



***THE BOY AND THE HERON* | Curriculum Packet | Grades 6-8**

Dear Educators,

Welcome to the theater! We are thrilled to host you for a film viewing experience with our Education Screenings. Being in our treasured movie palace allows us at Milwaukee Film to immerse you and your students in our vision of a fully realized and multisensory film-going experience. Thank YOU for taking your students to see this feature film. Despite the many challenges of these past few years, we believe that engaging with film, in this space together, helps us all engage with each other in impactful ways.

There is something about sitting in the dark of a cinema, cloaked in history and stories, absent the distractions of our routines and screens, that allows us to travel outside of ourselves and learn about the world from others' perspectives. We are engaged. We are educated. We are entertained. We are changed.

Now, more than ever, many children are craving social and emotional connections, and the health and well-being of their communities. Like books, music, and art, film transports us through time, across borders, and into others' shoes, without restrictions. We find humanity and hope in stories brought to life through film. Your efforts to facilitate students' connections to film helps them develop their critical media literacy skills, deepens their awareness, expands their worldviews, and cultivates empathy, understanding, allyship, and action.

Our feature film this Spring for students in Grades 6-8, is *THE BOY AND THE HERON*, directed by Hayao Miyazaki for Studio Ghibli. This Oscar nominee* is compelling and entertaining through its brave storytelling, artistic medium, and balance of emotions. Created using hand-drawn animation, this creative, colorful, and stylistic film is an immersive fantastical story that navigates universal experiences: love, loss, grief, moving forward. Echoes of enduring human themes at every turn, the film wrestles with the question: "How do you live?", the cousin of "What is the meaning of life?" Perhaps the answer lies in the journey to discover the philosophical and concrete truth. Maybe it's in doing something meaningful with life itself. With a narrative that grapples with big questions on an individual level with sheer imagination and visual intrigue, viewers will be captivated.

The activities you will find in this packet, allow students to explore the topics of the film itself, filmmaking elements that help tell a story, and lessons to spark conversation, creativity, appreciation, and action. These activities were created for your grade range and are easily adaptable as you see fit for your students. There are plenty of opportunities for discussion, extension, multimodal engagement and response, critical thinking and analysis, and connections.

It is my hope that when the lights come up, your students' engagement with this film will launch thoughtful interactions, inquiry, and interest in pursuit of their own, and their community's, goals.

With Appreciation,
Aliza Werner
Curriculum Writer, Milwaukee Film

** Did the film win Best Animated Feature at the ceremony on March 10?*



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A Note from Milwaukee Film:

Teachers and Educators,

This packet includes several activities and discussion questions that fulfill a variety of Common Core Standards. Feel free to adapt and modify the activities for your own classroom. Students could also simply journal, blog, or write about their experience.

As we continue to sustain this year-round program, we would love for your class to complete at least one activity in conjunction with the screening of THE BOY AND THE HERON. Your participation ensures that we are able to continue applying for funding to bring in these films and offer them to you (and literally thousands of students) at such a low cost. Please feel free to send evidence of the work you did to integrate the film into your classroom electronically or by mail. This could include: links to online photos or videos, Google Drive folders, scanned material, photocopied or original student work concerning the film/film-going experience or even your own anecdotal, narrative accounts.

All of what you send us will help us write and fulfill the grants that allow us to bring these films to you and your students. We may also post some of the best work on our website (with students' first names and school only) later in the semester (if you would prefer we not share your students' work publicly, please let us know).

Send student work or evidence via email to youthfilmian@mkefilm.org or by mail to:

Milwaukee Film
Attn: Ian Cessna, School Programs Coordinator
1037 W McKinley Ave #200
Milwaukee, WI 53205

Thank you again for participating in this program, and we look forward to hearing how your trip to the Oriental Theatre and the discussions afterwards impact your students.

Thanks again, and we'll look forward to seeing you again at a future screening!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CARA'.

Cara Ogburn
Artistic Director, Milwaukee Film



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THE BOY AND THE HERON Curriculum-At-A-Glance

Pre-Screening Activity: The Boy and The Heron

Prepare for your screening by watching the trailer for the film, reading about director Hayao Miyazaki, and responding to reflection questions about the themes that students will see explored throughout the story.

Common Core Standards – RI.6.1,2,3,4,6,7; RI.7.1,2,3,4,6,7; RI.8.1,2,3,4,6,7; W.6.9; W.7.9; W.8.9; SL.6.1-6; SL.7.1-6; SL.8.1-6

Other Worlds, Alternate Realities, and New Perspectives

Reflect on the ways in which Mahito's world was different than the one we see around us every day, and encourage students to think about times that they've had to see something with a new perspective.

Common Core Standards – RL.6.1,2,3,6,7,9; RL.7.1,2,3,6,7,9; RL.8.1,2,3,6,7,9; W.6.3,4,9; W.7.3,4,9; W.8.3,4,9; SL.6.1-6; SL.7.1-6; SL.8.1-6

Patterns and Tessellations

Take a deep dive into one of the art styles used throughout the film—Tessellations—and take a turn to create one of your own!

Common Core Standards – Math: RP.6.1,3; RP.7.1,3; RP.8.1,3

The Sower

In Mahito's mother's book, she includes a world-famous painting called The Sower. Learn about the history of this painting and its many different iterations throughout the artist's life, and then create four different versions of your own artwork like the artist did!

Common Core Standards – RI.6.1,2,3,6,7,9; RI.7.1,2,3,6,7,9; RI.8.1,2,3,6,7,9; SL.6.1-6; SL.7.1-6; SL.8.1-6

How Do You Live? Reflection

Much like Mahito must come face to face with the way he's been living and the way he interacts with the world around him, students will have the opportunity to reflect on those around them and how they exist in their lives.

Common Core Standards – RL.6.1,2,3,6,7,9; RL.7.1,2,3,6,7,9; RL.8.1,2,3,6,7,9; W.6.3,4,7; W.7.3,4,7; W.8.3,4,7; SL.6.1-6; SL.7.1-6; SL.8.1-6

Piece by Piece for Peace

Students will think about ways we can make our planet safe and secure for all—by taking care of ourselves, each other, and the planet.

Common Core Standards – RL.6.1,2,3,6,7,9; RI.7.1,2,3,6,7,9; RI.8.1,2,3,6,7,9; W.6.2,3,4,8,9; W.7.2,3,4,8,9; W.8.2,3,4,8,9; SL.6.1-6; SL.7.1-6; SL.8.1-6



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Easter Eggs

Take a look at some of the hidden messages throughout the film and compare the ways Mahito's journey mirrors that of Greek mythology.

Common Core Standards – RL.6.1,2,3,4,5,7,9; RL.7.1,2,3,4,5,7,9; RL.8.1,2,3,4,5,7,9; W.6.2,4,5,7; W.7.2,4,5,7; W.8.2,4,5,7; SL.6.1-6; SL.7.1-6; SL.8.1-6

Keeping a Dream Journal

Learn about the background and benefits of keeping track of what you see in your dreams, and extend the learning outside of the classroom to encourage students to keep their own dream journal's at home.

Common Core Standards – RL.6.2,3,4; RL.7.2,3,4; RL.8.2,3,4; W.6.3; W.7.3; W.8.3; SL.6.1-6; SL.7.1-6; SL.8.1-6



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Pre-Screening Activity: THE BOY AND THE HERON

Teacher Resources

- Official Film Website: <https://gkids.com/films/the-boy-and-the-heron/>
- Official Film Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5khm-VjEu4>
- Film IMDB site: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6587046/>
- Hayao Miyazaki Biography (attached)

Teacher Note

This activity is intended to be done prior to watching the Education Screening of THE BOY AND THE HERON. This pre-screening activity introduces the concept of the film to students via the film's official trailer. Engaging students in a discussion of the film before seeing the entire feature allows students to gain familiarity with the film, understand the topic of the film, recognize story elements such as character and problem, make predictions, practice reading subtitles, and raise their engagement level as active thinkers while viewing the film. They also have the opportunity to explore the director's biography.

Directions

1. Lead a discussion to get your students ready to make the most of your Milwaukee Film Education Screening by actively thinking about storytelling on film, specifically using the feature film you'll be seeing, THE BOY AND THE HERON. Guide the discussion:
 - a. Explain to students that they will be attending a Milwaukee Film Education Screening. Activate background knowledge and connections regarding film, seeing a movie in a theater, or streaming at home.
 - b. Share the name of the film (The Boy and The Heron), which will provide the first clues about the film itself.
 - c. Share the film's website: the synopsis (brief summary of a film's storyline). Read aloud or give students time to read the synopsis, and give students time to discuss their thoughts. Then share other parts of the website.
2. Sharing the Film Trailer
 - a. Ensure understanding of what a film trailer is (a "commercial" that grabs our interest, shares the big problems/obstacles/challenges characters face in a film's storyline, and we'll only know how it resolves if we see the film. It also gets our minds making predictions about the whole film.)
 - b. As a class, watch the trailer for The Boy and The Heron.
 - c. Gather predictions from the class about the film based on the trailer and hold onto that work until after you have seen the film. Revisit them to see how much the film trailer and synopsis helped them make predictions.



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3. Exploring Hayao Miyazaki's biography

- a. Read and discuss the director, Hayao Miyazaki's biography (see printable next page)
- b. Extend as time allows: watch trailers and learn more about Studio Ghibli films (ghiblicollection.com)

4. Preparing for thematic interpretations of the film

- a. This film will send students to a land of fantasy, suspended in time and space, with many different characters and creatures that exist outside of our own reality. Discuss the use of metaphors in literature and other films they may have seen and how fantastical representations of real-life issues can help them understand our world.
- b. Mahito, the young protagonist of the film, will go on a journey to find his mother who he lost to the tragedies of war. Encourage your students to think about, discuss, or journal about the lengths they would go to save their families or friends. You can even encourage them to think up their own mythical world they would travel to!
- c. Mahito is a child who often disobeys those older than him to quench his curiosities, being led into a dangerous situation by the pesky gray heron at his new home. Have your students discuss the "rules" they have come to know in order to be safe and respectful to others, and ask them whether or not they would travel to a dangerous location if it meant they were able to see something they've never seen before.



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Other Worlds, Alternate Realities, and New Perspectives

Teacher Resources

-Activity Sheet: "Other Worlds, Alternate Realities, and New Perspectives" (an example writing/illustrating sheet is included—please adapt length to reflect your students' needs)

-How To Age Paper: <https://feelingnifty.com/how-to-age-paper-tea-coffee/>

Directions

1. Complete the Activity Sheets on the following pages.
2. In Part 1 of the REFLECT portion of the activity on the second page, encourage students to share their answers with a small group around them or all together as a class.
3. In Part 2 of the RELFECT portion, feel free to encourage students to use their own lined notebook paper or even weather their own piece of white printer paper to look like a diary entry from Mahito's time period—1943. You can use directions at the following link or your own methods (crumpling the paper, adding little tears, etc) to help students learn how to weather their diary sheets. You could then have them hang up their diary entries on a classroom wall or bulletin board!
 - a. How To Age Paper: <https://feelingnifty.com/how-to-age-paper-tea-coffee/>



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Patterns and Tessellations

Teacher Resources

- “Patterns and Tessellations” Background Sheet (attached)
- “Patterns and Tessellations” Activity Sheet and Directions
- Original Activity from Amy Friedman at Faber Castell: <https://www.fabercastell.com/blogs/creativity-for-life/tessellation-art-lesson-for-kids>

Materials

- 3x3 Note Card or Piece of Card Stock for Stencil
- Pencil with Eraser, Pen or Sharpie, Colored Pencils
- Scissors
- Scotch Tape
- White Piece of Paper or Construction Paper
- Paint Brush and Water Cup (if using Construction Paper)

Directions

1. Read through the background information of Patterns and Tessellations and encourage them to share any other examples throughout THE BOY AND THE HERON where they may have seen repeating patterns in the art style—or other examples of art, nature, or other contexts where they see repeating patterns.
2. Guide students through the creation of their own tessellations. As an extension, it may be helpful to use the fish example from Faber Castell together as a group, and then send students home to create their own repeating pattern of their choice using their 3x3 note cards to complete outside of classroom time.



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The Sower

Teacher Resources

-“The Sower” Introduction and Reflection Sheets

-“The Sower” Art Activity Sheet

-*The Sower* by Jean-François Millet: <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/31601>

Teacher Note

Prior to the Introduction and History of *The Sower*, check in with students about their understanding of the following words and concepts that will be reference in the reading:

- The Louvre
- Rococo style (art movement)
- “...revolts against their monarchies”
- “...outbreak of cholera”
- Rural life

Directions

1. Read the history and background of the painting *The Sower* by Jean-François Millet. This can be done together as a class or in small reading groups.
2. Check in with students about their comprehension of the history and what their immediate thoughts are.
3. Either as a class, in small discussion groups, or writing individually on a separate sheet of paper, encourage students to respond the reflection questions.
4. Using the Art Activity Sheet, have students create their own art work of a person contributing to the world, then re-creating it three more times in all different art styles. Encourage students to use all different types of art materials: pencils, pens, markers, paint, three-dimensional materials like clay, etc. This can also be done on a separate sheet of printer paper or sketchbook paper by folding the paper once vertically and once horizontally.



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How Do You Live? Reflection

Teacher Resources

-“How Do You Live” Reflection Sheet (feel free to extend the activity to create more room for answers depending on student need)

Teacher Note

This reflective activity requires time...to think, consider, and write. Create the time, space, and atmosphere for students to focus individually. Some students may encounter an emotional reaction or process while completing this reflection. When finished, come together to have a class discussion, modeling your thoughts and ideas to prompt participation and interaction.

Directions

1. Read the introduction to the activity and encourage students to think about the ways Mahito is **present** for those around him throughout the film.
2. Whether on the worksheet, on a separate sheet of paper, in small groups orally, or together as a class, have students respond to the reflection questions provided.
3. As an extension, have students revisit these questions in a week, month, or at the end of the semester to see if their answers have changed—whether because of circumstances in their lives or because their ways of thinking after this activity changed their perspective.



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Piece by Piece for Peace

Teacher Resources

- "The Interdependence Of Humanity And Earth (NPR, 2017)" – article by Marcelo Gleiser - <https://www.npr.org/sections/13.7/2017/11/08/562668359/the-interdependence-of-humanity-and-earth>
- *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer - <https://milkweed.org/book/braiding-sweetgrass>
- "The Council of Pecans" chapter from *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Orion Magazine, 2013/2022) - <https://orionmagazine.org/article/pecan-trees-indigenous-land-rights/>
- *Braiding Sweetgrass* short film (Phoebe Lyn Pinkner) - <https://vimeo.com/639233670>
- *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses* by Robin Wall Kimmerer - <https://osupress.oregonstate.edu/book/gathering-moss>

Teacher Note

This activity is inspired by several of Hayao Miyazaki's films, including *THE BOY AND THE HERON*, *EARTHSEA* (an Ursula K. LeGuinn adaptation), *PRINCESS MONONOKE*, *NAUSICAA OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND*, and more. In these films, the main characters strive to help others and the planet. For humans and nature to thrive, healthy interaction and interdependence are crucial, both on film and in real life. In this activity think about ways we can make our planet safe and secure for all, by taking care of ourselves, each other, and the planet.

Directions

1. MENTOR TEXT 1
 - a. Read the article "[The Interdependence Of Humanity And Earth](https://www.npr.org/sections/13.7/2017/11/08/562668359/the-interdependence-of-humanity-and-earth) (NPR, 2017)", a science commentary on where we have been (humans and Earth) and where we may be headed. www.npr.org/sections/13.7/2017/11/08/562668359/the-interdependence-of-humanity-and-earth
 - b. Spark discussion and allow students to reflect: human and planetary interdependence, climate change, human responsibility and accountability, solutions and innovative ideas, etc.
2. MENTOR TEXT 2
 - a. Robin Wall Kimmerer (Potawatomi) is the author of the bestselling book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* and *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*. In the former book's description:



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“Drawing on her life as an indigenous scientist, a mother, and a woman, Kimmerer shows how other living beings—asters and goldenrod, strawberries and squash, salamanders, algae, and sweetgrass—offer us gifts and lessons, even if we’ve forgotten how to hear their voices...the awakening of a wider ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. For only when we can hear the languages of other beings will we be capable of understanding the generosity of the earth, and learn to give our own gifts in return.”

- b. Read, discuss, reflect on the chapter titled: *“The Council of Pecans”*

“If one tree fruits, they all fruit—there are no soloists. Not one tree in a grove, but the whole grove; not one grove in the forest, but every grove; all across the county and all across the state. The trees act not as individuals, but somehow as a collective. Exactly how they do this, we don’t yet know. But what we see is the power of unity. What happens to one happens to us all. We can starve together or feast together. All flourishing is mutual.”

- c. EXTENSION: Read Kimmerer’s writing [“Council of the Pecans: Lessons on native resilience from a venerable tree”](#) (Orion Magazine, 2013/2022)”

3. MENTOR TEXT 3:

- a. Watch Kimmerer’s words from *Braiding Sweetgrass* come alive on film, available directly on [Vimeo](#) or on Kimmerer’s [website](#) on the “Books” page.

4. REFLECT & CREATE: Allow students to write a reflection in a style of their choosing (free write, journal entry, poetry). Ask each student to pick a sentence or two from the articles, excerpts, or short film to which they will respond.



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Easter Eggs

Teacher Resources

- “Easter Eggs” Sheet
- Easter Eggs background - <https://crazynate.com/what-do-easter-eggs-mean-in-movies/>
- Cairns background via LiveScience - <https://www.livescience.com/65687-rock-cairns.html>
- Orpheus and Eurydice background - <https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Orpheus/332104>
- Isis and Osiris background - <https://www.laits.utexas.edu/cairo/teachers/osiris.pdf>

Directions

1. Read through some of the many easter eggs that are featured in THE BOY AND THE HERON, and ask students if they spotted any other references to other movies, books, histories, or more in the film.
2. Compare and Contrast: Read a summary of a myth, such as [Orpheus and Eurydice](#) or [Isis and Osiris](#). Discuss how Orpheus’s journey into the underworld and Mahito’s entry into the “land shared by the living and the dead” are similar and/or different.



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Keeping a Dream Journal

Teacher Resources

-“Three Reasons to Start a Dream Journal” by Dr. Kelly Bulkeley -

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/dreaming-in-the-digital-age/202003/three-reasons-start-dream-journal>

Teacher Note

This activity is primarily intended as an out-of-classroom-time home extension. Whether assigned as something to complete over a few days or a week or just as an option for them to have fun with in their own time, encourage students to come back together after a signified period of time to discuss what they saw in their dreams and what they think it might mean.

Directions

1. Read the introduction to the activity together as a class or in small groups. As an extension, explain that fantastical worlds like the one illustrated in *THE BOY AND THE HERON* can represent our own—particularly the filmmaker’s—dreams. Think about what Mahito’s, and director Hayao Miyazaki’s, “dream” world might represent in their real lives.
2. Print out (or have students replicate on their own paper) 3-5 Dream Journal pages provided at the end of this packet. Discuss with students how frequently they dream: every night, every other night, once a week, or never. Based on these answers, set a time period during which you’d like for them to complete their Dream Journal sheets. These are meant to be kept close to where they sleep to fill out while the dream is still fresh in their minds, but can also be done at the start of the school day or class time depending on your class’ schedule. Once they have all filled out the dedicated number of sheets, come back together as a group to talk about their funniest, scariest, most realistic, etc dreams and how they see them apply to their real lives.



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