

# 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:** How Nikita Got Herself a Horse  
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** *The Netherlands*  
**RELEASE YEAR:** *2006*  
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE:** *Dutch (with English subtitles)*  
**DIRECTOR:** *Anneke de Lind van Wijngaarden*  
**RUNTIME:** *23 Minutes*  
**DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:** HOW NIKITA GOT HERSELF A HORSE (2006)

**TITLE:** Heavy Pockets  
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** *The United Kingdom*  
**RELEASE YEAR:** *2004*  
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE:** *English*  
**DIRECTOR:** *Sarah Cox*  
**RUNTIME:** *6 Minutes*  
**DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:**  
HEAVY POCKETS (2004)  
PLAIN PLEASURES (2002)

**TITLE:** Benny's Gym  
**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** *Norway*  
**RELEASE YEAR:** *2007*  
**ORIGINAL LANGUAGE:** *Norwegian (with English Subtitles)*  
**DIRECTOR:** *Lisa Marie Gamlem*  
**RUNTIME:** *25 Minutes*  
**DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:** BENNY'S GYM (2007)

**CURRICULUM LINKS:** Language Arts – Media Studies, writing skills  
Health and Physical Education, Social Studies

**FOCUSING QUESTION:** What did you learn about some of the causes of bullying that you didn't consider before?

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## SYNOPSIS:

Recommended for Grades 6 to 8

This programme brings together three short films – a combination of documentary, animation and live-action – that tell intelligent stories about the important subject of bullying. Offering different perspectives on their common topic, the films also share the underlying optimism that bullying can be overcome.

### *How Nikita Got Herself a Horse*

When we meet Nikita, she seems to be a happy and lively thirteen-year-old. But she soon reveals that she was consistently bullied since the first grade, and recounts how one incident almost led to the loss of her eye.

### *Heavy Pockets*

Featuring a unique mix of animation and live-action, this wonderfully original film highlights the emotional impact of being bullied. Awel Jones has the ability to float, but will the actions of her bullying classmates keep her weighed down?

### *Benny's Gym*

In this beautifully photographed and well-acted film, twelve-year-old Alfred is bullied by some boys from school. When one of the bullies, Benny, discovers Alfred's talent for drawing, he befriends him. But can Alfred trust that Benny's friendship is genuine – especially when Benny wants it kept a secret?

## TEACHER ENDORSEMENT:

"The film *How Nikita Got Herself a Horse* is subtitled, and follows the life of a school aged Dutch girl. Frightening stories are discussed but not depicted visually. Adults are seen smoking cigarettes in this film. This film is uplifting, as Nikita gains strength from her experiences. Due to subtitles and the age of the protagonist, I would recommend the film to students in the fifth grade or above. *Heavy Pockets* is an animated film. The tone is very dark and although no content would overtly offend students, it is very

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abstract. This film could be viewed and discussed with classes of grade three and above. The third film, *Benny's Gym*, contains profanity and there are stressful 'chase' scenes as well as homosexuality (two boys share a short kiss). This is quite a confronting film, but my favourite of the three. Again it is subtitled, and does warrant a fairly mature audience in order to deal with both the overt and subtextual homosexuality. I would recommend it to a mature Grade 5 class and above."

**PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION:** Brainstorm with students 'What is bullying?' Ask students if they believe bullying is essentially cultural (e.g. only occurring in North American or Westernized cultures). Why does it occur? What are characteristics of the bully and the bullied?

**DURING SCREENING QUESTION/ACTIVITY:** E.g. While watching these films, think about what, if anything, the three protagonists (or bullied children) have in common.

**POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY:** The following chart can be filled in together as a class or in small groups. Discussion should be sparked by various elements. After students have filled in the chart and results are discussed have them journal using the following stimulus:

**Retell:** Have students briefly retell the plot of the film they feel best depicts bullying.

**Relate:** Students are to relate the happenings in the film to something they've experienced, witnessed or heard about.

**Reflect:** Students are to reflect on bullying. Why does it happen? Who is involved?

	How Nikita got her horse	Heavy Pockets	Benny's Gym
Style: Describe the style of the film	<i>Documentary style</i>	<i>animated</i>	<i>narrative</i>
Symbols	<i>Horse: symbol of power and</i>	<i>Rocks:....</i>	<i>jacket:... hat:....</i>

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	<i>healing</i>		
Protagonists <i>Do any protagonists have outstanding features? (No, only common feature is individuality)</i>			
Bullies <i>** all bullies are described as a group - no individual features</i>			
Nature of Bullying <i>How is the bullying manifested? Physical? Verbal?</i>			
Music			
Setting			

**CONCLUSION/WRAP UP:** Students should be aware of the detriment and destruction of bullying, and not only the long-term effects but the healing that is possible.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:** Students are urged to use counseling available at school, or call Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868