

(sundance)

CHIWETEL
EJIOFOR

AND INTRODUCING

MAXWELL
SIMBA

A NETFLIX FILM

THE BOY WHO HARNESSED THE WIND

BASED ON THE
INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY

THE INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY OF A BOY WHO HARNESSED THE WIND. WILLIAM KAMKWAMBA, A 13-YEAR-OLD BOY FROM MALAWI, USED HIS IMAGINATION AND DETERMINATION TO BUILD A WINDMILL THAT GENERATES ELECTRICITY. HIS STORY IS A REMINDER OF THE POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION. THE FILM IS A TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION. THE FILM IS A TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION.

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About *Journeys in Film*

Founded in 2003, *Journeys in Film* operates on the belief that teaching with film has the power to prepare students to live and work more successfully in the 21st century as informed and globally competent citizens. Its core mission is to advance global understanding among youth through the combination of age-appropriate films from around the world, interdisciplinary classroom materials coordinated with the films, and teachers' professional-development offerings. 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 an increasingly interdependent world. Our standards-based lesson plans support various learning styles, promote literacy, transport students around the globe, and foster learning that meets core academic objectives.

Selected films act as springboards for lesson plans in subjects ranging from math, science, language arts, and social studies to other topics that have become critical for students, including environmental sustainability, poverty and hunger, global health, diversity, and immigration. Prominent educators on our team consult with filmmakers and cultural specialists in the development of curriculum guides, each one dedicated to an in-depth exploration of the culture and issues depicted in a specific film. The guides merge effectively into teachers' existing lesson plans and mandated curricular requirements, providing teachers with an innovative way to fulfill their school districts' standards-based goals.

Why use this program?

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

For today's media-centric youth, film is an appropriate and effective teaching tool. *Journeys in Film* has carefully selected quality films that tell the stories of young people living in locations that may otherwise never be experienced by your students. Students travel through these characters and their stories: They 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 the ways modernity challenges Maori traditions in New Zealand in *Whale Rider*, tour an African school with a Nobel Prize-winning teenager in *He Named Me Malala*, or experience the transformative power of music in *The Music of Strangers: Yo-Yo Ma & the Silk Road Ensemble*.

In addition to our ongoing development of teaching guides for culturally sensitive foreign films, *Journeys in Film* brings outstanding documentary films to the classroom. We have identified exceptional narrative and documentary films that teach about a broad range of social issues in real-life settings such as famine-stricken and war-torn Somalia, a maximum-security prison in Alabama, and a World War II concentration camp near Prague. *Journeys in Film* guides help teachers integrate these films into their classrooms, examining complex issues, encouraging students to be active rather than passive viewers, and maximizing the power of film to enhance critical thinking skills and to meet the Common Core Standards.

Journeys in Film is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

A Letter from Chiwetel Ejiofor



I hope you enjoyed watching the film *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*.

William's story embodies the creativity of young people and acts as a powerful reminder of the achievements we can make when we are not afraid of failure. He encountered many obstacles, but his determination to get an education and unstoppable drive to do what he believed in will act, I hope, as an inspiration to you in this course.

This film tells the true story of a family in Malawi and the difficulties they faced; external factors like the weather, environment, politics, religion, and education have a profound effect on the daily life of many Malawians. I hope this film and the course spark a much wider discussion and action to engage with some of the issues that the film touches on.

William's story continues to inspire the next generation of innovators in Africa and around the world. I hope that watching *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* and the curriculum help to inspire you to never give up on your dreams.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chiwetel Ejiofor'.

The Character of William Kamkwamba

Enduring Understandings

- What we learn in school and from books can help us to improve our lives.
- Family relationships can endure through times of great stress.
- One person's talents can benefit an entire community.
- Desperate circumstances can evoke diverse responses, some positive, some negative.

Essential Questions

- What personal characteristics enable William to devise a windmill so beneficial to his community?
- How do individuals' responses to stress and catastrophe affect others?
- Is school learning a right or a privilege?
- How are we affected by and how can we respond to the influences around us (environment, politics, culture, media, etc.)?

Notes to the teacher

As they watch *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, many people find themselves entering a world very different from their own. Malawi is far away on the east side of Africa, and for viewers who live in cities and suburbs, strenuous physical work on a farm is remote. Even for those who make a living on farms or orchards and who know what it means to have products ruined by hail, frost, or insects, starvation is not a likely outcome. On the other hand, young people (and older ones, too) can find many connections with William Kamkwamba and his family and can gain new perspectives from their experiences leading up to the successful construction of the windmill and water pump.

This lesson focuses on William, a young teenage boy with natural mechanical skills and an intense desire to attend school and do well there. As we see him in the movie, William is hard-working, respectful of his parents and other authorities, intelligent, self-confident, persistent, inquisitive, and energetic. On several occasions we also see him as brave and able to find alternative ways to pursue an objective.

In two ways some students may find themselves very different from William. One is his keen desire for schooling and knowledge. The film can lead to the insight that education is a privilege not available to everyone everywhere and that it can improve our lives. The other is the respectful behavior he extends even in circumstances that might evoke a retaliatory outburst from many people. He does not rage at the school headmaster, and he does not rebel at his father's expressions of anger and frustration. In both situations, he benefits more from restraint than he would have from outrage.

In Part 1 of this lesson, students view the film, which takes slightly less than two hours, and respond to a viewer-response guide. They share responses with partners or small groups, participate in large-group discussion, and complete a short writing assignment as an assessment activity.

In Part 2, the class considers the impact of outside forces on William. These include religion, politics, the environment, and the field of knowledge about the generation of energy. In the film, religion is in the background but nonetheless forceful. Christianity is present from the funeral ceremony near the beginning. The traditional religion is embodied by the colorful dancers clearly loved by the people. Islam is also there, hinted at through manner of dress and at the chief's funeral. The two funeral scenes, which frame the film, work well to focus discussion on this topic. To discuss the role of politics, you may want to focus on the political rally during which Chief Wimbe speaks and is then attacked. To discuss the environment, it is useful to juxtapose scenes of torrential rain and flooding with those of scorched and barren earth, followed by the windmill providing irrigation water near the end. Finally, the movie shows William's progress from the ability to work with batteries to his interest in generating light and onward to the complexities involved in using a windmill as a source for the power to pump water out of a well.

In Part 3 students switch their attention to the real William, now a college graduate and consultant who travels all over the world. For this you will use a TED presentation, and students will use other websites to gather information. Students then respond to the quote, "I try, and I made it."

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ADDRESSED BY THIS LESSON

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.8

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that the listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Duration of lesson

5–6 class days, including time to view the film

Assessments

Responses to **HANDOUT 1**, the viewer guide

A short writing in response to the film

Participation in group presentation

A short analytical writing

Participation in class discussion

Culminating essay

Materials

The film *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*

Presentation devices with internet access

Internet and word processing access

Copies of **Handouts 1–4** for students' use

Short video “How I Harnessed the Wind” at https://www.ted.com/talks/william_kamkwamba_how_i_harnessed_the_wind.

Procedure

Part 1: Watching the Movie and Responding to It

1. Explain that the class will be focusing on the main character in *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. If this is students' first viewing of the film, provide introductory information. The movie takes place in Malawi, a country in Africa, and centers on a family whose source of income is agriculture. Assure students that, although the film is subtitled, they are likely to find interactions relatively easy to follow.
2. Distribute **HANDOUT 1** for students' use as a viewer-response journal and ask them to complete it as they watch the film. The handout suggests two places to pause for students to record ideas. You may want to select additional moments.
3. After students view the film and complete **HANDOUT 1**, allow a little time for partners or small groups to review and discuss responses to the questions and to make sure their own handouts are complete. (Diverse responses are fine and helpful to discussion.) Then collect the handouts for use in assessment.
4. Explain that the movie is not fiction; it is based on real events and people. Ask students to think about the extent to which they felt engaged in events depicted in the film. Did they find themselves identifying with any of the characters? Why?

5. Conduct a whole-class discussion based on the following questions.
 - A. How would you describe William's relationship with his family? (This is a loving family, and William is respectful of his parents. He is expected to help with chores and does so willingly. The family relationships become strained because of the failure of the crops.)
 - B. Several times the movie shows William foraging in the local junkyard. Why? (To him discarded items can be seen as tools to solve problems. Faced with difficulties, William's characteristic response is to seek for and create solutions.)
 - C. Do you think the headmaster at school was fair to William and the other students who were behind in tuition payments? (For William, universal free public education does not extend past elementary school; his high school is tuition-based. Do young people have a right to attend school? Did the headmaster have a choice?)
 - D. What moment in the movie strikes you as most impactful? Why? (Possibilities abound, including the political rally and assault on Chief Wimbe; Trywell's explosive response to William in the barren field; William's response to the death of his dog; the windmill succeeding in pumping water out of the well.)
 - E. Point out that **HANDOUT 1** asked students to record words and phrases that describe William. Tell the class that each person will be asked to name one trait that is important to describe his character. They will also need back-up ideas to avoid redundancy. As students identify characteristics, record them on the board. (Examples: intelligent; mechanically gifted; persistent; respectful; inquisitive; friendly; loyal; helpful; brave.)
6. Ask students to write paragraphs in which they respond to the following prompt: The thing that strikes me the most about William Kamkwamba is his _____ when _____. Collect writings for use as assessment tools.

Part 2: Outside Influences on William

1. Point out that William's character development is affected by forces outside of himself and that, in fact, this is true of everyone in real life. Ask students to brainstorm the ways outside forces intrude to affect their own thoughts and actions. (Examples: A tornado can demolish a home and force a family to start all over again with basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter. Political decisions can make neighborhoods better places to live or cause them to decline. New developments in technology render some items obsolete and cause people to develop new skills.)
2. Divide the class into small groups and assign each group one of the following topics: religion; politics; weather; scientific knowledge. Tell students that their job is to analyze the role of the topic in the film and the ways it affects William and the other characters. They will then present their findings to the class as a whole. (Note: Although students can do this from their memories of the movie, it is much more effective if they can access it and review sections pertinent to the assigned topics.)
3. Distribute **HANDOUT 2** for groups to use as a guide in researching their topics and creating their presentations. If necessary, assist students who have trouble getting started or knowing how to proceed. Allow sufficient time for groups to access information and organize content.

4. Distribute **HANDOUT 3** for note-taking purposes during the presentations.

Suggested Responses:

Religion is an influence but not an intrusive factor. Perhaps the most important scenes are the two funerals and Trywell's prayers with the family. The movie reflects Malawi's dominant religion, Christianity, as well as its significant Muslim population. It also shows the influence of traditional pre-Christian beliefs and practices sometimes referred to as animism. These belief systems seem to coexist in harmony. For example, at Chief Wimbe's funeral, William and Gilbert stand side-by-side and appreciatively look at the colorful traditional dancers. Perhaps the greatest influence on William would be a spirit of tolerance and appreciation toward religious differences, a sense that those differences are complementary rather than a cause for dissension or hostility.

Politics is a significant factor. We see it early in the rally in the village. Trywell sets off toward a demonstration about the farmers' needs. Inadequate government assistance provokes mob violence. Most important is the scene in which officials visit Wimbe with much pomp; when the chief speaks his mind, he is hustled off stage and severely beaten. William and his friend Gilbert clearly know that the chief is in serious danger and are among the first to arrive to intervene, leading to the quick departure of the political figures. Perhaps the result for William would be the idea that government cannot be trusted and that people can and must look out for themselves.

Malawi's environment can be harsh, with torrential rains and flooding followed by long arid periods. Thus the vast

majority of Malawians are in constant danger of inadequate nutrition. Deforestation is a complicating issue. The crops are always at risk. Many scenes in the movie can be used, among them Trywell's desperate efforts to divert flood waters, the attempt to glean at least some grain from the devastated crops, the labor on the fields during drought, and the final scene of the windmill's power to provide electricity to pump water for irrigation. The environment prompts William to seek solutions, which he finds through science and technology.

As he begins secondary school, which is not required in Malawi, William is a neophyte in scientific knowledge, although he is significantly skilled with mechanical things. He is able to repair radios, an important source of entertainment to the villagers. His need for a light source to enable him to study at night leads him to Mr. Kachigunda's bicycle and the discovery that motion can generate power. When William cannot attend school, he uses the library and discovers books about electricity's causes and uses. This leads ultimately to the success of the windmill. William values knowledge, particularly its practical applications.

5. Ask students to complete short writings in which they reflect on how the film's presentation of one of the four influencing factors can relate to their own lives and attitudes today. Collect the writings for assessment. You may want to create a montage of interesting excerpts from the writings and distribute copies to the class for use as a basis for discussion.

Part 3: The Real William Kamkwamba

1. Have students review the short clip near the end of the movie in which William and his father talk about the future. Ask partners to collaborate to answer the following question: What do you think happened to William after the events depicted in the film? (Note: If you let the film run clear through the credits at the end, students will have some clear information on the subject.)
2. Ask students who think William stayed in Wimbe to help his family on the farm to move to one side of the room. Ask those who think he continued on with further education to move to another. Ask those who foresee some other outcome to stand where they are. Then have two or three members of each group explain their thinking.
3. Point out that *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* presents some important experiences in William's life, but it does not present William himself. The roles are played by actors, and some elements are condensed and altered to suit the film medium and the director's goals. The film's time setting is early in the first decade of this century, so William is now a grown man, and we can verify which group came closest to what has really happened.
4. Have the class view the short video (about 5 minutes) "How I Harnessed the Wind" at https://www.ted.com/talks/william_kamkwamba_how_i_harnessed_the_wind.
5. Explain that William has also given other presentations and participated in interviews. Ask students to use the Internet to access several of these and to view them carefully. (Note: Several can be found on YouTube, as well as the TED site.) Students can also look for additional sites

that provide information about William; the movie has evoked considerable media interest in him.

6. Distribute **HANDOUT 4** and ask students to use it to record information. Tell them that they will be able to add to it later during class discussion.
7. Lead a discussion based on the handout questions.

Suggested Responses

- A. William was one of seven children and was the only boy. The movie simplifies the family, but in real life drought and famine must have been even more terrifying.
- B. He did not want to be caught in the cycles of poverty that often afflict subsistence farmers. Education was a welcome way out of a no-win situation.
- C. He describes a fascination with how and why things work. Why, for example, does turning a key make a car engine start?
- D. At first, he returned to school in Malawi, but eventually he completed high school in South Africa.
- E. The successful creation of the windmill attracted media attention, and in 2007 William was invited to participate in a TED conference in Tanzania. Clearly his life was changing radically from that of the young boy he used to be.
- F. He had the opportunity to attend Dartmouth, a prestigious college in New Hampshire in the United States. He graduated in 2014 with a bachelor's degree in environmental studies.
- G. He is based in the United States, but travels all over the world as a consultant and speaker.
- H. Write the following quote from William on the board: "I try, and I made it." Assign students to write essays

in which they respond to it, including the following:
references to the movie; references to the real William;
and reflections on how the comment relates to their
own lives. You may want to establish a time for peer
conferences as well as a due date.

Extension Activity

Invite students to complete projects or essays in which they
examine the role and development of another significant
character in the film: William's father or mother; Annie;
Gilbert; Chief Wimbe; or another figure that they found
intriguing.

Handout 1 ► P. 1

Viewer Response Journal

A. During the first half-hour of the film, the viewer becomes acquainted with William Kamkwamba and the circumstances of his life. Stop viewing after the scene in which William and some of his schoolmates find that they cannot attend classes because of incomplete tuition payments and the following scene showing heavy rains and consequent flooding of the fields. (34:04) Use the following questions to consider your insights and responses:

1. In what ways does William's life seem like/unlike yours and the lives of your friends?

2. What forces in the world are likely to affect him and his family, friends, and neighbors, whether or not they fully understand those forces?

3. What seems to be William's attitude toward school? Is it the same as or different from yours? Explain.

4. Based on these opening moments in the movie, what character and personality traits have you observed in William? List at least five.



Handout 1 ► P. 2

Viewer Response Journal

B. Continue viewing up to and including the meeting of William's family with the school headmaster (1:18:43). As you view, focus primarily on William's actions and reactions. Then consider the following questions.

- 5.** A number of times in the movie we see the area used to dump what is viewed as useless trash. How does William view the area? What does this show about him?

- 6.** Why are the people suffering a devastating food shortage? What reactions do you see? How does William respond?

- 7.** What tensions are brewing in William's family? How do they seem to affect him?

- 8.** How do you react to the decisions of the school principal? How does William respond? What does this show about him?

**Handout 1 ► P. 3**

Viewer Response Journal

C. View the rest of the movie and consider the following points.

- 9.** William's father's great anger and frustration lead him to lash out at his son. How does William react? Would you have responded the same way? Why or why not?

- 10.** The film depicts many losses. How do the characters, including William, react to them?

- 11.** The creation of the windmill and resulting ability to irrigate the land are a triumph. What does the windmill reveal about William? In what ways does it operate as a symbol?

- 12.** Now that you have seen the entire film, write a sentence in which you identify what you see as three of William's most important personal characteristics.

Handout 2

Focus Group: Analyzing a Topic and Creating a Presentation

Use the following steps to guide your work and check off when each has been completed.

Group Members: _____

1. Make preliminary observations about what you remember about your topic in the development of the movie. How impactful did it seem to you at the time?	
2. Define your topic. What does it include and not include? How important is it?	
3. Identify moments in the film when your topic is evident. Closely review those moments and focus on details. Then decide how you can incorporate them as visual elements in your presentation.	
4. Pinpoint related topics that need additional clarification and conduct relevant research.	
5. Plan the content of your presentation. Create a guiding thesis statement that summarizes the ways your topic impacts William. Explain how and why it has those impacts. What effect would omitting your topic have on the movie as a whole?	
6. Decide on the best format for your group's presentation. Do you want to create a multi-media presentation or a video, or would you prefer to perform live? Would a debate or panel discussion work well? How about using an interview session or a dramatization?	
7. Assign responsibilities so that each group member can make a significant contribution to the final result. Set a time to gather everything together and for rehearsal. Make sure your presentation clearly shows the role of each group member, just as a movie screen identifies actors, director(s), and crew.	
8. Make the official presentation to the class.	

**Handout 3**

Outside Influences on William Kamkwamba

Use the chart to take notes on each topic, including relevant scenes and analytical observations.

Topic	Film scenes	Analysis
Religion		
Politics		
Environment		
Scientific Knowledge		



Handout 4 ► P. 1

The Real William Kamkwamba

Research to find the answers to the following questions

1. How did the real family with whom he grew up differ from the one presented in the movie?

2. How does William explain the intense desire for an education that he felt even as a young boy?

3. What kinds of questions seem to have fascinated him?

4. In the movie, his education stops when he has barely begun his first semester of high school. How did he eventually get a high school diploma?

**Handout 4 ► P. 2**

The Real William Kamkwamba

5. How and why did his life change in 2007?

6. What kind of post-secondary school education did he receive?

7. What is his life like now?

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