

THE BIG BAD FOX AND OTHER TALES



GRADES 4-12
CLASSROOM GUIDE

USING
THIS GUIDE ▶

ABOUT
THE FILM ▶

DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS &
POST-VIEWING
ACTIVITIES ▶

ARTICLES &
REVIEWS ▶

MEDIA LITERACY
RESOURCES ▶

SUPPLEMENTAL
RESOURCES ▶

TEACHING THE FILM:

The Big Bad Fox & Other Tales is a hand drawn animated film following a group of misfit barnyard animals. Their absurd situations and lively pace will bring back memories of the zaniest Looney Tunes cartoons. But don't be fooled. Beneath its light-hearted surface lies its emotional core. **The Big Bad Fox & Other Tales** and its anthropomorphic characters will invite your students to challenge ideas of stereotypes and tackle questions of identity and community and even morality. Discussion questions and supplementary materials facilitate research into related themes as well as the process of animated filmmaking.

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.

Please direct all comments and queries to Keith Zwölfer, Associate Director of Education:

SFFILM
39 Mesa Street, Suite 110 - The Presidio San Francisco, CA 94129-1025
kzwolfer@sffs.org
415.561.5040

Content written by Katie Spear. Guide designed by Lizzy Brooks.

SFFILM
education



USING THIS GUIDE

This study guide is intended to flexibly support educators in preparing for and following up on a class screening of the *Big Bad Fox and Other Tales*.

Support materials are intended to facilitate group discussion, individual and collaborative creative exercises, subject-based learning and access to resources for further investigation of material. Educators are encouraged to adapt and abridge the content as necessary to meet their unique learning objectives and circumstances.

ABOUT THE FILM

The idyllic image of life on the farm has been disrupted in Benjamin Renner (co-director, *Ernest & Celestine*, Festival 2013) and Patrick Imbert's delightful hand-drawn creation about a misfit group of barnyard animals and their mischievous hijinks. There's enough action and madcap humor here to bring back memories of the zaniest Looney Tunes cartoons, but buried just beneath the fun lies a sweet core that will melt the heart of the most cynical audience member.

In French with English subtitles.

{ Benjamin Renner & Patrick Imbert
 (France, 2017) French, 80 min }

Recommended Subject Areas:

Arts/Media
 Elementary School
 French



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRE-VIEWING TOPICS AND DISCUSSION:

The Big Bad Fox and Other Tales is a three part tale that will have your students giggling as they watch delightful barnyard animals bumble through some very silly situations.

In preparation for the screening, prompt your students to think about stereotypes with the following questions:

- Did you ever try to accomplish something other people thought you couldn't do? How did that feel?
- Have you ever made an assumption about someone based on how they look?
- What does the phrase, "Don't judge a book by its cover," mean to you?

POST VIEWING DISCUSSION:

Baby Delivery (K-5)

- Describe the pig. What is his personality like?
- What does the pig think of the rabbit and the duck at the beginning of the story? How does his opinion of them change of them change by the end?
- The pig seems reluctant to leave the baby with rabbit and duck. Why do you think that is? Would you let Rabbit and Duck take the baby to her parents?
- What is the problem in Baby Delivery? How is it solved?

Big Bad Fox

- In many stories foxes are described as tricksters who are sly and intelligent. Does this description match the fox in the story? Use details from the film to support your thinking.
- How does the fox feel about the chicks at the beginning of the story? How do his feelings for them evolve throughout the film?

WHAT DOES THE
PHRASE, DONT JUDGE
A BOOK BY ITS COVER,
MEAN TO YOU?

Saving Christmas

- Why is it so important to Duck and Rabbit that Santa's presents get delivered?
- Is there a holiday your family celebrates every year? How do you celebrate? What are your family's traditions?

Cross-Story Themes

In each story the characters work together to achieve a common goal. In Baby Delivery Pig, Rabbit, and Duck get the baby to her parents. In Big Bad Fox the hens and the fox come together to protect the chicks and the farm against the Wolf. In Saving Christmas Duck and Rabbit both try to be Santa by delivering presents to everyone on the farm.

- Describe a time when you collaborated with others to achieve a goal. Were you successful? Why or why not?



POST VIEWING DISCUSSION:

Style and Message/Reading the Film for Media Literacy

- How is the hand drawn animation in this film different from animated films you've seen? Why do you think the creators chose to use hand drawn animation for their stories?
- What style of illustration does the film's creator use? How does this contribute to the overall tone of the film?
- Each tale is introduced as a play. Why do you think the filmmaker chose to do this?

HOW IS THE HAND DRAWN ANIMATION IN THIS FILM DIFFERENT FROM ANIMATED FILMS YOUVE SEEN?

POST VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

Writing Activity

Write an alternative ending

These three tales are compelling because they are so much fun.

- Choose one of the stories and think about how it could have gone differently.
- Consider the traits of the pig, the fox, and the duck and write a new ending. How can different character choices change the ending of the story?
- Bonus: Have students work with a peer or in a group to create a skit for their alternate ending and act it out in front of the class.

Compare the Tales

Use a Venn Diagram to compare all three tales. You can have students focus on something specific (such as the challenges faced by the characters), or have them compare plot features or events.

Explore Character Traits

Choose one of the characters from the film and make a mind map of the character's traits. Ask students to consider whether this character is someone they would be friends with and why, then have them write their "friend" a letter, making sure to mention events from the story that are relevant to that character.

Anti-Stereotype Posters

Your students can challenge stereotypes and build support for their peers by making posters for their school. After discussing the stereotypes presented in *The Big Bad Fox and Other Tales*, have your students collaborate to create anti-stereotype phrases to draw on posters. Hang their posters in your classroom or around your school to build connections and understanding among the diverse students in your school.

California Media Literacy Standards Addressed In This Lesson

- Grade 4: Standard 1.10 Evaluate the role of media in focusing attention on events and in forming opinions on issues.
- Grade 5: Standard 1.7 Identify, analyze, and critique persuasive techniques (e.g., promises, dares, flattery, glittering generalities); identify logical fallacies used in oral presentations and media messages; Standard 1.8 Analyze media as sources for information, entertainment, persuasion, interpretation of events, and transmission of culture.
- Grade 6: Standard 1.9 Identify persuasive and propaganda techniques used in television and identify false and misleading information.

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

California Core Standards Addressed In This Lesson

This lesson addresses the English and Language Arts standards for Reading Informational Texts grades 9-12. Additional specific standard applications are listed below:

Grades 2 - 3:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.2: Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

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.RL.2.7: Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

CA Visual and Performing Arts: Derivation of Meaning from Works of Theatre 4.2: Compare the content or message in two different works of theatre.

Grades 4 - 5:

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).

CA Visual and Performing Arts: Creation/Invention in Theatre 2.3: Collaborate as an actor, director, scriptwriter, or technical artist in creating formal or informal theatrical performances.



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.

CORE CONCEPTS OF MEDIA ANALYSIS

MEDIUM	<p>All Media Is Constructed. How is the message delivered and in what format? What technologies are used to present the message? What visual and auditory elements are used? What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?</p>
AUTHOR	<p>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)?</p>
CONTENT	<p>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?</p>
AUDIENCE	<p>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?</p>
PURPOSE	<p>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?</p>



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).

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



SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

The Film's Official Website

<https://www.gkids.com/films/the-big-bad-fox-other-tales/>

Teaching about Stereotypes from Teaching Tolerance:

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/teaching-about-stereotypes-20>

Three Circle Venn Diagram

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/venn-diagram-circles-b-30833.html>

MindMup

<https://www.mindmup.com/>



ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

Hollywood Reporter

6/15/2017 by Jordan Mintzer

A lively trio of cartoons that are wacky, heartwarming and wise, *The Big Bad Fox and Other Tales* (*Le grand méchant renard et autres contes*) showcases an animal farm like no other: The titular fox is far less cunning than he is both kind and nurturing, a duck has no idea how to actually swim, a lizard shows up out of nowhere and starts speaking Mandarin and a stork is far too lazy to deliver the baby in its beak.

Those are just some of the characters populating this second feature from director Benjamin Renner (working here with animator Patrick Imbert), whose *Ernest & Celestine* was one of the more memorable animated movies to come out of France a few years back, earning a Cesar Award and an Oscar nomination. This time the source material is different, with Renner adapting his own best-selling comic book in a tone that's equal parts Tex Avery and Dr. Seuss, with a bit of Adult Swim thrown into the mix. The result is lots of fun, if less compelling and cohesive than the last film, which should make it a shoo-in with Gallic tykes as they head into the summer vacation.

Co-written by Jean Regnaud, all three stories feature animals that have a hard time fulfilling their traditional roles, whether it's on the farm or in the forest. They could all also probably use a dose of Ritalin, so much do they seem constantly agitated and incapable of chilling out for as much as a second.

In the first tale ("A Baby to Deliver"), a feckless stork leaves a baby in the hands of a rabbit, a pig and a duck, urging them to make the delivery in his place. The second and longest story ("The Big Bad Fox"), based on Renner's comic, follows a fox scrounging around for food and winding up — not unlike Seuss' *Horton Hatches an Egg* — with a set of baby chicks to take care of, proving he may be a better at child-rearing than at hunting. In the third section ("The Perfect Christmas"), the animals mistakenly think they've killed Santa Claus and try their awful best to replace him.

Each part offers an array of slapstick gags, snappy dialogue and winks at pop culture — including a possible reference to *Fargo* in the Christmas story — though behind all the chaos lies a rather sentimental core, especially in the fable where the hungry fox is constantly tempted to eat the very infants he's falling in love with. Renner and Imbert spend more time dishing out jokes than they do weaving the kind of meaningful narrative that made *Ernest & Celestine* so special, yet while *Fox* is more of a slaphappy romp than a morality play, there's still a method to the madness.

Like the last film, the old-school 2D animation is especially impressive and sticks very close to Renner's original drawings. Characters' features only seem to be partially rendered at times, as if we're watching a cartoonist's sketchpad in motion, and the effect creates a whirligig of nonstop action from start to finish. Keeping the pace is a playful score by Robert Marcel Lepage (*Cesar* winner *Fatima*), while a clever stage setting is used to introduce each story — as well as providing a quick encore in which the major players all take a bow before the show inevitably goes on.



Toronto Review

9/09/2017 by Sarah Ward

If a bear and a mouse could strike up a friendship in Benjamin Renner's delightful *Ernest & Celestine*, then a farmyard full of animals — and their surrounding forest counterparts — can certainly work through their various problems, find common ground and zip through amusing life lessons in his second feature, *The Big Bad Fox & Other Tales*. Adapting his own graphic novel, the French filmmaker and his first-time co-helmer Patrick Imbert animate an affectionate and energetic madcap effort that might not completely match its predecessor's bursting heart, but still remains charming and engaging.

Helping the warm, wacky feature find its footing is Renner's preferred style of hand-drawn 2D animation

Proving the type of cross-generational family-friendly film, *The Big Bad Fox & Other Tales* is guaranteed further audience attention, with Gkids acquiring the title for North American distribution, and Studiocanal elsewhere. Its Toronto berth comes after premiering at Annecy and releasing in France in June, with a London Film Festival slot to follow. While reaching the same heights as the Cesar-winning, Oscar-nominee *Ernest & Celestine* is far from assured, its blend of sensitivity and slapstick will raise plenty of chuckles — and fans.

As co-written by Renner and Jean Regnaud, anthropomorphic creature capers abound in the film's three stories, as well as in the framing device that sees the titular fox (voiced by Guillaume Darnault) mounting a stage production along with

a pig (Damien Wieteka), rabbit (Kamel Abdessadok), duck (Antoine Schoumsky) and more. They rush around in front and behind the curtain, comically not quite ready for the performance, before unveiling each separate segment.

In the eventful road trip of first tale, 'A Baby To Deliver,' the wise but cranky pig is saddled with the rabbit and duck's bumbling double act after a lazy stork (Christophe Lemoine) sweet talks them into ferrying his latest cargo — a newborn human — to its expectant parents

Next up is a case of mixed motivations and identity issues in 'The Big Bad Fox', in which the fox struggles to be seen as big and bad; a situation that doesn't improve when a wily wolf (Boris Rehlinger) convinces him to steal the hen's (Céline Ronté, also the movie's casting director) eggs, which then hatch into chicks that think he's their mother. And good intentions meet blundering actions in the final story, 'A Perfect Christmas', in which the animals believe they have accidentally killed Santa Claus and do everything they can to replace him.

Helping the warm, wacky feature find its footing is Renner's preferred style of hand-drawn 2D animation, looking soft yet rough as though it has just been sketched and painted. Indeed, loose yet dynamic proves to be the playful effort's visual and tonal niche, and one that, along with its lively voice acting, brisk pace and jaunty score, serves its fond yet farcical escapades well.

A balance of absurdity and insight is crucial to each adventure, which hews closer to Looney Tunes cartoons than the somewhat narratively comparable, in parts, likes of *Storks*, *Chicken Run* and *Arthur Christmas*. And though the film doesn't scrounge too deeply, offbeat gags, ample emotion and parallels with human nature all go hand-in-hand.

HELPING THE WARM,
WACKY FEATURE FIND ITS
FOOTING IS RENNER'S
PREFERRED STYLE OF
HAND-DRAWN 2D
ANIMATION