

MVFF
EDUCATION



WINDCATCHER

CURRICULUM GUIDE
GRADES: 5-9

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Dear educators,

Thank you for attending the 47th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of *Windcatcher*. 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 in 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. The hero's journey is a common story that involves a hero who goes on an adventure, learns a lesson, wins a victory with that newfound knowledge, and then returns home transformed. How is *Windcatcher* a hero's journey? How do Percy, Daisy, and Keithy become the heroes of their own stories?
2. How did the film make you feel? What did the film make you think about?
3. What is the film's central theme? How is the theme developed and emphasized throughout the story? Is the theme expressed in a fresh, unique way?
4. What values does the film communicate? How do you know?
5. In what ways does the film comment or reflect on aspects of indigenous culture, society, or humanity?
6. Describe a moment or a scene in the film that you found particularly disturbing or moving. What about the scene was especially notable or compelling for you?
7. Did anything that happened in this film remind you of something that has occurred in your own life, or that you have seen occur to others?
8. Consider the film's title. After viewing *Windcatcher*, does the title take on any new significance based on the story, themes, or aspects of indigenous culture, society, or humanity?
9. How would different people view this film differently, dependent on age, gender, cultural background, social location, or worldview?
10. What is Percy's life like? What conflicts or challenges does he face in his home, family, school, and social life? What is the source of those conflicts or challenges?
11. What aspects of Percy's experiences in the film are universal and relatable for all young pre-teens or teenagers coming-of-age, regardless of social location, geography, or culture? What about his experiences are unique to his indigenous culture?
12. Is *Windcatcher* responding to a moment in history? What social or cultural influences can you detect within the film?
13. Thinking back on what you discussed, what new insights do you have about the film, the world in which it was made, or the process of storytelling and filmmaking?

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. Windcatcher is a hero's journey. The hero's journey is a common story that involves a hero who goes on an adventure, learns a lesson, wins a victory with that newfound knowledge, and then returns home transformed. Write an essay in which you show how Percy, Daisy, and Keithy become the heroes of their own stories.
2. Percy's Pop imparts wisdom and life lessons throughout the film. They include, keep your head down when you work, keep your chin up in adversity, always keep your fists to yourself, and the opposite with your heart, keep that open. Write an essay in which you show the importance of one, or all, of these life lessons and how Percy, Daisy, and Keithy learned the value of them.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Windcatcher: Behind the Scenes

<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/sa/screen-news/2024/03-29-windcatcher-bts>

Director Tanith Glynn-Maloney talks about directing her first feature film, Windcatcher.

Britannica Kids

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Australian-Aboriginal-peoples/629039>

Australian-Aboriginal Peoples.

National Geographic Kids

<https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/history/general-history/aboriginal-arts-and-culture/>

Facts about Indigenous Aboriginal Arts and Culture.

Traditions of the Ancestors

<https://www.tota.world/article/716/>

Connecting people through culture, an overview of the traditional beliefs of Aboriginal Australian cultures.

StopBullying.gov

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/>

Prevention: Learn how to identify bullying and stand up to it safely. Become an upstander.

Anti-Bullying Alliance

<https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/understanding-bullying/definition>

The Anti-Bullying Alliance and its members have an agreed shared definition of bullying based on research from across the world over the last 30 years.

Stop, Speak, Support Activity: Bystander vs. Upstander Student Handout

https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/attachments/Handout%20%20-%20Bystander%20vs%20upstander_1.pdf

This worksheet invites students to look at a list of scenarios and decide if the person involved is a bystander or an upstander.

Mindful Practices: Upstander/Bystander Worksheet

<https://mindfulpractices.us/2022/06/20/upstander-bystander-worksheet/>

It can be difficult to know what to do when witnessing bullying. This PSA video and worksheet invites collaboration between peers as they work to solve a very real issue. It takes self awareness and social awareness to recognize when someone is being treated unfairly. This activity affirms human dignity and encourages a process of reflection that centers on the safety and acceptance of all.

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards ELA-Literacy

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3

Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g. how setting shapes the characters or plot).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.



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

 @cafilm  @californiafilminstitute  @cafilmstitute  californiacafilmstitute

Name: _____



ABOUT THE FILM

WINDCATCHER is set in the heartwarming town of Herbertson, where Percy Boy, a fast-running Aboriginal boy, forms an unexpected alliance with Keithy Cobb, the newcomer, and Daisy Hawkins, a daring girl. Together, the trio aim to clinch the athletics carnival title from the “Wolf Pack” — the notorious grade five bullies. As Percy Boy trains, he uncovers his unique gift of seeing Lost Souls, a gift inherited from his grandfather. But as the big day approaches, a crisis looms over Herbertson and threatens Percy Boy’s family and the town. Percy Boy must harness the support of his mates, his family, and his community to face the challenge head-on. This is not just a journey about winning, but discovering the strength to make your mark. For Percy Boy, catching the wind is only the start of his big adventure.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

TANITH GLYNN-MALONEY

Tanith Glynn-Maloney began her career like many Indigenous filmmakers at CAAMA (Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association) in Alice Springs. Glynn-Maloney is co-founder of Since1788 Productions, an Independent Indigenous owned production company co-owned by Dylan River. Together they created a company that allows them to make high-quality content across a range of genres and platforms specifically to tell stories that are meaningful and culturally appropriate that is committed to ensuring Indigenous stories are authored and told through the Indigenous perspective. Glynn-Maloney's credits as producer include critically acclaimed and award-winning documentary, *She Who Must Be Loved*, AACTA Award winning online series, *Robbie Hood* and as a director AACTA Award winning short film *Finding Jedda*. She has two projects due out in 2024 for Stan, her feature film directorial debut *WINDCATCHER* produced by Unless Pictures and Every Cloud Productions, and, *Thou Shall Not Steal* - credited as Creator, Writer and Executive Producer as a co-pro with Ludo Studio.

FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

WINDCATCHER is more than just a film; it's a vibrant celebration of life's journey, capturing the essence of youth, the challenges of growing up, and the timeless quest for courage and connection. It's a reminder of the joyous run through life's winds, the beauty of seeing the world with wonder, and the warmth of coming home to hearts that understand us without words. This film isn't just a story to be watched; it's an experience to be felt, a journey to be shared, and a heartwarming adventure that promises to leave audiences everywhere inspired, uplifted, and utterly enchanted.

THE GENESIS OF THE STORY

When writer Boyd Quakawoot first unveiled the vibrant world of Percy Boy Collins — a ten-year-old Aboriginal boy whose quick wit and boundless resilience leap off the page — to producer Meg O'Connell in 2021, the story of *WINDCATCHER* captivated the team at Unless Pictures from the get-go. It promised a journey filled with laughter, heartwarming moments of family and friendship, and the universal theme of conquering fear. After a year of nurturing and refining the script, the project caught the eye of Stan and the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF). When Tanith Glynn-Maloney signed on to direct, and Every Cloud Productions came on board as producing partner, *WINDCATCHER* swiftly moved into pre-production and is set to enchant audiences from March 2024. Get ready to be swept off your feet by the magic of *WINDCATCHER* — a story that promises not just to entertain but to inspire a deep, lasting love for its spirited hero and his unforgettable journey.

BEFORE VIEWING

ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Directions:

The film you are about to watch is about how a smart mouthed ten-year-old Aboriginal boy and his group of fifth-grade friends face adversity and show resilience and determination to overcome the challenges that life in their community confronts them with.

Read each statement below. If you agree with the statement, explain why in the left hand box under the agree column. If you disagree, explain why in the box under the disagree column.

Agree	Statement	Disagree
	We always learn something from what life throws at us.	
	Sometimes, unlikely or unexpected friendships are the best ones.	
	Our imagination helps us create memories of what is happening right now, which is sometimes why we remember things differently when we recall and reflect on something that has happened in our life.	
	No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.	
	Being a hero does not mean saving the world. It can be as simple as doing the right thing.	
	We are all the heroes of our own stories.	
	It's our reaction to adversity, not adversity itself, that determines how our life's story will develop.	
	It's a bad tradesman who blames his tools.	

BEFORE VIEWING

JOURNAL PROMPT

Directions:

Writing in a journal is an effective and powerful way to remind you of your goals and your learning in life. It is a personal space to hold a thoughtful and deliberate conversation with yourself. The following prompt will get you thinking about a topic connected to the film you are about to watch.

Are heroes born or are they made? Are there heroes in real-life, or must they be larger-than-life? Who are the heroes in our society?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

DURING VIEWING EMPATHY MAP

How to Use this Thinking Routine:

In *Windcatcher*, we follow the story of Percy Boy who is trying to navigate the world as a fifth-grader. In this empathy map activity, fill out each quadrant to better understand and connect with his lived experience.

HEAR

Some of the film includes voiceover narration. What does the viewer hear from Percy himself about the challenges he is facing as a fifth-grader?

SEE

What does Percy's pre-teenage experience look like? What challenges does he face at home, at school, and in his community?

FEEL

How does Percy feel about life at home, at school, and in his community? How does he feel about the challenges he is facing and the obstacles he is trying to overcome?

SAY/DO

How do Percy's words and actions reflect what he is thinking, or what he values?

A Thinking Routine Borrowed from Harvard Project Zero's Think Routine Toolbox:
<https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>

DURING VIEWING

STORY MAP

Directions:

Use the story map to identify the elements of narrative film. Identify the film's characters, plot, setting, problem, and solution as well as important symbols and themes.

PROBLEM

What is the main conflict of the film?

OUTCOME

How is the conflict resolved in the film?

CHARACTERS

Who are the main characters in the film and what is their relationship to each other?

ACTION

What actions do the characters take during the film? How do these actions develop the story?

SETTING

What is the significance of where the story takes place?

SYMBOLS

Are there any important symbolic props used in the film? If so, what are they and how are they significant to the story?

SETTING

What are the main themes of the film? These are broader points about society at large.

AFTER VIEWING RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Directions:

Respond to each question, referring to specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your interpretation.

1. The title of the film is connected to Percy's nickname. Why is he called a "windcatcher?"

2. What is motivating Percy to work before and after school? What ultimately motivates Percy to train with Daisy and Keithy, and compete in the race?

3. What are some of the creative ways Percy and his friends try to make money for the shoe situation? What works, what doesn't, and what lands them in trouble?

4. What is Percy Boy's supernatural ability and where did he get this gift? How does he go from being afraid of it to embracing it?

5. What is the backstory of Percy's parents? What haunts him in his dreams? What do we learn about his memory of what happened and what really happened?

AFTER VIEWING RESPONSE QUESTIONS

6. What happens when Percy steals some shoes from the wolf pack? Does he learn his lesson?

7. What natural disaster disrupts the race? How do Percy and his friends become heroes in the community?

8. How does Percy Boy ultimately overcome his fears, prove his resilience, and become a force to be reckoned with?



AFTER VIEWING

SAME, DIFFERENT, CONNECT, ENGAGE

How to Use this Thinking Routine:

Same, different, connect, engage is a thinking routine to nurture empathetic perspective taking and social or cultural bridge building. After watching Windcatcher, think about your relationship to the main character by responding to the following prompts.

SAME

In what ways are you similar to Percy?

DIFFERENT

In what ways are you different from Percy?

CONNECT

In what ways are your own life experiences connected to Percy?

ENGAGE

What would you like to ask, say, or do with Percy if you had the chance?

A Thinking Routine Borrowed from Harvard Project Zero's Think Routine Toolbox:

<https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

STORYBOARD THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Directions:

The Hero's Journey template can help us learn about plot structure, character motivation, and theme in storytelling and filmmaking. *Windcatcher* is about Percy, Daisy, and Keithy, who struggle to defeat a pack of racist bullies at the school athletics carnival after planning to join a sports event. When a natural disaster strikes their village, and threatens loved ones, Percy must show resilience and determination to overcome challenges posed by the calamity and they all finally become the heroes of their own story.

Directions:

1. Create a Storyboard of the film that outlines and represents the four main parts along with the different stages within each part.
2. This can be done on paper or digitally. Whichever format you choose, your storyboard should include hand-drawn images, photos, or stock images that connect to each of the stages of the journey.
3. Add captions to describe what is happening at each stage.

Part One - Call to Adventure

At the beginning, the hero is in the ordinary world, usually the hero's home or natural habitat. Conflict arises in their everyday life, which calls the hero to adventure. They are beckoned to leave their familiar world in search of something. They may refuse the call at first, but eventually leave, knowing that something important is at stake and the refusal of the call is no longer an option.

ORDINARY WORLD The hero is at home in their ordinary world.	CALL TO ADVENTURE Something happens that causes them to go on an adventure.	REFUSAL OF THE CALL The hero is hesitant at first to go on the journey.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

STORYBOARD THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Part Two - Supreme Ordeal or Initiation

Once the hero makes the decision to leave the normal world, venture into the unfamiliar world, and has officially begun their mysterious adventure, they will meet a mentor figure and together these two will cross the first threshold. This is the point where turning back is not an option. On the journey they will encounter tests, allies and enemies.

Obstacles like tests and enemies must be overcome to continue. Helpers aid the hero on their journey.

MENTOR HELPER A helper arrives to guide the hero through his or her journey.	CROSSING THE THRESHOLD The two continue on to the point where turning back is not an option.	TESTS/ALLIES/ENEMIES On the way they are tested and meet enemies or allies.

Part One - Call to Adventure

Having overcome initial obstacles, in this part of the heroic cycle, the hero and their allies approach the major challenge in this new or special world and must prepare for it. During the approach, the hero undergoes an ordeal, testing them to point near death. Their greatest fear is sometimes exposed, and from the ordeal comes a new life or revival for the hero. This transformation is the final separation from their old life to their new life. For their efforts in overcoming the ordeal, the hero reaches the reward. The hero receives the reward for facing death. There may be a celebration, but there is also the danger of losing the reward.

APPROACH The hero and allies get ready for a major challenge.	ORDEAL During the ordeal, they experience near-death.	REWARD Together they are successful and have their reward.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

STORYBOARD THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Part Four - Road Back or Hero's Return

Once the hero achieves their goal and the reward is won, the hero and companions start on the road back. The hero wants to complete the adventure and return to their ordinary world with their treasure. This stage is often referred to as either the resurrection or atonement. This is because the hero has conquered his demons or enemies and is transformed by the experience into a new person with a renewed sense of self confidence. As the hero crosses the threshold, and returns from the unknown to their ordinary world, he or she may be tested one last time. This test is an attempt to undo their previous achievements. Once home, the hero has come full circle, and the major conflict at the beginning of the journey is finally resolved. The hero resumes life in his or her original world, and things are restored to ordinary once again.

ROAD BACK On the road back, they come across one more obstacle.	ATONEMENT The hero reaches the threshold of his or her home having learned something on the journey.	RETURN Things are restored to normal.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

FILM REVIEW

Directions:

After watching the narrative feature *Windcatcher*, write a review of the film.

While a film review is an evaluation of a movie, it is not simply a viewer-response expressing the writer's feelings about the film. Instead, a film review attempts to do three things for the reader:

1. **Summarize** what the film is about (the story)
2. **Interpret** the film/filmmakers' intended meaning (the themes and claims)
3. **Evaluate** whether the film is successful in expressing the intended meaning (its effectiveness in conveying the themes and claims)

A review will support its perspective with evidence from the film, such as descriptions of important moments, characters, and scenes.

Suggested Structure

Introduction

- Introduce the film: title, director, and any relevant credentials (award wins for the film, other films by the director, origins for the film's story, etc.).
- Summarize what the film is about - briefly, and without any "spoilers" that give away plot twists and surprises.

Body

- Offer an interpretation of what the film/director is trying to say through this story. In other words, what is the film's theme, message, or primary claim?

Conclusion

- Evaluate whether the film is successful or not in conveying its intended message.
- Identify who the intended audience is and how effective the film is in meeting their needs. Is the film for a particular age group or social group?

Final Tip: Make sure to include some critical appraisal of the film in the first and last sentence, but try to weave it throughout the review as well.



From CAFILM Education Resources: Narrative Film Analysis Toolkit
<https://www.cafilmedu.org/curriculum-resources/>

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

FILM REVIEW

My Film Review

[illegible]

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.

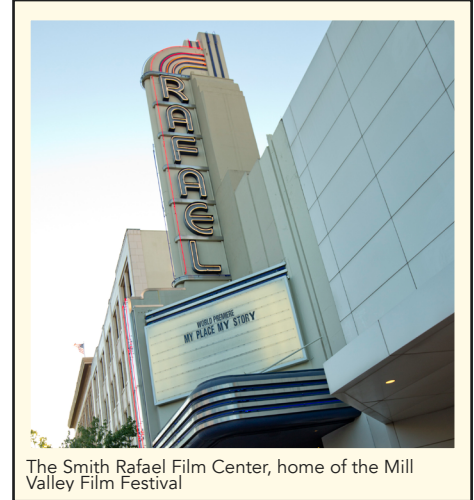
History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

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.



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/>.