

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:	The Substitute
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:	<i>Denmark</i>
RELEASE YEAR:	<i>2007</i>
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE:	<i>Danish(with English subtitles)</i>
DIRECTOR:	<i>Ole Bornedal</i>
RUNTIME:	<i>93 mins</i>
CURRICULUM LINKS:	<i>This lesson plan will help teachers meet the Overall Expectations for Media Literacy for Grades 5-8:</i>

- 1. Demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts;*
- 2. Identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning;*
- 3. Create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques;*
- 4. 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.*

FOCUSING QUESTION: Why is it important to be able to empathize? What techniques do film-makers use to help their viewers relate to the characters in their films?

SYNOPSIS:

Recommended for Grades 6 to 9

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It is quickly apparent to Carl's Grade 6 class that Ulla Harms is no ordinary teacher. Cold and insensitive, she sets about humiliating the students by picking on their weaknesses. Carl is certain she isn't human and suspects she plans to kidnap the students and take them back to her planet, but finds it isn't easy to convince his classmates. Even when his peers do come onside, it is impossible to get the adults to believe there is anything wrong with their substitute teacher. When their "alien" claims are dismissed, Carl and his friends realize they must take matters into their own hands if they are to prevent Ulla from carrying out her sinister mission.

In her superb portrayal of Ulla, celebrated Danish actor Paprika Steen brings every student's nightmare to life. This wonderfully imaginative and exhilarating film is sure to cause gasps and laughs as it champions the values of cooperation and friendship and celebrates the very human emotions of empathy and love.

TEACHER ENDORESEMENT: "Brief instances of language, some mature themes (e.g. bereavement). Recommended for ages 10 and up."

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:

JUST ANOTHER LOVE STORY (2007)

THE SUBSTITUTE (2007)

I AM DINA (2002)

DEEP WATER (1999)

NIGHTWATCH (1997)

NATTENAGTEN (1994)

PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION:

The film uses the term 'love' and 'empathy' interchangeably, so students need to have an understanding of both terms and how the ability to empathize shows your ability to love.

Suggested pre-screening activities:

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ACTIVITY 1:

1. Cut out the Emotional Cue Cards in Appendix 1.
2. Ask ten students to volunteer to act out the emotion on each of the cards. Inform them that they can only mime and not use any verbal communication, i.e. no talking. (Alternatively, students can mime the word in pairs.)
3. The rest of the class must watch the mime in its entirety before they attempt to guess what the word on the card is.
4. Ask the students to reflect on the exercise once it is complete. How did the class know what how the performer was feeling even though the performer did not tell the class?
5. Write the word 'EMPATHY' on the board and inform the students that their ability to understand how another person feels is their ability to empathize.
6. Lead students on discussion: Why it is important to be able to empathize? i.e., Why is it important to understand how other people are feeling? Can you think of a time when you helped someone by empathizing with them?

DURING SCREENING QUESTION/ACTIVITY:

Part of what makes watching movies enjoyable is our ability to empathize with the characters in the movie.

1. Which characters in the movie can you empathize with most/least? Why?
2. Although the film deals with aliens and fantasy, why/how are we able to still empathize with the characters?

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY:

Lead a discussion with students and answer the above questions. Possibly ask students to respond to question 1 above in a journal format. If possible when discussing question 2, draw your class's attention to the various aspects of the film that help the viewer empathize with the students, e.g. quiet, suspenseful music playing in the background when the students are scared; close-up shots of the teacher's face when the students are feeling intimidated of her; dark

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scenes/low lighting when the students are lost in the teacher's house and are feeling scared etc.

1. Ask students why being able to empathize with someone shows that you care for (i.e. love) them. The movie's message is that love is "the greatest force in the universe." Do you agree? Why/why not?
2. Refer to the scenes in the movie where Ulla pretends to cry to make the parents/students empathize with her so she can get them to do something for her (e.g. in the gymnasium, where she meets the parents for the first time with the "Minister," Ulla cries to make the parents feel sorry for her and convince them that she cares about their children; at the end of the film, Ulla cries to try and save her magical ball from the grinder.) Discussion question: Are there times when you have felt that someone has used empathy to influence your behaviour? (e.g. commercials for children's aid use powerful images and language to make people feel sad in the hope that they will donate money to their cause)
3. Possible extension activity (Grades 4-5): Ask students to use the template given in Appendix 2 to write a poem where they make their reader empathize with them about a feeling. Brainstorm a list of emotions with the class before you begin the exercise. Also, print a sample (Appendix 3) of an empathy poem on an overhead to model template to students.
4. Ask some students to read their poems in front of the class and have the class guess which emotion they have written about.

CONCLUSION/WRAP-UP: Continue to help students identify techniques in other written, verbal, audio-visual texts, that you study with them, that result in them empathizing with the people in the texts.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

' "The Substitute" Website,' 2007, [Online] Available at:
<http://www.vikaren.com/>

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Appendix 1 – EMOTIONAL CUE CARDS
Resource

Teacher

Happy	Worried
Sad	Disappointed
Excited	Lonely
Nervous	Angry
Shy	Tired

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Appendix 2 – Template for Empathy Poem

Student Handout

I am feeling: _____

<p>Poem's Title: What makes you feel this way?</p>	<hr/>
<p>What are you thinking?</p>	
<p>What are you doing? (2 actions) Action 1</p>	
<p>Action 2</p>	
<p>What are you saying?</p>	
<p>What can someone do to show that they understand how you're feeling?</p>	

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Appendix 3 – Sample Empathy Poem

Teacher Resource

I am feeling: Nervous

Poem's Title: What makes you feel this way? <hr/>	<i>Math Tests</i> <hr/>
What are you thinking?	<i>I hope I pass!</i>
What are you doing? (2 actions) Action 1	<i>I sit quietly at my desk.</i>
Action 2	<i>I bite my nails..</i>
What are you saying?	<i>I stammer "h-h-here" when my name is called for attendance.</i>
What can someone do to show that they understand how you're feeling?	<i>I wish my best friend was here to give me a hug!</i>