



Mahek 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.

This teacher resource was written by Ernest Agbuya.

TITLE: *Mahek*

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: India

RELEASE YEAR: 2007

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: Hindi, English

DIRECTOR: Kranti Kanade

RUNTIME: 80 minutes

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:

1. *Mahek* (2007)
2. *Chaitra* (2002)

CURRICULUM LINKS:

A key element in the plot is an essay competition in Mahek's class. The full Writing strand of the Language Curriculum is relevant to the ideas presented in this Teacher Resource.

There are science connections through references to Isaac Newton and James Watt, two scientists who made key contributions to the studies of energy and forces. Links can also be made to the Grade 3 study of Growth and Changes in Plants.

One of the film's key themes is perseverance, June's trait for Character Education.



FOCUSING QUESTION: What struggles does Mahek have to overcome in order to find out what her greatest strength is?

SYNOPSIS:

Poor Mahek! She wants to be the best at something but just can't figure out what she's best at. In fact, she doesn't know of anything she's even good at. She loses the class election by a landslide, builds a science-fair project that doesn't work and lands the role of Garbage in her school play. At home, she loses to her dad in chess every game they play. It seems to her the only thing she's good at is daydreaming about being good at things! When a woman claiming to be her fairy godmother appears, it would seem she's just another one of Mahek's fantasies – and not a very good one at that.

Unlike the fairies from storybooks, this one can't perform any magical spells. She simply offers Mahek this advice: "Look within yourself and you'll find your strengths." A writing contest at school seems like the chance for Mahek to use her powerful imagination, but after so much failure, will she have the confidence to prove herself?

Featuring charming performances from the young cast and clever fantasy sequences, *Mahek* is filled with equal amounts of heart and humour. The film celebrates the importance of imagination, self-confidence and perseverance, and reminds us that everybody is great at something.

Recommended for grades 4 through 6

AN EDUCATOR'S COMMENTS ON THE FILM:

"This is a wonderful film that celebrates the power of dreams and imagination as key forces for change, creativity, leadership, invention and guilt-free leisure."



PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION:

Students need to know where to locate India, the film's setting, on the map. Share with them some information about Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, two very important figures in Indian history (see additional resources below).

Aimee Buckner has a great writing strategy in her book *Notebook Know-How: Strategies for the Writer's Notebook*, in which students gain writing inspiration from other texts. Instead of being a reading response, "writing off" another text (be it a story, an item in the news or even just a word) is an effective way to use another work as a springboard to rich, imaginative writing.

The following two quotes play a key role in the film and present a perfect opportunity for students to "write off" a quote.

"If you shut your doors to all errors, truth will be shut out."

– Rabindranath Tagore

"Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes."

– Mahatma Gandhi

Lead a discussion with the class after giving students a chance to share their initial responses to these quotes in a "think-pair-share" to generate ideas. You may want to ask them some questions to focus their thoughts:

- What did these people really mean when they authored these quotes?
- What do the quotes mean to you?
- Can you make a text-to-self, text-to-text or text-to-world connection to either of these quotes that would illustrate the truth behind these words?

After students have had a chance to share ideas, they will be ready to write down their thoughts in their Writer's Notebook. When watching the film, take a peek at their reactions when the quotes pop up on screen should you choose not to let them know ahead of time that the quotes will be included in the film!



Mahek is a girl who is struggling to find out what her strengths are in the face of numerous gaffes and awkward missteps. You may want to lead an activity with your students in which they consider what their greatest strengths are. Brainstorm some ideas with the class. Honour a variety of interpretations of what strengths are; some may put a lot of value on their honesty or trustworthiness, while others might take most pride in their goaltending skills. Have students write about their greatest strength in their Writer's Notebooks. Alternately, they can create a piece of art that shows how they visualize their strength.

Also, you may want to look briefly at biographies of Isaac Newton (discoverer of gravity) and James Watt (inventor of the steam engine), two important figures in scientific history who, like Mahek, were dreamers.

If you are teaching Grade 3 Science, you could plant some flowers and watch them grow. How long does it take them to bloom? Do they all bloom at the same time? Some will bloom later than others but will bloom nonetheless. In the film, a plant that does not seem to want to flower symbolizes Mahek's struggle to find value in herself.

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY:

Just as in the film, hold an essay competition. For their topic, students can choose from *intelligence*, *humour*, *beauty* or *imagination*. If you have not done so already, guide them through the writing process, from generating ideas to publishing the final copy. Perhaps the winning essay writer can read their work at a school assembly.

CONCLUSION/WRAP-UP:

Reflect with the class on the key themes of the film. Have students see that even the most ordinary person has something extra-ordinary in him or her. Discuss the dream of Martin Luther King Jr., the initial improbability of Barack Obama's journey to the White House, and the idea that important changes come from individual people who dare to imagine. Is it possible for Mahek to become a national leader in India? What are your students capable of becoming when they blossom into adulthood?



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

1. Anderson, Margaret J. *Isaac Newton: The Greatest Scientist of All Time*. New Jersey: Enslow Publishers, 2001.
2. Buckner, Aimee. *Notebook Know-How: Strategies for the Writer's Notebook*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.
3. Kindersley, Dorling. *DK Biography: Gandhi*. London, UK: Dorling Kindersley Ltd., 2006.
4. Shaw, Maura D. *Gandhi: India's Great Soul*. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2003.
5. Sproule, Anna. *James Watt: Master of the Steam Engine*. Woodbridge, CT: Blackbirch Press, 2001.
6. Tagore, Sir Rabindranath. *The Crescent Moon*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2007.