



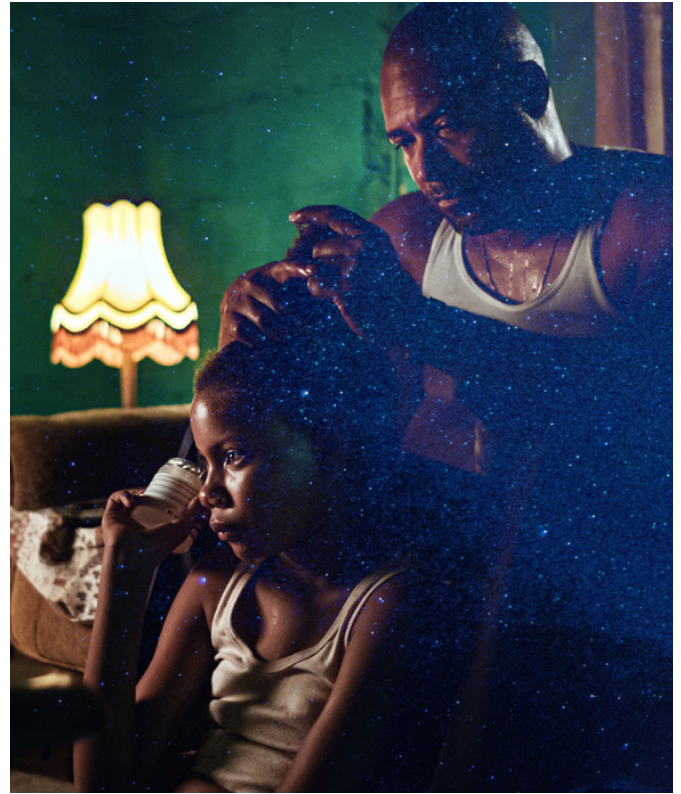
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Dear educators,

Thank you for attending the 44th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's virtual screening of *Buladó*. 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.

We know that this year is likely one of the most challenging of your professional career, and we hope that this film and study guide can support the incredible work you're already doing. These curricular materials are designed to get students to engage deeply with film by the common-core aligned skills of developing an evidence-based interpretation of a text.

The discussion questions on the following page offer a variety of options for fostering small-group or whole-class dialogue. If your students are already familiar with a process of writing evidence-based interpretive essays, consider using one of the suggested essay prompts for a short writing piece. Additionally, individual handouts for before, during, and after viewing are provided as stand-alone activities to be used individually or in sequence. We have also included a handout that provides some context for the film festival experience, which may help to introduce your in-class screening.

Thank you so much for your tireless work!

Sincerely,

The CFI Education Team



**CFI EDUCATION**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the main events that occur in this film? What has changed between the start and the end?
2. What are the primary emotions you felt during this film? What are some secondary emotions?
3. Consider the editing and the tempo of this film. Did things move quickly or slowly? Why?
4. What do you see in this film that reminds you of other stories from your life or other stories you know?
5. What are some background details you noticed in this film? How do these details provide information about the time or place in which this film was made?
6. Consider other films you've seen. What makes this film unique or important? What are some connections between this film and other films?
7. The title of *Buladó* is Papamiento for "to take off" or "whatever that takes off." Why do you think the filmmakers chose that title? If you were to give this film another title, what would you title it?
8. What does Kenza do when she visits the cemetery? What does this reveal about her?
9. How is Kenza's relationship with her father different from her relationship with her grandfather? Who do you think has the bigger impact on Kenza?
10. What is significant about the various locations where the film takes place?
11. What was unique about the style of this film? Why do you think the director chose to tell this story in this particular style?

## INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. Is Kenza's worldview shaped more by her father or her grandfather?
2. What is the film trying to say about the relationship between the past and the present? How and why does it use symbolism to convey its message?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Curaçao History

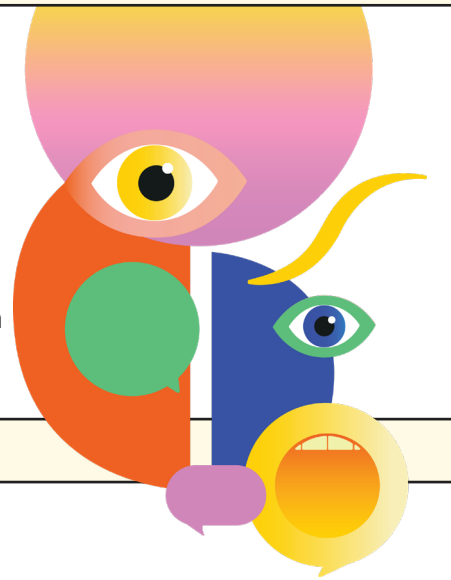
<https://www.curacaohistory.com/>

An interactive timeline of Curaçao provided by Curaçao's National Archive

### What is Symbolism?

<https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/wlf/what-symbolism>

A short video and accompanying text explanation of how symbolism functions in literature



## STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6

Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

## ABOUT CFI

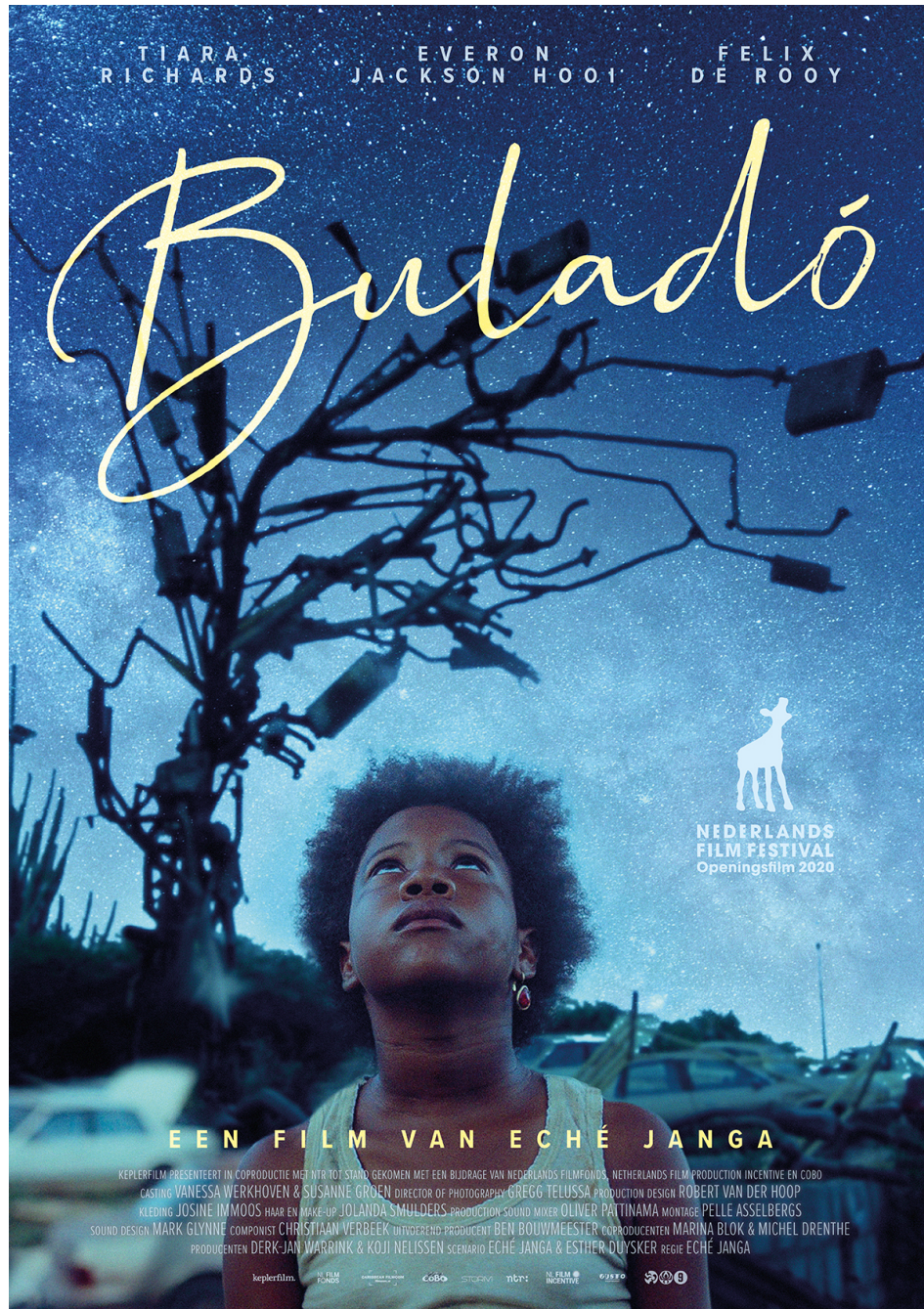
The nonprofit California Film Institute celebrates and promotes film as art and education through year-round programming at the independent Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, presentation of the acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival, as well as cultivation of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

### Follow the Mill Valley Film Festival on social media

 @millvalleyfilmfest  @MillValleyFilmFestival  
 @mvfilmfest  californiafilminstitute #MVFF44



Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## ABOUT THE FILM

This visually spellbinding feature from Dutch director Eché Janga brims with a sense of wonder that occasionally recalls Benh Zeitlin's magical-realist drama *Beasts of the Southern Wild* as tragedy and heartache lurk beneath folklore and fantasy. On the Dutch Caribbean island of Curaçao, otherworldly beliefs permeate the solitary life of fiery 11-year-old Kenza (the sublimely spunky Tiara Richards), who plays hooky from school and tries to sell lizards in her free time. Ostracized by classmates and grieving the loss of her mother, the willful Kenza feels caught between her strict police-officer father's cynicism and her grandfather's shamanic ways, rooted in ancestral slave traditions. With a lyrical soundtrack, lush colors, and stunning cinematography that eschew the easily picturesque, Janga's quietly seething film manages a sensuous toughness, and celebrates its young protagonist's resilience.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Director Eché Janga graduated from the Netherlands Film Academy in 2010 with his graduation film *Mo*, which immediately won several prizes. After directing various short films Janga directed his debut feature *Helium* in 2014 which premiered in competition at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) and won two national film awards (Golden Calves) for Best Camera and Best Music. *Buladó* is his second feature film as a director.



# THE WORLD OF THE FILM

*Buladó* takes place in Curaçao, an island in the Caribbean with a population of ~157,000. Though 90% of the population lives in the capital of Willemstad, this film takes place in the island's rural countryside.

Indigenous Arawak peoples had already settled in Curaçao by the time Spanish explorers arrived in the late 15th Century. In the 17th Century, Curaçao become a Dutch colony and home to a major port for the Dutch



West India Company. Curaçao functioned as a major hub for the Atlantic slave trade until the Dutch abolished slavery in 1863, and as a result of this colonial history, much of Curaçao's current population is of African descent.

Today, Curaçao is an autonomous country with its own parliament and prime minister, but it also still remains a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The official languages of Curaçao are Dutch, Papiamentu, English, and West Frisian, with Papiamentu and Dutch being the two languages spoken throughout *Buladó*.

## WHAT IS SYMBOLISM?



**Symbolism** is a term used widely in literature to refer to when something in a text has a deeper meaning that goes beyond its literal meaning. A toy in a literary text, for example, may literally be a toy, but it could also represent childhood, innocence, optimism, or some other theme/concept entirely. Symbolism can be used to create layers of meaning, and it is just as prevalent in film language as it is in literature as a means for the artist to convey thematic ideas and emotional effects in subtle and sometimes subconscious ways.

A challenge and pleasure of analyzing film is that the symbolic meaning of a story is often open to the audience's interpretation. *Buladó* is an example of a film that relies heavily on symbolism, with a relaxed pace that allows the viewer plenty of time to contemplate the meaning behind its unique imagery. When watching, consider how people, places, and events might represent deeper themes and ideas.

## Questions to Consider:

1. How is the history and colonization of Curaçao similar to or different from other countries in North America?
2. What are some of the lasting impact of colonialism and the slave trade that you know of in other countries? How might these impacts be different in an island nation?
3. What is an example of a book or film you've encountered that used symbolism to great effect?



## BEFORE VIEWING: JOURNAL ENTRY

**Directions:**

Some of the themes in *Buladó* relate to the protagonist's relationship to her past: her family and her heritage. Consider your own cultural or ancestral past and write a short journal entry about the ways that you maintain a connection to your cultural heritage, your ancestors, your parents, etc.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey 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: IMAGE & MEANING NOTECATCHER

**Directions:** *Buladó's* imagery is evocative and symbolic. As you watch, take notes when you see the following images. In the left column, write down the literal meaning of each image (what the thing pictured actually is in the context of the film) and in the right column, record a few of your own interpretations of possible symbolic meanings (what the thing pictured might represent on a deeper level).

## LITERAL MEANING

What is this in the film? What is its role in the story?

## IMAGE

## SYMBOLIC MEANING

What themes or concepts does this image make you think of? Why?





# DURING VIEWING: IMAGE & MEANING NOTECATCHER

## LITERAL MEANING

What is this in the film? What is its role in the story?

## IMAGE



## SYMBOLIC MEANING

What is this actually in the film?  
How do the characters relate to it?



# AFTER VIEWING: REFLECTION QUESTIONS

## Directions:

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

1. What were the primary locations in the film? What is significant or symbolically meaningful about these locations?

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2. Look back at your notes on the symbolism in the film. Based on your notes, what do you think was the film's overall theme or message? How did the symbolism point you to this interpretation?

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3. How do you think Curaçao's colonial past played a role in the story told in *Buladó*?

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4. Think of another film you've seen or a story you've read that features a pre-teen protagonist, but takes place in your own country. In what ways does *Buladó* show a pre-teen experience that is unique to life in Curaçao? In what ways does it show a universal teenage experience?

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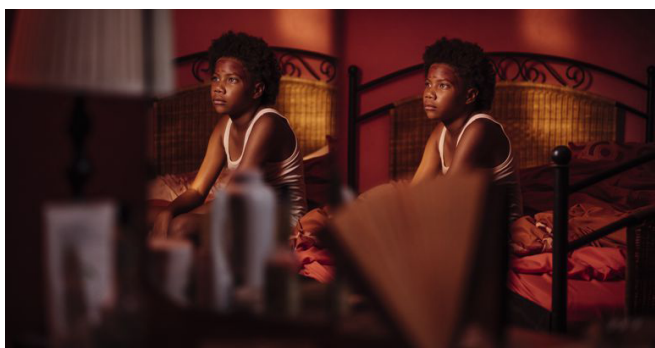
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# ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

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## 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

©Tommy Lau

## 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](http://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/>.