

Shorts:
Saturday Morning Cartoons



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Dear educators,

Thank you for attending the 47th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of Family Shorts: Saturday Morning Cartoons. We are excited to return in our 2024 fall season with a combination of both in-person screenings for local schools and online screenings for those of you joining us from afar

As media educators, we support film as the literature of the twenty-first century. This powerful medium sits in a critical part of human culture, at the intersection of art, industry, technology, and politics. It is a universal language that lets us tell stories about our collective hopes and fears and gives us the opportunity to make sense of the world around us and the people in it. This year, our film selections for school screenings continue to focus on increasingly relevant issues of global empathy and active citizenship, and we believe this film will be a powerful and engaging text to use in your classroom. These curricular materials are designed to get students to engage deeply with the film by the common-core aligned skills of developing an evidence-based interpretation of a text both orally and in writing.

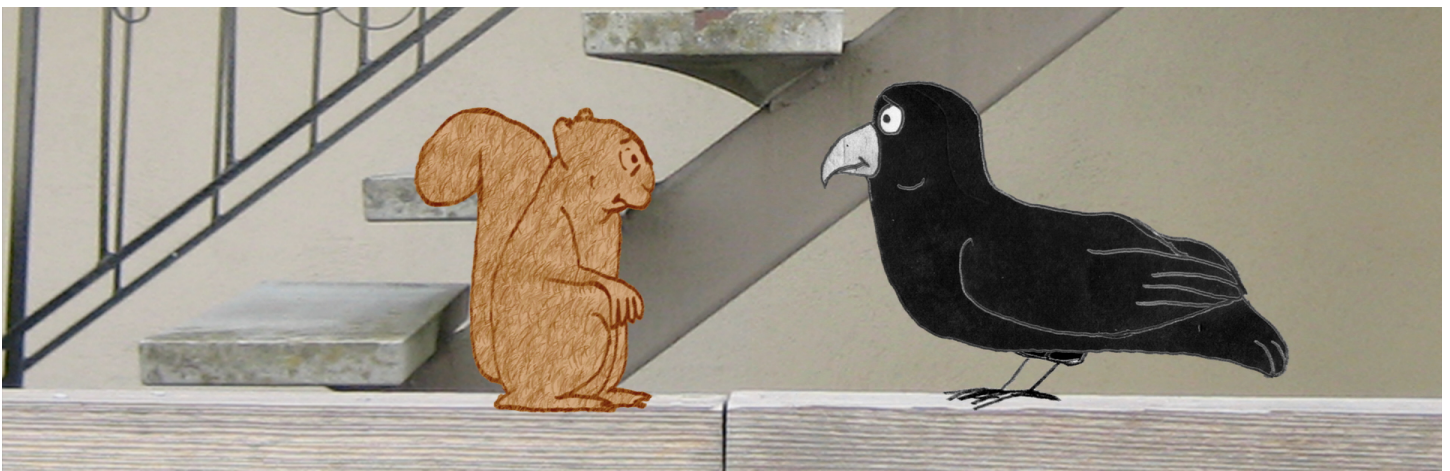
The discussion prompts have been crafted to offer students the opportunity to grapple with questions of ethics and social justice through representations of culture on film. They offer a variety of options for fostering small-group or whole-class dialogue by addressing the film industry in general and this film in particular. If your students are already familiar with a process of writing evidence-based interpretive essays, consider using the suggested essay prompts for a short writing piece, or consider the film review format as an alternative. Additionally, student handouts for a variety of thinking routines are provided for before, during, and after viewing the film with a particular emphasis on social-emotional learning. Extension activities offer further creative opportunities for students to consider the cultural impact of the film as both an art form and a political platform. We have also included a handout that provides some context for the film festival experience, which may help to introduce your screening experience.

Thank you so much for your tireless work! Enjoy the film!

Sincerely,
The CAFILM Education Team

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This collection of films pays tribute to Saturday morning cartoons. Saturday morning cartoons were a significant cultural phenomenon that influenced fashion, music, and other aspects of popular culture. Some people say that Saturday morning cartoons taught them valuable lessons that are applicable to other areas of life. Of the shorts included in this film collection of Saturday morning cartoons, which one had the most significant popular, or greater, cultural influence? Which one had the most valuable life lesson?
2. Cartoon is a word that has changed meaning over time. In addition to a humorous drawing or a comic strip, we also use the word cartoon to describe an animated film or TV show. Of the films included in this film of Saturday morning cartoons, which film had the most unique or original animation style? What was unique or original about it?
3. Which film in the collection do you think had the most unique or original story? What was the story and how did it provide a fresh perspective on the subject?
4. Who do you think was the most memorable character from these films? Who was the most relatable character from these films? Why?
5. In filmmaking, a trope is any element of the story that's shared with many other similar stories. What are some of the movie tropes you noticed in this collection of films? What other films have you seen that included similar tropes?
6. What connections can you make between the stories in these films? What are some of the universal themes these films have in common?
7. How did the stories in this collection of films represent a range of cultural values and beliefs?
8. What did you learn about the importance of creative stories and the power of storytelling from watching these films?
9. How or why is film an important medium for bringing stories to life? How is it a powerful tool for teaching us life lessons, even while we're being entertained?



DISCUSSION NOTECATCHER

Directions:

Use this notecatcher to record what you take away from discussing the questions above.

IDEAS I HEARD DURING DISCUSSION

MIND-POP IDEAS

Ideas that came to my mind during discussion.

ONE IMPORTANT THING I LEARNED DURING DISCUSSION

INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. Saturday morning cartoons have been important for many reasons. They were a significant cultural phenomenon that both influenced and impacted multiple aspects of popular culture. Write an essay in which you show how one of the animated films in this collection has popular cultural impact or influence.
2. Saturday morning cartoons are also often educational, as well as entertaining, by imparting valuable life lessons. Write an essay in which you show how one of the animated films in this collection taught you a valuable life lesson.
3. The shared viewing experience of Saturday morning cartoons provides a way to bond with family and friends of all ages. Write an essay in which you show how watching the animated films in this collection was a special bonding experience with your family, friends, or classmates.
4. Saturday morning cartoons celebrate an old childhood ritual of a simpler time in front of a TV screen rather than streaming content on a small individual screen. Write an essay in which you show how watching the films in this collection on the big screen was a nostalgic experience.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WHYY PBS NPR

<https://whyy.org/articles/the-importance-of-saturday-morning-cartoons/>

The Importance of Saturday Morning Cartoons

Cartoon Vibe Medium

<https://cartoonvibe.medium.com/saturday-morning-cartoons-a-lost-tradition-in-the-age-of-streaming-1b1b46e3cee7>

Saturday Morning Cartoons: A Lost Tradition in the Age of Streaming

Saturday Evening Post

<https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2021/05/the-rise-and-fall-of-saturday-morning-cartoons/>

The Rise and Fall of Saturday Morning Cartoons

ABOUT CAFILM

The nonprofit California Film Institute celebrates and promotes film as art and education through year-round programming at the independent Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, presentation of the acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival, as well as cultivation of the next generation of filmmakers and audiences through CAFILM Education programs.

Follow the California Film Institute on social media



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STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards ELA-Literacy

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2

Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3

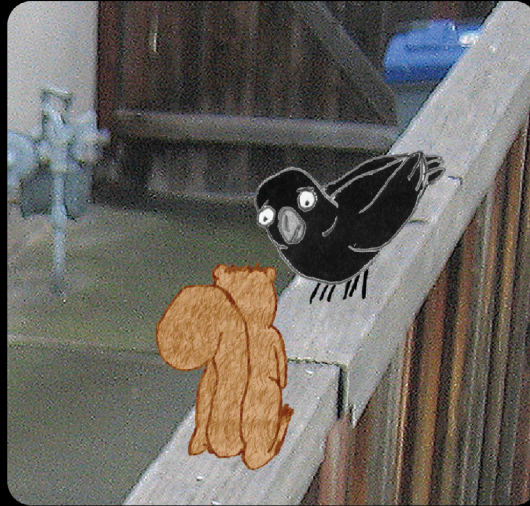
Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1

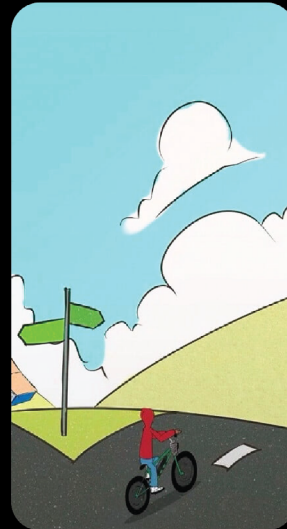
Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.



Name: _____



Shorts: **Saturday Morning Cartoons**



ABOUT THE FILMS

Who says that watching Saturday morning cartoons with the family ended with the 20th century? Not us! Wondrous and whimsical shorts from near and far corners of the world grace the festival screen for the enjoyment of the entire family. Independent filmmakers share central themes of innovation and curiosity. Join us for this fun frenzy of animated wonders and explore where ideas and inspiration come from in these enchanting stories that are sure to inspire laughter, curiosity, tears, and awe in both the youngest and most seasoned filmgoers. Presented in collaboration with the Poppy Jasper International Film Festival.

KEY THEMES

ANIMATION, SEL, STORYTELLING

ABOUT THE FILMS

FILMS INCLUDE:

LLAMAS AT THE LAUNDROMAT

Martha Grant | Canada 2023 | 2 min

Got dirty clothes? Join two stylish Llamas as they dance and sing their way through the steps of doing laundry at the laundromat.

LUNAR POWER

Annastacia Henry-Ramos | US 2024 | 3 min

A young Latina superhero, Amaya, tries to connect with her anti-social cousin, Miguel, but their walk to school is interrupted by a vicious monster from outer space. Now they must navigate this disaster to find each other again.

LIL RED IS RIDING THE WRONG WAY IN THE HOOD

Venus Jones | US 2023 | 8 min

This short film with a long title is a Hip Hop twist on a classic cautionary tale that starts with an adventurous little boy getting lost on the wrong side of town. Childhood labor and public safety may sound like heavy topics, but they're presented in an approachable manner in this timely and important project filled with valuable life lessons.

THINK TOO MUCH

Paperface | UK 2023 | 4 min

A musical journey through a landscape of broccoli and an adventure about the dangers of thinking too much.

ADVENTURES WITH THE CARETAKER

Peter Gardner | US 2022 | 25 min

A man has a secret job taking care of creatures like Bigfoot, The Loch Ness Monster and The Abominable Snowman.

THE SOCIAL CHAMELEON

Alex Ross | US 2022 | 9 min

Cosmo the Chameleon doesn't fit in with the other animals. No matter how hard he tries, he just can't seem to find his place in the jungle. Then, everything changes when he meets another chameleon, who shows him how to live by his own true colors.

THE CROW AND THE SQUIRREL

Guillermo Gomes | US 2018 | 4 min

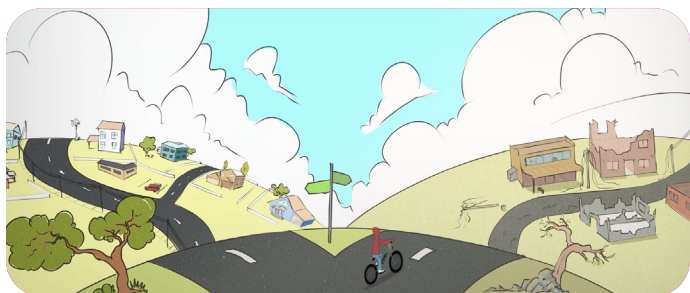
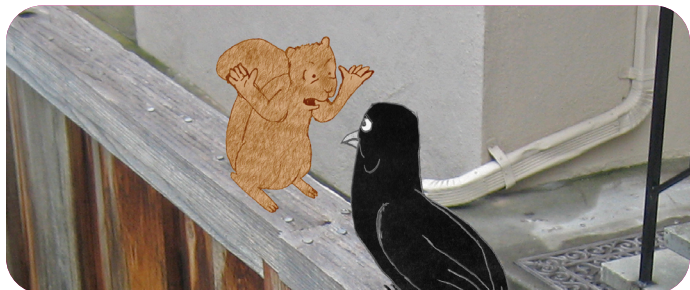
In this hand-drawn animated film, a crow has an encounter with a squirrel, and learns a valuable lesson in communication and compassion.

BEFORE VIEWING

SEE, THINK WONDER

How to Use this Thinking Routine:

Each of the seven films included in this collection of shorts has a unique animation style. Take a look at images from three of the films. Make some observations and thoughtful interpretations about what you see, what you think, and what you are wondering about before viewing.



<p>SEE</p> <p>What observations can you make by looking at these images?</p>	
<p>THINK</p> <p>What thoughtful interpretations can you make by looking at these images?</p>	
<p>WONDER</p> <p>What are you curious about?</p>	

DURING VIEWING

NOTEATCHER

Directions:

The collection of shorts you will see are all films that celebrate the magic and power of animated storytelling. Use the notecatcher to keep track of the films so you will be able to dig a little deeper later. After each film, write a one-sentence summary of the story in your own words. Then, use six words to record your personal review of the film.

FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	ONE-SENTENCE SUMMARY	SIX WORD REVIEW
LLAMAS AT THE LAUNDROMAT	Martha Grant		
LUNAR POWER	Anastacia Henry-Ramos		
LIL RED IS RIDING THE WRONG WAY IN THE HOOD	Venus Jones		
THINK TOO MUCH	Paperface		
ADVENTURES WITH THE CARETAKER	Peter Gardner		
THE SOCIAL CHAMELEON	Alex Ross		
THE CROW AND THE SQUIRREL	Guillermo Gomes		

AFTER VIEWING RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Directions:

Recall, reflect, and then respond to each question, referring to specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your response.

1. Of all the films featured in the program, which one was your personal favorite? Why?

2. Did any of the films remind you of a Saturday morning cartoon? Which film? Which cartoon did it remind you of? How or why did you make this connection?

3. Which of the films had the most impact or influence on pop culture? How or why?

4. Did any of the films remind you of something that happened in your own life or that you have seen happen to others?

5. How do the stories in these films help us make sense of the world around us and the people around us?

AFTER VIEWING RESPONSE QUESTIONS

6. How do the stories in these films represent our collective hopes and fears?

7. What connections can you make between the films in this collection?

8. Which of these films would you like to see expanded into a feature-length film? In other words, which of the stories would you want to see more of?



AFTER VIEWING

LIFE LESSONS

Directions:

Besides being entertaining, animated films are a powerful medium for teaching us valuable life lessons. Filmmakers use this engaging style to entertain us with stories that impart values and wisdom that we can connect to our own life or the world right now.

1. Identify a life lesson you learned from one of the films in this collection of shorts.
2. Use specific details and examples from the film to show which film taught you this life lesson and how.
3. Reflect on how the lesson you identified connects to your own life and the value it has in the world right now.

Life Lesson

Which film taught you this? How?

How does this lesson connect to your own life? This could be something from your past, the present, or something you're thinking about for your future.

What value does this lesson have in the world right now? This could be something everyone could learn and apply to their everyday lives.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

COMIC STRIP

Create your own Comic Strip: A Creative Writing Activity.

With comic book writing, students can explore their imagination and create stories that reflect their own unique perspectives and ideas.

Directions:

1. Brainstorm Ideas.

Encourage students to think of story ideas that excite them, exploring different scenarios and characters. Have students recall and reflect on the films featured in the animated shorts collection of Saturday morning cartoons. Ask them to think about how they can create a cartoon that has popular cultural influence or impact, or how they can create a cartoon that shares a valuable life lesson.

2. Choose a Theme.

The theme is the backbone of the story, informing the characters and setting. Is it a superhero adventure, a mystical journey or an everyday tale with a twist? The chosen theme should inspire students to dive deeper into their imagination and fuel their passion for storytelling.

3. Writing Captivating Dialogue.

Dialogue brings characters to life and moves the plot forward. Teach the art of brevity and wit in comic writing, focusing on how to make each word count and each exchange impactful. Dialogues are the voice of the comic strip, so make sure they're captivating!

4. Creating Character Profiles and Backstories.

Characters are the heart of any story, and having well-developed profiles and backstories enriches the narrative. Engage students in writing exercises that allow them to flesh out their characters, from their appearance to their quirks and motivations.

5. Storyboard: Plan the Comic Strip Layout.

Storyboarding is a pivotal step in crafting engaging comic strips. Think of storyboarding as a roadmap, guiding each scene from conception to the final panel. This visual outline impacts the clarity and pacing of the plot, ensuring that readers can follow the flow and progression of the comic's narrative.

6. Illustrate.

Have students use markers to draw scenes in each panel. The scenes should showcase the key moments of the story. The drawings convey the story's meaning, so there is very little need for dialogue.

7. Add the Text.

Have students use fun bubbles for the narrative of each panel. The text should be concise and to the point, but encourage students to also have fun with the dialogue.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

COMIC STRIP

8. Color.

Finally, have students add color to their comic strips.

9. Share.

Create a classroom gallery and have students peer review their work.

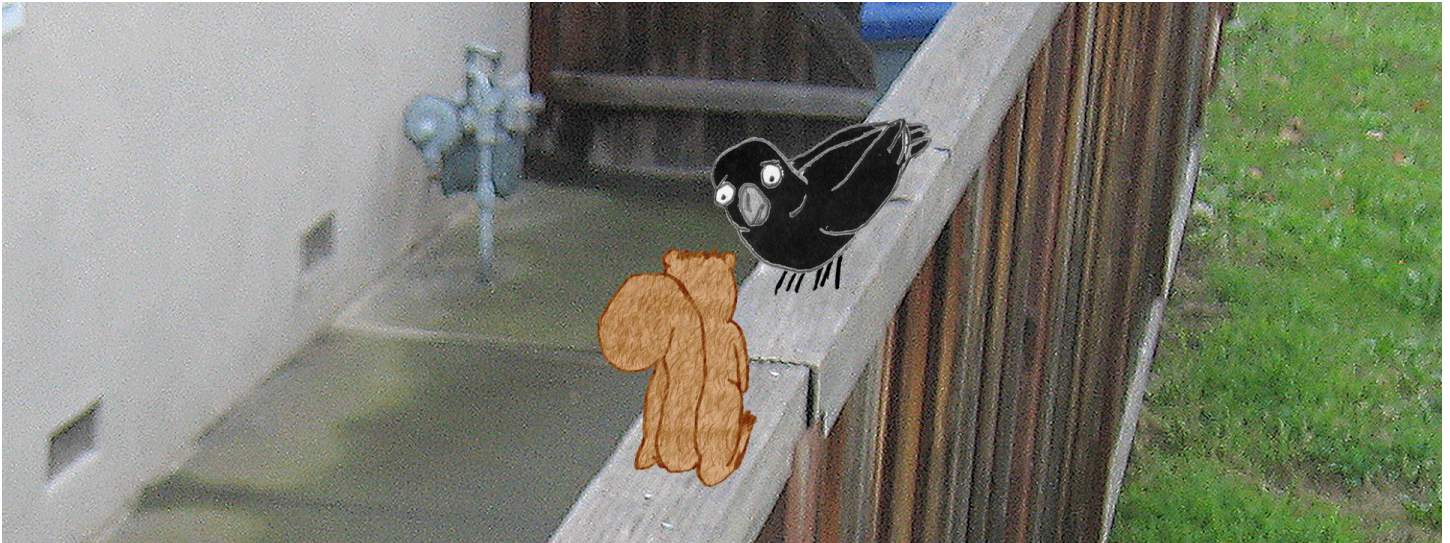
Canva Free Printable Comic Strip Templates.

<https://www.canva.com/comic-strips/templates/>

Print sheets with panels that are pre-drawn for each student to fill in or use the digital comic strip templates.

Additional Activity Resources.

<https://studenttreasures.com/blog/classroom-activities/create-your-own-comic-strip-a-fun-writing-activity-for-kids/>




EXTENSION ACTIVITY

FILM REVIEW

Directions:

A film review is a report that provides information about a film, expresses an opinion, and summarizes the main parts of the story. Use the template below to review and rate the film.

Title:	Director:
Main Characters:	
Setting:	
Summary of the Story:	
Central Theme or Lesson Learned:	
What I liked:	
What I disliked:	
My Favorite Part:	
Movie Rating: Color in the Appropriate Number of Stars 	
Who would you recommend this movie to and why?	

ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

What is a film festival?

A film festival is an event in which multiple movies are presented over the course of one or several days. Depending on the size of the festival, all of the screenings may take place in a single theater or may involve multiple venues throughout a city. Festivals also include special events like panel discussions with filmmakers and actors. Typically, filmmakers submit their works to a festival, where a team of curators selects the best entries for inclusion in the festival. For independent and international filmmakers, festivals are often an important way to raise awareness of a film, generate an audience, and/or attract a studio to purchase the rights to distribute a film in a wider release. Acceptance into a major festival can add significant prestige to a film, with some festival awards (such as the Cannes Film Festival's Palme d'Or) considered among the highest honors a film can receive.

There are many film festivals through-

out the world, with some focusing on particular themes, such as highlighting LGBTQ films/filmmakers, specific cultural groups, or particular genres. While some of the more famous festivals may be in distant locations, there are hundreds of small festivals spread through every corner of the world and, increasingly, festivals are using streaming access to make it easier for the public to view their curated programs.

History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

Since founding the Mill Valley Film Festival in 1977, Executive Director Mark Fishkin has shepherded this once small, three-day showcase into an eleven-day, internationally acclaimed cinema event presenting a wide variety of new films from around the world in an engaged, community setting.

The festival has an impressive track record of launching new films and new filmmakers, and has earned a reputation as a filmmakers' festival

by celebrating the best in American independent and foreign films, alongside high-profile and prestigious award contenders. The relaxed and non-competitive atmosphere surrounding MVFF, gives filmmakers and audiences alike the opportunity to share their work and experiences in a collaborative and convivial setting.

Each year the festival welcomes more than 200 filmmakers, representing more than 50 countries. Screening sections include world cinema, US cinema, documentaries, family films, and shorts programs. Annual festival initiatives include Active Cinema, a forum for films that aim to engage audiences and transform ideas into action; Mind the Gap, a platform for inclusion and equity; and ¡Viva el Cine!, a showcase of Latin American and Spanish-language films.. Festival guests also enjoy an exciting selection of Tributes, Spotlights and Galas throughout the program.



The Smith Rafael Film Center, home of the Mill Valley Film Festival

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the purpose of a film festival? What are the benefits for filmmakers? For the audience? For the community?
2. How might the films at a festival differ from the films available to watch at your local movie theater?
3. What qualities do you think festival curators might look for in a film? If you are watching a festival film with a class/school group, what aspects of the film do you think made it appealing to the curators?

Get Involved!

Many film festivals, including the Mill Valley Film Festival, have student film categories. If you are a filmmaker, explore FilmFreeway (www.filmfreeway.com) for a database of worldwide film festivals where you can submit your film. The call for entries for MVFF opens in late February and closes in June. Youth filmmakers do not have to pay an entry fee. MVFF also offers many opportunities for volunteering. Find out more at <https://www.cafilm.org/volunteer/>.