



SCHOOL PROGRAM

Grades 7-8 Lesson Plan

by

Regent Park Film Festival

The Regent Park Film Festival's School Program provides media-literacy programming to students in Grades 1-8 across the GTA. Our programming creates a dialogue surrounding social issues affecting Toronto's diverse student population.

## **Program Description**

Has there been an event in your life that significantly shifted your perspective? This program explores narratives of individuals and communities at the brink of a 'turning point'- a moment in which a change occurs within the usual pattern of one's life, often to a positive outcome. Factors such as racism, gender and socio-economic status all shape the way in which they begin to understand their place in the world, and how to gain agency through their choices.

## **Definitions To Consider**

**Minority** - An individual or group of people within a community or country, differing from the majority population in race, religion, language, or political views.

**Marginalized** - To make a person or group of people feel isolated and underrepresented in the dominant narrative or what is seen as important.

**Intergenerationality** - Experiences and existence of multiple generations of a family. This is often used in reference to trauma, status or wealth that are passed down from grandparents and parents to their children, with significant impact on the current generations way of life.

**Anti-black Racism** - Policies and practices rooted in Canadian institutions such as, education, health care, and justice systems that mirror and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination towards people of Black-African descent. (<http://blackhealthalliance.ca/home/antiblack-racism/>)

**Microaggression** - Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership. (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>)

**Colonization** - The process in which Indigenous Peoples of Canada were uprooted and displaced from their homes through violence by Europeans. This was done as a means to establish power over land, resources and cultural dominance.

**Idle No More** - A mass Indigenous movement focused on awareness of Indigenous rights and reconciliation.

<http://www.idlenomore.ca/story>

**Gender Identity** - One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither - how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology-and-definitions>

## **BEFORE THE FESTIVAL**

Has there been an event or situation that shifted your ideas around something significant in your life? Have students reflect on this question in the form of writing, poetry, sketches, film or any other creative form. Consider these prompts:

- a. What was the situation or event you faced which made you question your perspective?
- b. What was your position before this change? And after?
- c. What were some of your thoughts before making a final decision?
- d. Looking back at that time, are you happy you made that decision? Why or why not?

## **AT THE FESTIVAL - BE A FILM CRITIC!**

Print out the Be A Film Critic sheet attached, and bring it to the festival to review the films you see! Have students rate each film from 1-5 stars.

## **AFTER THE FESTIVAL**

### 1. General Reflections:

- a. How have the films that you saw at the festival differ from the regular media you engage with?
- b. Have any of these films changed, confirmed or challenged your outlook on a particular topic or issue? Why or why not?

### 2. Reflecting on the films:

This section will provide critical discussion questions based on the content of the films. It will allow students to reflect on various social issues, and provide their own interpretations of film content. The last four pages contain pictures from films to help you remember them.

## **FILM: THE HIGH BRIDGE**

1. What do you think was the 'turning point' for Abel and his relationship with his daughter? How do you think his outlook on fatherhood changed from the beginning to the end of the film?
2. The nurse is quick to judge Abel when she meets him for the first time. Write a letter addressed to the nurse, expressing how you felt about her attitude towards Abel. Consider factors such as race, age, gender and society's perception of fathers (vs mothers) when writing your response.

Additional resources for students:

- <http://www.ppt.on.ca/>
- <https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/teen-parenting-important-things-know/>

**FILM: MAHALIA MELTS IN THE RAIN**

1. In this film we see many examples of microaggressions towards Mahalia. Name an example from the film and interpret the negative connotation or stereotype behind the statement. Then, rewrite the microaggression as a positive/neutral statement the character could have used instead.

2. Though Mahalia does not have much dialogue, the film is framed to show her point of view. How do you think Mahalia's views on her peers change from the beginning to the end of the film?

**FILM: FIREBIRD**

1. Director, writer and producer Mimi Lee has stated that "her goal as a filmmaker is to create engaging stories that reflect the true Asian American experience and to bridge the gap between Asians and other minorities". What does this statement mean to you? How does one portray a "true" reflection of a community's experiences?

2. At the end of the film, we see Nicki in a blonde wig speaking to an online audience - what is your interpretation of this scene? Why do you think the filmmaker chose to include it?

**FILM: SILVIA IN THE WAVES**

1. Noa wanted to honour and remember Silvia for who she truly was after her death, despite it being a point of contention between him and his mother. Why do you think it was important for him to do this?

2. At the end of the film Noa and his mother build a shrine paying tribute to Silvia. Silvia then emerges from the water, puts on the purple dress and necklaces that were laid out by her family, and walked into the forest. Why do you think the director chose to show this? Do you think this scene was a turning point in Noa and his mother's relationship? Why?

**FILM: IDLE NO MORE**

1. Why do you think the filmmaker chose the visuals in the film such as nature, fire and water, regalia and youth performing songs, along with Heather Archibald's poem? How does the film's title reflect this? Also consider the Program Description.
2. Was there anything that surprised you in the film about Canada's treatment of Indigenous Peoples? Why did this surprise you? Why do you think this issue is left out of the mainstream Canadian narrative, such as in our news channels and papers?

**FILM: WORST STUDENT EVER**

1. As a child, some of the adults in Randell's life silenced and undermined his potential due to his checkered past. In highschool, a teacher took interest in getting to know him and encouraged him to find his voice through writing and speaking. Write or draw about either someone in your life, an experience or situation that encouraged you to follow or realize your dreams, hobbies or talents. Why was this impactful to you?
2. "Are you going to be a leader or a follower?" asked Randell's grade 5 teacher; what do you think qualifies someone to be a leader or follower? Who gets to decide this? Is it always a negative quality to be a follower?

## FILMS

### FILM: THE HIGH BRIDGE



**Synopsis:** A Bronx teenager reluctantly confronts fatherhood when his young daughter visits her doctor.

**Themes:** Coming-of-Age, Parenting, Discrimination, Gender Norms

### FILM: MAHALIA MELTS IN THE RAIN



**Synopsis:** Mahalia, a timid 9-year-old black girl, feels different from the other girls in her ballet class. Hoping to boost her confidence, her mother brings her to a hair salon to get her hair straightened for the very first time.

**Themes:** Identity, Intergenerationality, Assimilation, Discrimination

## FILM: FIREBIRD



**Synopsis:** An Asian-American artist loses her identity as she navigates her way through a social-media driven world.

**Themes:** Identity, Conformity, Discrimination

## FILM: SILVIA IN THE WAVES



**Synopsis:** Noa struggles to honor the identity of his recently deceased parent while his mother tries to uphold the appearance of a conventional family.

**Themes:** Gender, Identity, Death, Grief, Family, Memory

## **FILM: IDLE NO MORE**



**Synopsis:** Heather Archibald was a social activist and foster care child who passed away. Her strong words are honoured in this film, demanding a change in the attitude of the law concerning Indigenous people in Canada.

**Themes:** Indigenous, Healing, Reconciliation, Intergenerationality, Activism

**Note:** This film is dedicated to the 18 year old author and narrator Heather Archibald, to honour her spirit and message after her untimely death.

## **FILM: WORST STUDENT EVER**



**Synopsis:** Through the eyes of Randell Adjei, we understand the gravity of the issues facing Scarborough youth today. Amidst gun violence, poverty, and stigmatization, we see resilience through community, art, and a passion for change.

**Themes:** Perseverance, Systemic Oppression, Racism, Empowerment



**17TH ANNUAL REGENT PARK FILM FESTIVAL**  
**SCHOOL PROGRAM GRADES 7-8**

**BE A FILM CRITIC!**

**5 ☆ = HIGHEST**



**THE HIGH BRIDGE**



**MAHALIA MELTS IN THE RAIN**



**FIREBIRD**



**SILVIA IN THE WAVES**



**IDLE NO MORE**



**WORST STUDENT EVER**

