

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: Standing Alone

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: *Iran*

RELEASE YEAR: *2007*

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: *Farsi*

DIRECTOR: Gholam-Reza Ramezani

RUNTIME: *90 Minutes*

CURRICULUM LINKS: Media Literacy, Health, Equity, ESL

FOCUSING QUESTION: Mohammed has a strong sense of social justice, how does this get him into trouble in his family and in his community?

SYNOPSIS:

Recommended for Grades 6 to 8

Teacher Endorsement:

"In Iran, there are strict guidelines for filmmakers, regarding the representation of contentious religious and political ideas, and sexuality. As a result, directors often tell moral tales under the guise of children's films, where the rules are more flexible. *Standing Alone* is a deceptively simple story of a young boy who takes a stand against bullying in its many forms, and gets into trouble for doing so. With the help of his mother, and others in the community, social justice prevails. The story explores the power of bullies of all ages who attempt to take advantage of others, and the personal cost of standing alone for what is right.

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This film paints a vivid picture of Muslim family life in Iran, a country that has experienced many years of financial hardship and political and religious instability. It is a representation of a culture which has some different values from western cultures, notably, different approaches to the role of women in society and to the discipline of children. Such practices evolve in every culture over time. It is relevant to point out that as late as 1968, spanking and strapping of children was acceptable in Canadian schools and culture; as well, the role of women has changed dramatically in Canada in the late twentieth century.

This film has very different production values from typical children's films created by western production companies. Produced with limited funds, it makes up for a lack of glitz and glamour with a complex script, interpreted by strong actors.

All children living within a diverse culture benefit from learning stories of other cultures and students from other cultures love to see their own culture represented. I see this film as an anthem for social justice. Even a child can make a difference."

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:

STANDING ALONE (2007)

HAYAT (2005)

BAZI (2004)

THE CART (1999)

PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION

1. Make sure the students know the synopsis of the plot as a support for the subtitles.
2. Explain that this story takes place in one neighbourhood in a city in Iran. It is not representative of the whole country, which also has large modern cities.
3. Have students find Iran on a map/globe. Students can research Iranian culture, Muslim family life and/or Iranian students/teachers in the class can prepare a presentation of Iranian modern life for the class.

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DURING SCREENING QUESTION/ACTIVITY:

While watching, look for examples of both social injustice (bullying, lying etc) and kindness (helping, kind words etc)

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY:

1. Divide the class into two groups. Have one group brainstorm a list of kind acts from the film, and the other group list the injustices. Have each group appoint a recorder to create a list to present for discussion by the whole class.
2. Discuss the ending of the film. How did Mohammed's father change? Why did this happen?

CONCLUSION/WRAP UP: Every person can make a difference by taking a stand against injustice. This is a universal value which can apply to all cultures, but it is easier and safer to stand for justice in Canada than it is in many other places.

Additional Resources:

1. O.I.S.E. Library, University of Toronto: The history of discipline in Ontario Schools
2. Local Board Resources on Iran and Islamic Culture (check with E.S.L., Equity and Global and World Studies Departments)
3. Local Board AV Resource Centres for other Iranian films for children
4. Iranian Children's Film *Children of Heaven*.