

Sprockets

Toronto International FILM
Festival for children
April 14-18, 2008

A great deal of thanks and appreciation goes out to our teacher committees who volunteer their time to assist in the development of Sprockets lesson plans.

TITLE: *Almost Adult*

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: *United Kingdom*

RELEASE YEAR: *2006*

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: *English*

DIRECTOR: *Yousaf Ali Khan*

RUNTIME: *85 Minutes*

CURRICULUM LINKS: Language Arts - Media Studies
World Geography - Human Patterns & Interactions
International Law

FOCUSING QUESTION: **Language Arts – Media Studies:**
How effectively does the filmmaker portray the character of Mamie who faces many challenges settling into a new country?

World Geography - Human Interaction Patterns:
What are reasons for immigration and what are the expectations of immigrants in their new land that are suggested in the film?

International Law:
What is the role of an international organization in assisting in helping resolve conflicts?

SYNOPSIS:

Recommended for Grades 9 -12

The sensitive and realistic *Almost Adult* tells the story of two unaccompanied African teenagers who seek asylum in the United Kingdom. Having fled war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, seventeen-year-old Mamie is sent to Birmingham to await a decision on her refugee claim. When she loses her papers and is faced with the prospect of spending the night alone in a strange country, she meets Shiku, a teenaged refugee from Kenya. Mamie sees Shiku as a sister and vows to take care of her. But when authorities discover the pair do not speak the same language, the girls are separated: Mamie is sent to a squalid hostel, while Shiku is placed with a family that mistreats her.

However, Mamie and Shiku find one other again, and their growing friendship gives them the strength to cope with the challenges facing them and to come to terms with their past. Director Yousaf Ali Khan boldly depicts the obstacles these youth encounter, while highlighting the characters' dignity and strength. Featuring Victoire Milandu, herself a Congolese refugee, in the role of Mamie, this authentic film offers a compelling look at the important issue of displaced youth who must find the courage to build safer and better lives on their own.

TEACHER ENDORSEMENT: "No unacceptable content. One appeal of this film is the intelligent, realistic depiction of the resettlement of these young refugees, as they are trying to come to terms with their nightmare experiences in their former countries. I would recommend teachers bring their classes to this film for two reasons: first, for the superb character study of Mamie; second, for the relevance of its content to current global issues."

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:

ALMOST ADULT (2006)

TALKING WITH ANGELS (2003)

SKIN DEEP (2001)

PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION: All classes should receive the synopsis in advance of the screening so students can focus on a particular aspect of the movie and come to the screening with an understanding of the basic plot. The following activities are suggested to prepare teachers and students:

- 1) Language Arts – Media Studies: What techniques are used to properly represent a character in a film? In the period prior to the film, these methods need to be discussed with the students. Watch a film clip that shows effective and objective ways of portraying a character and then have a discussion of the filmmaker's techniques. Ask questions such as: Is a character presented in a well-rounded developed manner? Is the filmmaker neglecting to show a different perspective of this character? How would you change this character if you were to make this film?
- 2) World Geography: Human Patterns & Interactions: Using the developing crisis in Kenya and the tense political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as examples, teachers can review push-pull factors for migration.

Have students fill out the **Appendix A2** chart. Access to the Internet or news periodicals is required to complete this activity.

- 3) International Law: Review the function of international agencies such as the United Nations, Red Cross and Amnesty International in resolving conflicts and with human-rights issues. In the period prior to the film, have students research international organizations and complete **Appendix A3**.

DURING SCREENING ACTIVITY:

- 1) Language Arts – Media Studies: Observe the methods used by the filmmaker to create a strong character like Mamie.
- 2) World Geography: Human Patterns & Interactions: Be alert to any references to push-pull factors for the girls' immigration and their settlement in Birmingham.
- 3) International Law: Be alert to any references to human-rights violations in their home countries or any other issues that may require international intervention.

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY:

- 1) Language Arts – Media Studies: In groups of three or four, discuss the various ways the filmmaker effectively portrays Mamie's

character and complete **Appendix A**. To assist teachers, a suggested character chart is available, **Appendix A1**.

- 2) World Geography: Human Patterns & Interactions: Working in pairs, students can now complete **Appendix A2**.
- 3) International Law: For this activity, students will need access to the Internet. Please see **Appendix A3** for completing the post-screening activity.

CONCLUSION/WRAP-UP:

Language Arts – Media Studies students, *Almost Adult* provides an excellent example of the portrayal of a fully-realized character. World Geography - Human Patterns & Interactions and International Law students, the film enriches the academic exercise of studying current events.

Appendix A: Language Arts – Media Studies: Post-screening Activity - *Almost Adult*

Have students record memorable scenes, dialogue, traits, images, camera shots, etc.

Character Trait	Character's Actions	Dialogue (by character, by others)	Camera shots/Recurring Images/sound/other techniques

What would you consider to be the most compelling scene of the film? _____

Explain why: _____

Appendix A1: Suggested Teacher’s Guide Post-screening Activity - *Almost Adult* - Mamie’s Character

Filmmaker uses a variety of techniques to reveal Mamie’s complex character, all contributing to underscore her strongest trait, pride.

Scene	Character’s speech/What others say	Character’s actions	Camera shots/other film techniques	Character Traits
Establishing shot	I came to U.K. to be safe		close up – calm features	optimism
Approached by unscrupulous employer		Refuses offer of chocolate	shabby street in Birmingham	skepticism
Night in police station cell			flashback to her imprisonment in the Congo	fear
In mall with Shiku		Puts Shiku’s scarf and flowers back on counter	close up of items returned to counter (Mamie didn’t see Shiku pocket one of the flowers)	honesty
In shabby hostel	I thought it would be like paradise		camera pans shabby room	idealism
Market scene		Handling, smelling fresh produce	close ups of produce	sentimentalist
Solicitor’s office	I can’t talk about what happened			pride
Hostel room		Suffering from a medical issue	close up of her smiling face at end of tale	fair-minded
Hostel room	I could disappear	Watches Romanian refugee deported by police		fear

Scene	Character's speech/What others say	Character's actions	Camera shots/other film techniques	Character Trait
Mamie at school	I like to live where people don't disappear and I can make friends		close up of her smiling face	outgoing
Receives deportation letter and flees shelter	This is how it feels to become invisible	Roams the streets	night shot of street shadows against brick wall	fear
Accepts offer from unscrupulous employer: Squalid communal living conditions		Willingness to do anything to stay in UK	shot of shabby, crowded interior	resolute
Open field		Planting vegetables	shot of backbreaking work	resourceful, hardworking
Shabby communal shelter	I want my money			assertive
Mamie and Shiku in a park	You're not their slave – you have to tell them			pride
Shabby communal shelter	Mamie: I want my money Mamie: Yes, I'm something, I'm Mamie B....	Employer: You think you're something	shot of employer handing money to Mamie	pride
Gives stolen chocolate bar to Shiku			shot of Mamie giving chocolate bar to Shiku	sensitive (now Mamie has stolen just like Shiku)
Mamie watches Shiku's violent reaction to Mr. Turner's photo efforts – gets help from shelter	Tells her secret		flashback to Congo with Mamie and her sister in the hut with flowers in Mamie's hair	compassion (wants Shiku to know bad things happened to her as well)
In women's shelter again; receives second letter		Accepts change of name to stay in UK		pragmatism
Women's shelter; birthday party for Shiku		Mamie puts flower in Shiku's hair	positive image of flower (reconciliation with past)	

Appendix A2: World Geography: Human Patterns & Interactions - *Almost Adult* – Pre- and Post-screening Activity

Pre-screening Activity: Divide the class into two groups, one group researches the current political situation in the Congo and the other, Kenya; then, based on their research, students fill in the “Push Factors” column.

Kenya		Democratic Republic of the Congo	
Push Factors	Pull Factors	Push Factors	Pull Factors
Example: - ethnic violence	- safety		

Post-screening Activity: Working in pairs, one student with chart work on Kenya and the other, the Congo, discuss the push-pull factors as depicted in the film and add any further push-pull factors to your country; then, with the aid of your partner’s chart, complete the entire chart.

Appendix A3: International Law – *Almost Adult* – Pre- and Post-screening Activity

Pre-screening Activity: Research each of the organizations and briefly fill in the two columns: Mandate and Currently in.

Organization	Mandate/Purpose	Currently in?		Recommended presence		Explain	
		Kenya	Congo	Kenya	Congo	Kenya	Congo
Amnesty International www.amnesty.org							
United Nations www.un.org							
United Nations and Peacekeeping (Google the above)							
Red Cross www.redcross.ca							
African Union www.africa-union.org							

Post-screening Activity: Working in pairs, discuss the political situation of Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo as depicted in the film; then working individually, select one of the countries, research current newspaper article(s), note the cause(s) for the current political unrest. Finally, working in pairs again, complete your charts, filling in the Recommended and Explain columns, based on your discussion and your research notes.