

# To the Teacher...

## Discovering the World through *Journeys in Film*

### **What is *Journeys in Film*?**

Founded in 2003, *Journeys in Film* is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing global understanding among students through the combination of age-appropriate films from around the world, interdisciplinary classroom materials, and teachers' professional development workshops. Designed to develop 21st-century skills, this comprehensive curriculum model promotes widespread use of film as a window to the world to help students to mitigate existing attitudes of cultural bias, cultivate empathy, develop a richer understanding of global issues, and prepare for effective participation in the world economy—as active global citizens.

At no additional operating cost, the *Journeys in Film* model strengthens existing school curricular framework by integrating our lesson plans into core subjects, including social studies, math, geography, science, the arts, and media literacy, while also meeting current performance standards.

The foreign films are selected based on age and content appropriateness of the subject matter as well as captivating storytelling. Prominent educators, filmmakers, and cultural specialists are consulted in the creation of the curricula, each one dedicated to an in-depth exploration of the culture depicted in a specific film and related global issues.

*Journeys in Film* has been widely recognized for its effectiveness and vision. In the seven years since its inception, a small but industrious team of professionals has trained and supported more than 500 educators through professional-development workshops and outreach programs. To date (2010), the *Journeys in Film* curriculum has been integrated into approximately 500 schools and other

educational organizations nationwide and abroad (including after-school and summer school programs, faith-based groups, community service learning projects, correctional facilities, and clinics and health outreach programs), reaching more than 400,000 students.

Finally, a current market analysis of similar media-based educational programs shows that *Journeys in Film* is the only 501(c)(3) charitable organization committed to international education through the compelling combination of films focused on world cultures and global issues with dedicated comprehensive teachers guides.

### **Why use this program?**

To prepare to participate in tomorrow's global arena, your students need to gain a deeper understanding of the world beyond their own borders. *Journeys in Film* offers innovative and engaging tools to explore other cultures, beyond the often negative images seen in print, television, and film media.

For today's media-centric youth, film is an appropriate and effective teaching tool. *Journeys in Film* has carefully selected quality films telling the stories of young people living in locations that may otherwise never be experienced by your students. They travel through these characters and their stories: They discover the joy of art and individual expression with an Indian child in *Like Stars on Earth*, drink tea with an Iranian family in *Children of Heaven*, play soccer in a Tibetan monastery in *The Cup*, find themselves in the conflict between urban grandson and rural grandmother in South Korea in *The Way Home*, watch modern ways challenge Maori traditions

in New Zealand in *Whale Rider*, and learn about the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa in *Beat the Drum*.

Through each film in this program, your students gain a perspective on daily life of their peers around the world. By identifying with the appealing (and occasionally not so appealing) protagonists, your students understand another culture far beyond the limitations of a textbook. These lessons not only bring the world into the classroom, but also allow students to explore the diversity of their own classroom, community, and family.

### **Who can benefit from this curriculum?**

The curriculum was written expressly for students in grades 6 to 9. However, older and younger students may be intrigued by the films as well, and the curriculum can be adapted for them.

### **How are the films selected?**

Members of *Journeys in Film* have viewed dozens of films, both individually and at film festivals, in search of quality foreign films with storylines captivating enough to engage middle school students. The films must be rated G or PG. All films must be set within the past 15-20 years in order to offer a present-day connection for the student, as opposed to period pieces with cultural traditions that may not seem real in today's youth culture.

### **But I'm supposed to be using the standards in my classroom....**

Of course you are – any good teacher is meeting standards. Because this is a curriculum meant for a national audience, we chose to use the McRel standards rather than the standards for any particular state. Since 1990, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel) has been systematically collecting, reviewing, and analyzing state curriculum documents in all subject areas. McRel publishes a report on this work, called *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education*, and also has these standards and benchmarks available on their website at

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>. In the standards for each lesson plan, you will be able to recognize the corresponding subject-area standards for your state, even if the language is slightly different. While the Common Core State Standards Initiative is currently (2010) providing leadership in national standards for mathematics and English language arts, *Journeys in Film* finds the broader range of the McRel Compendium of Standards to be a better fit with the interdisciplinary nature of our curricula.

### **Will my students be able to read the subtitles?**

There is an ancient Iranian proverb that says, “He who wants a rose must respect the thorn.” Students are sometimes hesitant to watch a film with subtitles, but once they are hooked by the storyline of the film, reading the subtitles may become automatic and they may not even be conscious of doing so. We have a few suggestions to ease this transition.

Begin by asking the students how many have seen a subtitled film. Explain to them that we watch a subtitled film (as we do any film, for that matter) using not only the words, but also the sounds, the music, the actors' gestures, the locations, and more. The whole film helps to tell the story; dialogue is just one of the many ways the story is told. Suggest that students don't need to worry about following every single word. They should just skim the words for a general meaning and watch the film as a whole.

You can also help your students by using the following tips from teachers in the field:

- Whenever possible, use a large screen format, for better viewing of subtitles. If there is an LCD projector available at your school, by all means use it. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, Circle Cinema, an independent community film theater, hosted hundreds of students for film viewings as a local partner in the *Journeys in Film* program; you might be able to arrange a similar experience for your students with a local theater.
- Auditorium-style seating to simulate the film-going experience is ideal, but not necessary.
- As your school schedule permits, running the film in its entirety is preferable to breaking it into one-period chunks, unless needs of specific student groups require viewing the film in smaller sequences. Offer a break to coincide with recess to stretch and possibly have a refreshment or go outside. See our suggestions below under ***Suggestions for Implementation***.
- Bring in one or more older students to read subtitles aloud if your student group requires assistance in

reading comprehension. This model also offers an opportunity for mentoring. Be sure to give the older students the opportunity to view the film in advance and become familiar with the subtitles.

- For TESL students, use subtitles with all films, including the English-language films like *Whale Rider*, to offer the students an opportunity to follow along. Set the mode to English subtitles rather than hearing-impaired, unless there is a student with this disability in the class.
- A DVD is preferable to a VCR for later lessons that call for showing particular scenes. Be sure that if you buy a used DVD over the Internet, it is formatted for North American DVD viewing.

### **Suggestions for Implementation**

As a rule of thumb, we believe that the teacher can best decide what methods of film viewing and lesson implementation are appropriate for each specific class. However, we recommend an inter-disciplinary approach in order to make the greatest impact on the student; this curriculum guide makes this easy to facilitate. (It's much easier for teachers to come on board if they receive a fully articulated, standards-based lesson plan to work with.) This also allows a group of teachers to share their efforts and class time for a truly comprehensive, immersive experience, instead of one or two teachers giving up one or two weeks of class time in this current climate of reaching benchmarks and quotas. *Journeys in Film* encourages you to share this curriculum with your colleagues to create a team approach to engage your entire

school community. Your school's gym teacher might be a foreign film aficionado who could create culturally relevant athletic activities to join the fun.

Consider devoting an entire day or even several days to one film and its curriculum. Cancel all other classes, prepare students by having already implemented the pre-film lesson plan(s), view the film together as one entire student body or in large groups, and design a round-robin rotational method for the remaining lesson plans that are deemed core or essential by your school community. This full impact, immersive method has resulted in thoughtful dialogue between students, staff, and faculty members.

#### **Please note:**

You do not have to follow these lesson plans in order, nor do you have to complete all of them. However, please notice that some lesson plans have been designed for use *before* viewing the film, as a means for engaging the students about the country and culture and offering a context from which to connect with the film. The bulk of the lesson plans have been designed for use *after* viewing the film.

Here are some of our favorite suggestions from our pilot teachers:

- Collaborate with other schools in your district. Bring the skits, role-plays, art projects, and other *Journeys in Film* lessons into elementary classrooms, offering older students the opportunity to act as teachers by presenting a culture they've learned about.
- Start an after-school foreign film club, either as a means of using this program if it doesn't fit into the regular class schedule or as an opportunity for interested students to further explore film from other countries.
- Establish a quarterly film night or ongoing film festival, schedule the viewing in the evening or during the weekend, and invite parents to participate. This model will acquaint parents with the innovative programs being used in your school and encourage dialogue between parents and children. Serve popcorn!
- Designate a hallway or display case for *Journeys in Film*. Enlist the assistance of parents, business leaders, and community members who may have some connection to the culture represented in the featured film in decorating the space.
- Invite parents, business leaders, and community members from the culture of a given film to visit with students, tell their stories, share traditional foods, etc.
- On a larger scale, your school can plan an annual Global Village Day as the kickoff or finale to the *Journeys in Film* program series.

## What else can I use to promote cross-cultural understanding in my classroom?

There is an almost limitless supply of cross-cultural materials available to teachers from organizations and the Internet. The one we have found that fits well with the *Journeys in Film* approach is a free resource from the Peace Corps Coverdell World Wise Schools program. The booklet *Building Bridges: A Peace Corps Classroom Guide to Cross-Cultural Understanding* is designed for grades 6–12. Its 13 lively, interactive lessons were designed for the classroom from Peace Corps training materials to help American students learn about culture, stereotyping, and the resolution of cross-cultural misunderstanding. If you wish, you can use this as a supplement to, or in place of, the general cross-cultural understanding lessons from *Journeys in Film*. You can obtain this book free by calling the Peace Corps at 1-800-424-8580, ext.1450, or by downloading it from <http://peacecorps.gov/wws/bridges/index.html>.

## So, welcome to *Journeys in Film*!

And above all, no matter which specific implementation methods you use as you begin your own *Journeys in Film*, have fun with your students and colleagues while you're doing it!

For information about other *Journeys in Film* products and services (curriculum guides, professional development workshops, and other resources), please visit our website: [www.journeysinfilm.org](http://www.journeysinfilm.org).

## Some Additional Suggestions for Assessment

Modern assessment methods have moved beyond the objective test given at the end of a chapter or unit; instead teachers look for ways to measure students' deeper understanding of ideas. We have included assessment techniques in each lesson in this unit, including the valuable tool for student self-assessment included in several of the lessons. Here are some additional possibilities for you to consider as you plan your unit on this film. Be sure to brief students on what kinds of assessment you will do before you begin the unit.

1. Have students keep a journal throughout the unit. Based on the standards for each lesson, create a series of open-ended questions for students to choose from. Depending on the ability of your class, determine and make clear the number of questions that they must answer, when each journal entry must be completed, and the length of each journal entry. Create a rubric on which to judge the journal as a whole and be sure to share the rubric with the students before they begin.
2. Have students put together a class newspaper based on the film. Review the various parts of a newspaper with them (news report, news analysis, editorial, letters to the editor, obituaries, advice columns, sports, fashion, even comics and crosswords). Appoint student editors and then allow students time to brainstorm how to produce a newspaper based on the film. For example, a report about a student art show in Mumbai by a news reporter, advertisements for the schools depicted

in the film, a food column about Indian food, a letter to an advice column written by Ishaan's mother, etc. If you have desktop publishing software, students can design the newspaper on computer, or they can do paste-ups on large sheets of heavy paper.

3. Conduct face-to-face interviews with individual students or pairs of students. This can be done during study halls or lunch, as well as during class time. Make sure students know that the burden of the interview is on them to convey how well they understand the film and the lessons you have used to introduce and follow the film. Help them understand that they should prepare for the interview by reviewing what they have learned. Give them a rubric ahead of time to show how you will judge them on familiarity with the film, learning accomplished during the lessons, poise during the interview, respect for others' opinions (if conducting a joint interview), etc. You can use the standards in this unit as a starting place for your questions. And be sure you don't ask the same questions of each student or group, or the later interviewees will start limiting their preparation.

4. Have students collect a portfolio of work that they have done in this unit. Have them arrange the work from the elements that they think are the best (in front) to those they think are the least effective. Then have them write a response to these or similar questions:

**Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ is your best work?**

**What problems did you have to face as you started this assignment?**

**How did you overcome those problems?**

**Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ is your least effective work?**

**What goals do you have for yourself as a learner for the rest of the year?**

5. Play a game like *Jeopardy!* Have students come up with their own questions, perhaps splitting the class into two groups. Have each group split into five or six smaller teams and assign them a topic. Have them create six *Jeopardy!*-style answers, each with the appropriate question. Then trade the questions and play the game with each large group. You can give a simple reward, like allowing the winning team to leave the room first at the end of the period.