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Sirah STUDY GUIDE

From the John VanDuzer Children's Film Collection

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Message to the Educator

The Youth Learning Department at TIFF aims to provide children, youth and students with new academic opportunities and social experiences by exposing them to the language and vision of film. We are proud to introduce educators to The John VanDuzer Children's Film Collection. This initiative reflects our continuing commitment to educating and inspiring youth with the transformative powers of the moving image.

The collection, the first of its kind in the world, is empowered to purchase, archive and distribute the best children's and family films available from around the world. Developed with education experts, study guides accompany each film and are designed to address contemporary social issues and provide a wealth of synergistic programming with the Ontario Ministry of Education. For more information, please visit reellearning.ca, our online film-literacy resource for educators.

Synopsis

Country of Origin: USA

Release Year: 2005

Original Language: English

Director: Christine Spindler

Runtime: 17.5 minutes

Themes: Belief in yourself, friendship, responsibility, bullying, cultural awareness

Grade Recommendation: 5 to 8

Sirah is a young Muslim girl born in the United States who desperately wants to connect with other girls her own age. Sirah and her family are devout Muslims and she has chosen to wear a hijab, which further alienates her from her peers. Nevertheless, Sirah begins to develop a friendship with Amy, and must choose between fitting in at school and maintaining her family's traditional cultural values.

Curriculum Links

Activity	Curriculum Expectations
<p>Language: Writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience. • Identify their point of view, and other possible points of view, and determine, when appropriate, if their own view is balanced and supported by evidence. • Produce draft and revised pieces of writing to meet identified criteria based on the expectations related to content, organization, style and use of conventions.
<p>Arts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve problems through drama and dance, working in large and small groups using various strategies. • Use different forms of available technology to enhance work.
<p>Media Literacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions and techniques. • Reflect on and identify their strengths as media interpreters and creators, areas for improvement and the strategies they found most helpful in understanding and creating media texts.
<p>Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply strategies to deal with threats to personal safety (e.g., in response to harassment) and to prevent injury (e.g., from physical assault). • Explain how people's actions (e.g., bullying, excluding others) can affect the feelings and reactions of others. • Apply a problem-solving/decision-making process to address issues related to friends, peers and family relationships.

Lesson Outline

1. Bullying

40 to 50 minutes

- Part of an ongoing class discussion of bullying and acceptance
- Definitions: hijab, Muslim and Islam
- Lesson Assessment: Health

2. *Sirah*: First Viewing

40 to 50 minutes

- Activate prior knowledge of bullying and acceptance
- General classroom discussion: key scenes and climax
- Discuss the theme and message of the movie
- Lesson Assessment: Connector

3. *Sirah*: Second Viewing

40 to 50 minutes

- Activate prior knowledge: climax
- Students will identify and share key scenes from film
- Students will select three scenes they feel are critical to the story
- Lesson Assessment: Film Illuminator

4. *Sirah*: Film Review

40 to 50 minutes

- Students will write a review of *Sirah*
- Students will make connections between the film and their own personal experiences
- Lesson Assessment: *Sirah* Film Review Rubric

5. *Sirah*: What Happens Next?

2 x 40 to 50 minutes

- Students will brainstorm about what happens to *Sirah* after the film
- Students will write a short story from the perspective of *Sirah*, the bully or Amy
- Lesson Assessment: Writing, Perspective, Point of View

6. Learning Extensions

- Group storyboard and script writing
- Filming: production
- Filming: post-production

7. Appendix \ Black Line Masters

- Appendix one: Bullying Behaviours
- Connector
- Film Illuminator
- *Sirah* Student Question and Response Sheets
- *Sirah* Placemat Line Master
- Film Review Student Response Sheet
- Film Review Template
- *Sirah*: "What Happens Next" Line Master
- Story Writing Rubric
- Film Review Rubric

Lesson One: Bullying

Exercises to engage students *before* watching the film

Time required: 40 to 50 minutes

Overall expectations:

Health

- Explain how people's actions (e.g., bullying, excluding others) can affect the feelings and reactions of others.

Materials needed:

- Chart paper and markers
- Definition of bullying
- Bullying behaviours worksheet (appendix one)

Description:

Students will review their understanding of bullying and tolerance. Working in pairs, small groups and individually, students will complete the worksheet.

Procedure:

1. Create a definition of bullying with students (Think–Pair–Share Activity).
 - Students define bullying.
 - They share their definition of bullying with a partner.
 - Students share within a small group to create a group definition of bullying.
 - Student groups share their definitions with class.
2. Student groups brainstorm bullying behaviour and record their ideas on chart paper.
3. Discuss different types of bullying (physical, verbal and social/emotional).
 - Create a chart paper model of bullying behaviours appendix sheet.
 - Fill in model using brainstormed bullying behaviour.
4. Class discussion
 - Which of these behaviours happen most often at our school? In our classroom?
 - Which type of bullying behaviour is the most difficult to stop?
 - Which type of bullying do you think is the most hurtful?
5. Distribute bullying behaviour worksheet.
 - Give students the opportunity to fill in the sheet using samples from the board.

Activate prior knowledge

What is bullying?

- Involves a power imbalance between the bully and victim.
- Could include: number, size, status, role, culture, ethnicity.
- The bully tries to cause the victim to feel distress and/or humiliation.
- Bullying behaviour tends to be repeated.
- Bullying can be direct and/or indirect.
- Direct bullying is face to face and can include verbal (insults, putdowns, teasing), physical (shoving, hitting) and psychological abuse (rolling eyes, dirty looks, uttering threats, extortion).
- Indirect bullying occurs behind someone's back and can include, exclusion (leaving out, shunning), relational aggression (telling people not to be friends with a victim) and gossip (lowering peoples opinion of another).
- There are a number of roles in a bullying situation: bully, victim, onlookers, bully supporters and the intervener.

Student actions that can help onlookers prevent bullying:

- Treat others the way you would like to be treated.
- Be a friend to the victim.
- Report the bullying to a trusted adult.
- Tell the bully what he or she is doing is not acceptable and to stop.
- Include everyone equally.

Lesson Two: *Sirah* First Viewing

Time required: 40 to 50 minutes

Overall expectations:

Media literacy

Reflect on and identify their strengths as media interpreters and creators, areas for improvement and the strategies they found most helpful in understanding and creating media texts.

Materials needed:

- Literary scene illustrator
- *Sirah* DVD
- DVD player
- Chart paper and markers
- Connector worksheet (appendix two)

Description:

Students will review their understanding of bullying and tolerance. Students will learn the definitions of hijab, Islam and Muslim. The class will watch *Sirah* and then individually complete the connector worksheet.

Procedure:

Pre-viewing questions and activities:

1. Activate prior knowledge from lesson one.
 - What is bullying?
2. Introduce definitions of hijab, Islam and Muslim.
 - Write definitions on chart paper.
3. Anticipatory questions:
 - Have you ever accepted a dare from someone and regretted it afterwards?
 - If you were new to a school, how hard do you think it would be to fit in with everyone else?
 - What would you do to fit into a social group of friends?

Post-viewing questions and activities:

1. Record student thinking and answers (Think-Pair-Share).
 - What do you think is the main theme or message in the movie?
2. What happens to disrupt Sirah and Amy's friendship?
 - Why do you think the bully targets Sirah?
 - How do we know from the bully's actions that she doesn't like Sirah and wants to hurt her?
3. What type of bullying do you think Sirah is exposed to?

4. Distribute connector worksheet for students to complete individually.
- Give an example of a connection after the class discussion.
 - Students are to find connections between the film and the world outside. This means connecting the film to:
 - Their own life (film to self).
 - Other films, books or media sources (film to media).
 - Happenings at school (film to world).
 - Other people or problems they've encountered.

Definitions:

Islam: a monotheistic religion characterized by the acceptance of the doctrine of submission to God and to Muhammed as the chief and last prophet of God.

- <http://www.answers.com/topic/islam>

Muslim (Moslem): a believer or follower of Islam.

Hijab: a headscarf worn by Muslim women that sometimes includes a veil that covers the face except for the eyes.

- <http://www.answers.com/topic/hijab>
- <http://knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Hijab/>
- <http://middleeast.about.com/od/religionsectarianism/f/me080209.htm>

Lesson Three: *Sirah* Second Viewing

Time required: 40 to 50 minutes

Overall expectations:

Media literacy

Reflect on and identify their strengths as media interpreters and creators, areas for improvement and the strategies they found most helpful in understanding and creating media texts.

Materials:

- *Sirah* DVD
- DVD player
- Chart paper and markers
- 11x17 copy of film illuminator (appendix six)
- *Sirah* placemat 11x17 (one per group) (appendix eight)
- Film illuminator (one per student)

Description:

Students will work in small groups, and individually, to analyze *Sirah*. In groups, they will complete the placemat line master. Students will work independently to complete both the question and response sheets and the film illuminator.

Procedure:

Pre-viewing activities and questions:

1. Activate prior knowledge from lesson one.
 - What is bullying?
 - Thinking questions:
 - Have you ever accepted a dare from someone and regretted it afterwards?
 - How did you feel when Sirah took off her hijab?
 - What could Sirah have done differently?
 - What could Amy have done to support Sirah?
2. Prepare students for post-viewing activities.
 - The first few minutes of a film sets the tone and storyline.
 - What do we learn about Sirah in the opening scene?
 - What mood and feeling do we experience watching the first few minutes?
 - What does the director do to indicate what the film is going to be about?
 - Provide students with the definition of scene.
 - Ask the students to pay particular attention to how the director sets up scenes and shots to tell the story.

Post-viewing activities and questions:

Sirah follows a narrative story structure. The purpose of a narrative is to entertain, but it can also teach or inform. Narratives are typically imaginary but can be based on factual information. The structure of a narrative requires:

- **An orientation:**
 - Where the story takes place.
 - Addresses: who, where, when.
- **The complication:** this is when the story is moved along by an event, situation and/or problem.
- **The resolution:** the point when the complication is solved.

Group placemat activity:

- Discuss film narrative structure.
- On chart paper, identify three main elements in film narrative.
 - Orientation, complication, resolution.
- Distribute *Sirah* placemat to each student group.
 - Students complete the placemat.
 - Group presenter shares work.

Orientation:

- Where is the film set?
- Who are the main characters?
- What event at the beginning of the film puts the story in motion?

Complication:

- What problem does Sirah face?
- How do the character's actions affect the story?
- What scenes or situations move the story along?

Resolution:

- What is the climax of the film?
- Why is this scene the most important piece of action?
- When does it take place?
- Independent Student Activity:
- Students complete the film question response worksheet.
- Students complete the film illuminator worksheet.

Definitions:

Scene: Usually a shot (or series of shots) that comprise a single, complete and unified dramatic event, action, unit or element of film narration. This is a block (segment) of storytelling within a film. Much like a scene in a play, the end of a scene is often indicated by a change in time, action and/or location.

Example: In the film *Sirah*, the opening scene shows Sirah alone in a classroom, hanging up a glass mobile while she watches children play and laugh together outside.

Narrative: This film genre includes mysteries, romance, science fiction, adventure, drama and other films that you typically see in fictionalized film presentations. The purpose of a narrative is to entertain, but it can also teach or inform. Narratives are typically imaginary but can be based on factual information. The film narrative is a dramatised sequence of events.

The structure of a narrative requires:

- **Orientation:** Where the story takes place (who, where, when).
- **Complication:** When the story is moved along by a situation, event or problem.
- **Resolution:** The point where the complication is solved – for better or for worse.

Ask yourself the following questions when writing a narrative storyline:

- Who are the main characters?
- Where does it take place?
- What happens at the beginning?
- What is the complication or problem?
- How is it resolved?
- What twists or story points will keep the audience interested?

Lesson Four: *Sirah* Film Review

Time required: 40 to 50 minutes

Overall expectations:

Language – writing

- Generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience.
- Identify their point of view, and other possible points of view, and determine, when appropriate, if their own view is balanced and supported by evidence.
- Produce draft and revised pieces of writing to meet identified criteria based on the expectations related to content, organization, style and use of conventions.

Materials:

- Film review template (one per student) (appendix five)
- Film review guide (one per student) (appendix five)
- Film review rubric (one per student)

Description:

Students will write a review of *Sirah*.

Objectives:

Students will learn to:

- Analyze a narrative story structure.
- Synthesize literary and visual concepts into a structured essay.

Procedure:

- Distribute and then discuss the film review template (appendix five), the film review worksheet and the film review rubric.
- Make sure the students understand the structure before beginning the assignment.
- Individual Student Activity.
- Student completes the film review template.
- Student writes first draft of review.
 - They edit this draft themselves first, then with a classmate.
- Student completes final copy of film review.
- Self-evaluates using the film review rubric.

Lesson Five: *Sirah*, What Happens Next?

Time required: 80 to 100 minutes

Overall expectations:

- Generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience.
- Identify their point of view, and other possible points of view, and determine, when appropriate, if their own view is balanced and supported by evidence.
- Produce draft and revised pieces of writing to meet identified criteria based on the expectations related to content, organization, style and use of conventions.

Materials:

- Chart paper
- Story map outline (one per student)
- Story rubric (one per student)

Description:

- The end of *Sirah* is open to interpretation in terms of what will happen. Will she continue to wear the hijab or will she choose not to?
- Students will write a short story about what happens next.
- Lead a discussion about conflict in the story and, as a class, brainstorm possible scenarios based on the perspectives of the main characters.

Procedure:

- Lead a class discussion on complications and conflict within *Sirah*.
- Students first review their film response questions.
 - When is the first indication that the bully does not like Sirah?
 - Why does the bully dare Sirah to remove her hijab?
 - Why do you think Sirah accepted the dare?
 - After she takes off her hijab, Sirah recalls scenes wearing it. What do you imagine she is thinking?
 - When Sirah returns home, her mother appears to be standing there. What is her mother's reaction? How is this different from her reaction after the pool party?
 - What do you imagine Sirah is thinking as she is standing in front of her mother? What is her mother thinking?
 - Sirah returns downstairs at the end of the film to pray with her mother. What do you think she will say to her mother afterwards?
- On a chart, list the three main characters: Sirah, Amy and the Bully (Think-Pair-Share).
 - Students think about what could happen to Sirah after the film is over.
 - Students will then discuss and share with a partner.
 - Students will share (round robin) with the class – record on chart paper.

- Possible story elements:
 - If Sirah chooses to continue to wear the hijab, how will the bully react? Amy? Her friends?
 - Do you think her mother will talk to Sirah about not wearing the hijab after they finish praying?
 - What could Amy do to help Sirah?
 - How will her family react if Sirah chooses not to wear the hijab? The bully? Amy?
 - What could Sirah do in order to wear the hijab and still develop a friendship with Amy and the other students?
 - Will Sirah confront the bully the next day?
 - Will Sirah's parents do something?
- Individual Student Activity
 - Student completes the "what happens next?" worksheet.
 - Student writes first draft of story.
 - They edit this draft themselves first, then with a classmate.
 - Student writes final copy of story.
 - Self-evaluates using story rubric.

About Bell Lightbox

Currently under construction, Bell Lightbox, a breathtaking five-storey complex located in downtown Toronto, will provide a permanent home for film lovers to celebrate cinema from around the world and will propel TIFF forward as an international leader in film culture. Designed by innovative architecture firm KPMB, Bell Lightbox's fluid structure encourages exploration, movement and play. The campaign to build Bell Lightbox is generously supported by founding sponsor Bell, the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario, the King and John Festival Corporation—consisting of the Reitman family and the Daniels Corporation—RBC as major sponsor and official bank, Visa†, the Copyright Collective of Canada, NBC Universal Canada, the Allan Slaight Family, the Brian Linehan Charitable Foundation and CIBC. The Board of Directors, staff and many generous individuals and corporations have also contributed to the campaign. For more information on the Bell Lightbox campaign, visit belllightbox.ca.

Appendix one: Bullying Behaviours

Bullying can be direct (face to face) or indirect (behind someone's back).

Bullying can be physical, verbal and/or social.

Bullying typically crosses between categories, especially when it escalates. Examples may fit into more than one column, providing an area of worthwhile discussion.

Physical Bullying	Verbal Bullying	Social or Emotional Bullying
Hurting someone else's body	Hurting another person's feelings	Hurting someone in a relational sense
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hair-pulling• Biting• Hitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name-calling• Teasing• Racial slurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ignoring• Isolating• Humiliating people

Appendix two: Connector

Name: _____

Group Members: _____

Film: _____

Director: _____

Your job is to find connections between the film you watched and the world outside. This means connecting the film to:

- Your own life (film to self).
- Other films, books or media sources (film to media).
- Happenings at school (film to world).
- Other people or problems you've encountered.

List some connections you have found with this film below:

1.	
2.	
3.	

Appendix Three: Film Illuminator

Name: _____

Group Members: _____

Film: _____

Director: _____

As the film illuminator, you need to identify three scenes to share with the group. Remember to give reasons for your choices. These must be parts you think were very important to the film's storyline. The idea is to remember some interesting, powerful, funny, puzzling or important events or scenes in the film.

Possible reasons for picking a scene or event:

- Sad
- Surprising
- Tells about characters
- Well acted
- Sets a mood
- Funny
- Confusing
- Really makes you think
- Most important event

Example:

Setting	Scene	Importance to Film
School Classroom	Sirah is alone and standing on a bookshelf in her classroom hanging up a glass mobile.	Illustrates that Sirah is alone and wants to fit in with the other girls she sees out the window.

Worksheet follows on next page.

Appendix Three: Film Illuminator (cont.)

Setting	Scene	Importance to Film

Appendix Four: Student Question and Response Sheet

1. Why doesn't Sirah want to serve Amy's family at her restaurant?
2. What does Amy say at the restaurant to indicate she likes Sirah?
3. When is the first indication that the bully does not like Sirah?
4. Why does the bully invite Sirah to sit with her at lunch?
5. Why does Sirah want to go to Amy's party?
6. What is Amy's reaction to Sirah arriving at the party? The bullies?
7. What is Sirah's family's reaction when she returns home after the party?
8. What does Amy do the night after the party with Sirah? Why?
9. What does Sirah tell Amy her reason is for wearing the hijab?
10. Why does the bully invite Sirah to play under the bridge with the other children?
11. How do we know what the bully is thinking during the truth or dare game after school?
12. Why does the bully dare Sirah to remove her hijab?
13. What is the bully's reaction to Sirah removing her hijab? Amy's reaction? Onlookers?
14. Why do you think Sirah accepted the dare to remove her hijab?
15. After she takes off her hijab, Sirah recalls scenes wearing it. What do you imagine she is thinking?
16. Sirah walks home holding her hijab. Why do you think the director has her walking in the rain?
17. When Sirah returns home her mother appears to be standing there. What is her mother's reaction? How is this different from her reaction after the pool party?
18. What do you imagine Sirah is thinking as she is standing in front of her mother? What is her mother thinking?
19. Sirah returns downstairs at the end of the film to pray with her mother. What do you think Sirah will say to her mother afterwards?
20. Which scene do you think is the most important in the movie? Why?

Appendix Five: *Sirah* Film Review

Country of Origin: USA

Release Year: 2005

Original Language: English

Director: Christine Spindler

Runtime: 17.5 minutes

Sirah:

Amy:

The Bully:

1. Who are the main characters in the film?
2. What is this story about? Be very detailed!
3. What group of people would like this film?
4. Did you like this film? Why or why not?
5. What rating would you give this movie? One star (poor) five stars (excellent)
6. What moral lesson does the film teach? What did you learn from it?

Film Review Template

Movie titles are written within quotation marks, for example, “*Sirah*.”

Headline/Title: Include the title of the film.

Paragraph One: Introduce the film and a couple of details to capture the reader’s interest.

Paragraph Two: Describe what takes place in the film without giving away the ending. Who are the main characters? What is the story about?

Paragraph Three: Discuss the actors in film and how you felt about their performances.

Paragraph Four: Discuss what you liked about the film and anything you didn’t think worked.

Paragraph Five: What lessons did you learn from this story? What do you think others will learn?

Paragraph Six: Who is this film meant to appeal to? Would you recommend it? To whom? What is your final word on the film? Is it good or bad?

Rating System: Give the film a score. Stars (***) out of (*****) or numbers (3 out of 5).

Short Biography: Describe who you are and what grade you are in. Talk about any sports, activities or interesting things you like to do. Write about yourself in the third person, that is, pretend someone else is writing the biography about you.

Appendix Six: Film Summarizer

Name: _____

Group Members: _____

Film: _____

Director: _____

Summarizer: Your job is to prepare a brief summary of the film.

If there are several main ideas or points, you can use the numbered slots below.

Key Points/Events/Scenes:

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

Appendix Seven: *Sirah*, What Happens Next?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Setting:	Time:	Place:



Characters:



Problem:



Plot / Events:



Resolution:

Appendix Eight: Story Placemat

Students should review the sample storyline below, then recreate their own diagram reflecting the storyline of *Sirah* on a blank sheet of paper.

Example Storyline

