



***How to Survive Myself?* Teacher Resource**

A great deal of thanks and appreciation goes out to the members of our Teacher Advisory Committee, who volunteer their time to assist in the development of Sprockets teacher resources.

TITLE: *How to Survive Myself?*

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: The Netherlands

RELEASE YEAR: 2008

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: Dutch

DIRECTOR: Nicole van Kilsdonk

RUNTIME: 98 minutes

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:

1. *How to Survive Myself?*
2. *Johan* (2005)
3. *Allerzielen* (2005) ("Genade" segment)
4. *Sale* (2003)
5. *Zoë* (1996)

CURRICULUM LINKS:

English, Media Arts, Visual Art, Communication Technology, Health, Anthropology, Sociology and Psychology

- Bullying
- Family Dynamics
- Divorce
- Friendship
- School socialization
- Non-conformity



FOCUSING QUESTION:

How can teenagers evaluate competing influences and make good decisions during times of crisis? How can they “survive” and reconcile the challenges of youth to emerge with a healthy sense of self?

SYNOPSIS:

Teenagers always have to deal with change, but when you’re faced with moving to another city, rearranging your family, meeting new friends and riding the rollercoaster world of puberty in general, it would be helpful to have a how-to guide to help get you through it.

That’s certainly what imaginative, artistic Rosa needs – and what she creates for herself. She is nearly fourteen years old, and everything is in a state of flux. As she battles bullies, an overbearing stepfather, life in a new town, a so-called weight issue, and a couple of versions of herself – advice-dispensing alter egos – Rosa’s sea of change is peppered with interesting and highly entertaining how-to segments guiding her along a path to self-esteem.

How to Survive Myself? is an offbeat, fresh comedy whose success and power comes from the realism of the situations and characters. Jolijn van de Wiel’s wonderfully authentic portrayal of Rosa (and Rosa’s alter egos) combines with the film’s energetic and visually innovative style to offer a wholly engaging portrayal of the familiar dilemmas affecting a young teenaged girl. Youth will surely identify with the challenges Rosa faces and will appreciate the film’s intelligent, humorous and honest approach.

Recommended for grades 7 through 9

AN EDUCATOR’S COMMENTS ON THE FILM:

“This film candidly and humorously addresses pertinent issues for adolescents: sexuality, family relationships, love, attraction, bullying and opposition to authority at home and in the larger community. Students will require some emotional and intellectual maturity to examine diverse choices and lifestyles within the film and also in the context of their own lives.”



PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION:

Introduce the issues presented in the film by exploring the following themes:

- Music is an important expression of teenage angst and struggle. Consider popular music and identify some of the most common themes. Prepare students to understand and analyze why music is so important to the main character.
- Visual art, especially pop art and graffiti, is also a form of expression that teenage culture has embraced. Examine some examples ranging from local graffiti to museum art, CD covers or websites, and explore the power and content of this medium.
- Technology, especially communication technology, has enhanced the generation gap and largely defined the socialization of young people. Identify the role technology plays in the lives of young people and prepare students to evaluate the role of communication technology in the film.

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY:

The following concepts can obviously be contained within shorter time frames if research material is provided. Alternatively, students can be more involved in the research process and the activity can be expanded. Students can demonstrate their understanding through drama, video, PowerPoint, oral presentation, essay or scrapbook as it suits their research, subject matter and the aptitudes and talents of the students.

- In the film, there are several game show-style vignettes that examine an issue young adolescents struggle with (e.g., nutrition, sexuality). Using the style established in the film, develop your own vignette.



- Explore the legal ramifications of graffiti. The teenagers in the movie are aware of the criminal nature of their artistic expression yet continue to face risks. Examine the graffiti policy in your school and community. Research the historical genesis of graffiti, find samples in your community and invite guest speakers from the local police force, school board or art school to discuss their perspective.
- Explore the fashion code within your school community. What do various fashion styles and behaviours say about the individual (e.g., piercings, hairstyles, tattoos, specific articles of clothing)? What pressures exist to conform? Interview individuals representing various styles – this can also apply to individuals from different time periods. Consider interviewing a parent, grandparent or school principal.
- Explore the issue of bullying. Examine the policy within your school and/or within the larger community. Understand historical and cultural attitudes toward bullying, and its presence in different contexts (e.g., the workplace, preschool, military, sports). Why is the issue challenging our society today?

CONCLUSION/WRAP-UP:

Compare this film with others that examine bullying as a theme. (*Bluebird* is one example from Sprockets.) As a class, compare the coping strategies in *How to Survive Myself?* with those portrayed in other films, and evaluate the strategies for practicality and effectiveness. What do the “experts” say versus the average kid on the street? Compare the types of bullying portrayed in various films. How have filmmakers addressed the issue? How would students present the theme of bullying if given the opportunity?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

1. Goldstein, Ruth M., and Edith Zornow. *The Screen Image of Youth: Movies about Children and Adolescents*. London: Scarecrow Press, 1980.
2. Lewis, Jon. *The Road to Romance and Ruin: Teen Films and Youth Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992.



3. Low, Brian J. *NFB Kids: Portrayals of Children by the National Film Board of Canada, 1939-1989*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2002.
4. The New York Times. *The New York Times Guide to the Best Children's Videos*. New York: Pocket Books, 1999.
5. Wojcik-Andrews, Ian. *Children's Films: History, Ideology, Pedagogy, Theory*. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.
6. Bullying .org
www.bullying.org
7. Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System
www.lfcc.on.ca/bully.htm
8. National Film Board
www.nfb.ca
9. Ontario Public School Boards' Association
www.opsba.org/
10. Toronto Argonauts, Huddle Up Bullying Prevention Program
www.argonauts.ca/page/huddleup
11. Toronto Police
www.torontopolice.on.ca
(See Kids' Safety Zone and Graffiti Eradication from the Community Safety menu.)

Toronto Public Library Website

1. General research
<http://vrl.torontopubliclibrary.ca>
2. RAMP for youth
<http://ramp.torontopubliclibrary.ca/>