmakers use to get you interested in the topics?
- Choose two characters and describe their traits. Use a Venn Diagram or T-chart to compare them. How are their character arcs similar or different?

discussion questions

The Pen Licence

Olivia Peniston-Bird, Australia 2018, 9 min

Share in this heart-warming journey as Tiana and her classmates struggle to survive a coming-of-age ritual experienced by every Australian child.

- What is a Pen License? What do students have to do to earn it?
- Have you ever worked to achieve something at school? What was it? Were you successful?
- Why do you think the Pen License is so appealing to so many students? Why do they work so hard to gain access to a pen?

The Pig on the Hill

Jamy Wheless, USA 2018, 6 min

When Duck moves in next door to the reclusive Pig, he learns not only how to become friends, but how to build bridges

- What is Pig's life before Duck arrives? How does it change after Duck moves in?
- How does Pig feel after Duck leaves? Why?
- What does the bridge symbolize? Why is it important to the story?

Pre-School Poets: A Poem About All Different Things

Nancy Kangas and Joshn Kun,

USA 2018, 2 min

Written by a four-year old poet, this hand-crafted animation opens a portal into the real world of the limitless imagination of kids.

- Describe the narrator's voice. Who do you think they are? Does the narration remind you of anyone in your own life?
- What "different thing" do you think should have been included in the poem?
- What would it feel like to be on a trampoline with "Ten hundred thousand frogs?"

Rights on Tracks: Its All Family

Johnny Kelly, USA 2019, 2 min

Exploring timely topics through music, this song broaches all the different types of families, welcoming us all to practice kindness and cheer.

- What is your family like? Who is in your family?
- Everyone grows up different. Why is it important to be accepting of other people's families?
- What would you do with a pet otter?

discussion questions

Rooftop Kitters

Daniel Ribeiro de Castro Paiva,

Brazil 2018 5min

Children living in the tough favelas of Brazil find moments of joy and respite in flying beautiful kites from their rooftops.

- Where does this film take place? What is it like?
- Have you ever flown a kite before? What does it feel like to control a kite?
- Why do the boys love to fly kites?

Sam's Dream

Nölwenn Roberts, France 2018, 7 min

A small mouse relies on his cleverness and his friends to make his crazy dream of flying with swallows come true.

- What is mouse's dream?
- How do his friends help him reach his dream?
- What big dream do you hope to achieve some day?

Slurp

Florent Hill, France 2018, 4min

A boy finds a simple solution to help his grandmother slurp her soup.

- What is the challenge the boy faces?
- How does he solve the problem?
- If you were faced with a similar challenge, how would you solve it?



What big dream do you hope to achieve some day?

post-viewing activity: writing

- Choose one of the silent films, and write a fictional story to go with it. Make sure to use strong details to describe the characters, setting, and the problem and solution.
- If you could spend the day with any of the characters, who would it be and why? What would you do? Where would you go?
- Choose one of the films and write an alternate ending. Make sure to use vivid words to bring the story to life.
- Pick one of the characters and recreate them as a superhero. What is their superhero name? What is their power? Write and illustrate a comic describing the origin of their power.
- If you could make a documentary, what would it be about? What techniques would you use to make your film appealing to your audience?

california media literacy standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.9: Compare and contrast the themes, settings, and plots of stories written by the same author about the same or similar characters (e.g., in books from a series)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.2: Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.9: Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

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. <http://www.medialiteracy.com/standards.htm>
- Frank W Baker's guide to State Standards Which Include Elements of Media Literacy. http://frankwbaker.com/state_lit.htm

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.

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).

Retrieved from Britannic Online for Kids: <http://kids.britannica.com/ebi/article-198341>

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*)