

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: *Where Is Winky's Horse?*

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: The Netherlands

RELEASE YEAR: *2007*

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: *Dutch (with English subtitles)*

DIRECTOR: *Mischa Kamp*

RUNTIME: *90 Minutes*

CURRICULUM LINKS:

- Traditions and celebrations
- Reading
- Writing
- Life cycles

FOCUSING QUESTION:

Winky loves horses and wants the chance to ride Saint Nicholas's horse for her birthday. Instead, she gets lessons riding a pony called Naf-Naf. How far is she willing to go to make her wishes come true?

SYNOPSIS: This delightfully captivating follow-up to the acclaimed *Winky's Horse* reunites us with young Winky Wong, a Chinese immigrant to the Netherlands who has a passion for horses. Winky's favourite is Amerigo, a horse she dutifully grooms while dreaming of one day riding him. Then Winky receives wonderful news: her parents have decided that Winky can begin riding lessons. And there's more good news: Winky is getting a

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new brother or sister! But her excitement turns to disappointment when she is told she is too small to ride Amerigo and must instead practise on the pony Naf-Naf. Meanwhile, it seems that everyone cares more about her future sibling than about Winky, and she begins to feel left out. At least Amerigo is always there for comfort. One day Winky breaks the rules and takes Amerigo for a ride. Unfortunately something goes wrong and the horse escapes. Can Winky admit her mistake? And will she find her beloved Amerigo?

Working from Tamara Bos's sensitive and always realistic script, director Mischa Kamp once again elicits excellent performances that reveal the emotional richness of young lives. Beautifully paced so as to draw us in deeper as the story builds, *Where Is Winky's Horse?* is wholly engaging and utterly charming.

TEACHER ADVISEMENT:

"One character, Black Pete, the traditional assistant to Sinterklaas (Dutch Santa Claus), appears briefly toward the end of the film. As is commonly practised in the Netherlands, Black Pete is made up in blackface. In recent years, Zwarte Piet's role and portrayal have come under debate. You may want to discuss the representation of minorities in the media with your class."

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY:

WHERE IS WINKY'S HORSE? (2007)

WINKY'S HORSE (2005)

PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION:

This film is set in the build-up to the Dutch celebration of Saint Nicholas's Eve, which takes place on December 5. Read *Waiting for Sinterklaas: A Family in the Netherlands* by Helene Tremblay to familiarize your class with the Dutch tradition. The name "Santa Claus" comes from *Sinterklaas*, as did the practices associated with the Dutch legend. Sinterklaas rides a horse named Amerigo, the same name used for Winky's horse. Compare

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and contrast Saint Nicholas's Eve in the Netherlands with the way Christmas is celebrated in Canada using a Venn diagram.

The main character is Winky Wong, a young Chinese immigrant to the Netherlands. You can help the children gain an appreciation for the international nature of the film by showing China and the Netherlands on a world map. Discuss any experiences students have had learning new traditions in their adopted homelands.

Winky's friend Bram is fascinated with Native American culture, naming himself Swift Buffalo and introducing Winky to dreamcatchers, through which they project their hopes and wishes. Bring a dreamcatcher to the class and have children create their own and describe their hopes and dreams.

DURING SCREENING QUESTION/ACTIVITY:

While watching, think about how life in the Netherlands is different and similar to life in your city or community. Consider the different cultural practices that are shown in the film (Dutch, Chinese, and Native North American). Junior/Intermediate teachers might ask students to think about how the film is made accessible or relevant to older children or an adult audience.

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITY:

Students will write a letter in Winky's voice to Sinterklaas, written the day after Saint Nicholas's Eve. The letter should address her feelings of being picked on by her classmates; how she felt about losing Amerigo; how she might feel lonely because her parents are paying more attention to her baby sister; the lesson she learned about this experience; and her hopes and dreams for her new sibling.

CONCLUSION/WRAP UP:

Students will gain an appreciation for the face of multiculturalism in another country. They will discuss the hopes and dreams associated with being a young child growing up. On the flipside, they will also come

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away with the knowledge that growing up also involves pressures from their peers (teasing/bullying) and increased responsibility.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- *Winky's Horse* (the first of the two Winky movies) is available through the TDSB MediaNet (<http://media.tdsb.on.ca/av/>)
- Tremblay, Helene. *Waiting for Sinterklaas: A Family in the Netherlands*. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1998.