Dear Educators,

Welcome to the theater! We are still thrilled about the return to in-person Education Screenings after such a challenging time during the pandemic. Being back 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 returning with your students for a screening. 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.

The short films you and your students will see explore themes of creation, connection, and community. We all bring gifts to this world, and by using those talents and indulging our curiosities, whether through art, music, culture, or community, we forge connections with our ancestors, our peers, and those who are yet to be. The activities in this curriculum guide provide opportunities for reflection, discussion, and further exploration of the themes and content of the shorts program.

I hope our curated collection of films will educate, engage, and entertain your students, and demonstrate how impactful the language and medium of film can be.

With Appreciation,

Aliza Werner
Curriculum Writer, Milwaukee Film
Pre-Screening Activity: Film Detectives at Work
Get ready for your Milwaukee Film Education Screening of Shorts: Creation, Connection, Community by building background knowledge. Students will become “film detectives”, looking for clues in the images of the film stills that help them predict what each film may be about. Students will engage in critical media literacy skills prior to seeing the films, build excitement for seeing the films, and prepare for being active thinkers and viewers during the screening.

*English Language Arts*


The Reel Deal: My Favorite Short Film
Live action and animation. Humorous and thoughtful. Fiction and documentary. International and American. Students have seen a diverse selection of short films during the screening. One (or more!) will certainly stand out as a favorite. With this activity, students can tell us what they loved.

*English Language Arts*


The Heart of The Matter: Digging for Deeper Meaning in Stories
This activity gives students the opportunity to discuss the films they saw, to recall and retell, and to recognize that successful stories carry various layers of meaning. Using “The Magic of Chess” as an example, students will identify an activity they do in their own lives and what participating in it teaches them about life.

*English Language Arts, SEL*


Friending My Fear: Growing a Capacity for Emotional and Mental Strength
This activity addresses the social and emotional side of learning centered on the very human emotion of fear. Students will explore the concept of fear, identify common and individual fears, and participate in a visualization practice that empowers them in facing (or avoiding) real life fears.

*English Language Arts, SEL*

Pre-Screening Activity: Film Detectives at Work

Teacher Resources
- Activity Sheet: “Film Detectives at Work”

Teacher Note
This activity is intended to be done prior to attending the Education Screening of Shorts: Creation, Connection, Community. This pre-screening activity introduces the theme and content of the short films to students. Engaging students in a discussion of the films before seeing the entire program allows students to gain familiarity with the films, understand the common theme that unites the films, learn about the concept of short films, view a variety of animation and live action formats, make predictions, and raise their engagement level as active thinkers while viewing the films.

Directions

1. Lead a discussion to get your students ready to make the most of your experience with the 2023 Milwaukee Film Education Screenings by actively thinking about storytelling on film, specifically using the short films you'll be seeing, Shorts: Creation, Connection, Community. Gather students together, and guide the discussion:
   a. Explain to students that they will be attending a Milwaukee Film Education Screening! Activate background knowledge and connections regarding the festival, film festivals in general, seeing a movie in a theater vs. at home, or watching movies in general.
   b. Share that this is a unique opportunity to see films from all over the world that normally are not screened at big movie theaters. The program they will be seeing is a collection of short films from the United States and all over the world! They represent many different identities and life experiences. Some films may be in English, and others may be in another language or subtitled. Allow students to share background knowledge.
   c. Discuss the program's universal themes (Creation, Connection, Community). Ask students:
      - What does it mean to create?
      - What are some examples of things people can create?
      - How do people connect in a community?

2. Use the film stills and synopses that accompany them in this curriculum guide, to lead the next part of the activity:
   a. Share that students will be getting a sneak peek into the films they will see in their Education Screening.
   b. Show the film stills/descriptions to students, ensuring they each have visual access (project images via PDF file, utilize a document camera with a hard copy, make copies to pass out to students, etc.).
c. Explain that students are going to be “film detectives” to try to make their best predictions of what each short will be about.

d. Together, go through each film, read the description aloud, and allow students to make predictions. These predictions can be individual, a turn-and-talk with partners, or the whole group. Tell students to look for clues in the image and in the description that would give them an idea as to what the film’s story might be.

e. After discussing a film, allow students to make a quick sketch or write a few thoughts on the accompanying Activity Sheet. Revisit these predictions after the field trip for reflection, discussion, and insight.
Pre-Screening Activity: Film Detectives at Work

**LUCE AND THE ROCK**
One day, out of nowhere, a giant Rock lays in the middle of the peaceful little village where Luce lives.

**RACHEL**
Animator Rachel Reid talks about being an animator, encouraging others to follow in her footsteps.

**LAZY BLOOM**
In a small peaceful world, lives a people of lazy creatures called the Blobs. One day their calm is broken by the birth of Zip, a hyperactive blob. He will try to be accepted despite his difference.

**OTANIMM/ONNIM (FATHER/DAUGHTER)**
A short animation based on the relationship of an artist and his daughter, and their deep connection to one another. Using dialogue, music, traditional animation, stop-motion, experimental photography and rotoscoping, Terrance and his daughter Neko share a unique look at an indigenous father/daughter story.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RUNAWAY RADISH</strong></th>
<th><strong>EVAN’S DRUM</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A small Daikon radish comes to life in a suburban farmer’s market. A rambunctious terrier is determined to catch it and chases it through the market causing disaster wherever he runs. Can our tiny hero outrun the danger?</td>
<td>An adventurous young boy and his determined mother share a passion for Labrador Inuit drum dancing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>THE MAGIC OF CHESS</strong></th>
<th><strong>TO BE SISTERS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filmed at the 2019 Elementary Chess Championships at the Nashville Opryland resort, a group of children share their insights about the magic of chess.</td>
<td>To be sisters is about sharing a special bond and laughing together, and to be propelled by love. But these sisters share an extra something a bit different, and that's absolutely fine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LABOR OF LOVE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary Stepp Burnette Hayden delivered several hundred babies including her own grandchildren. Her granddaughter, Mary Othella Burnette and her daughter, Debora Hamilton Palmer, honor the family matriarch by telling her story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Reel Deal: My Favorite Short Film

Teacher Resources
- Activity Sheet: “The Reel Deal: My Favorite Short Film” (An example writing/illustrating sheet is included—please adapt length to reflect your students’ needs.)

Teacher Notes
The short films shown at the Education Screenings were united by a theme of “Creation, Connection, Community”, but they are enormously diverse in many other ways, namely: format, genre, animation style, subject, storyline, length, and tone. We encourage students to think about each film and how they received it. Which films appealed to them? Which films left them with questions? What emotions did they experience watching each film? Students are likely to share their opinions about their “favorite” films, and this activity provides the opportunity to express their responses to a particular film.

Directions

1. Gather as a whole group to discuss each film that was a part of the shorts screening. It may help to provide a visual (as provided in the Program Guide contained in this packet, for example) and/or write down the names of each film, so students can easily refer to particular films. Run a discussion as best fits the needs of your classroom. Here are some discussion ideas to get you started:
   - Discuss personal reactions to each film (what they liked, didn’t like, comprehension)
   - Discuss animation styles (CGI, hand-drawn, mixed media) and live-action
   - Review each short film briefly, divide students into partners or small groups to discuss each film, practice listening and responding to each other
   - Students ask questions or voice what they are still wondering about, have other students respond with their ideas and feedback
   - Discuss by emotion: “Which films made you feel happy? Which made you feel sad? Were any surprising? Scary? Humorous?”

2. Ask students to pick one film with which they connected. This may be their favorite film, one that appealed to them for any reason, or engaged them in an emotion or experience that was memorable.

3. Using the included activity sheet (“The Reel Deal: My Favorite Short Film”), ask students to identify that film and to write about why that film speaks to them. Why was it their favorite or why was it so memorable? Encourage students to support their opinion by writing about specific elements and aspects of the film, such as:
   - Characters
   - Setting
   - Plot/Events
● Animation Style (CGI, hand-drawn, mixed media)
● Cinematography (art and technology of using movie cameras and lighting in film)
● Tone/Atmosphere/Ambience
● Music/Score
● Beginning/Ending

Students should write on topic, appropriate for grade level writing expectations. If needed, students may continue on an additional piece of paper and attach it to the activity sheet.

4. Have students complete an accompanying illustration for their writing to show a favorite scene, a character, or something else memorable to the student about that particular film.
NAME:__________________________

The Reel Deal: My Favorite Short Film

My Favorite Short Film’s Title: ________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

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Illustration
The Heart of The Matter: Digging for Deeper Meaning in Stories

Teacher Resources

Teacher Note
This activity gives students the opportunity to discuss the films they saw, to recall and retell, and to recognize that successful stories carry various layers of meaning. Using “The Magic of Chess” as an example, students will identify an activity they do in their own lives and what participating in it teaches them about life.

Directions

1. Films, much like books, contain stories that carry more than one layer of meaning. Using the following language framing based on author Kate Messner’s blogpost on the writing process, practice digging for deeper meanings on the short films you watched. The first sentence is a surface level summary, while the second sentence gets to the heart and deeper meaning:

(Film title) is about __________. But underneath that, it's really about __________.

Example: “Evan's Drum” is about a young boy learning to make and play a drum. But underneath that, it’s really about Evan connecting to his Indigenous heritage and culture through music and community.

2. Try this framing for “The Magic of Chess” based on what students remember from seeing the film, and from the following quotes from the film (share with students).

   ● “It’s just a game of concentration, and that concentration will help me [with] everything I do.”
   ● “It's not always about trophies. It's about having fun. If you have fun, you'll learn more.”
   ● “It teaches you how to make a plan, and about making mistakes or blunders. All you have to do is try again as fast as you can.”

Here’s a start...

“The Magic of Chess” is about elementary school students competing in a chess tournament. But underneath that, it’s really about... (students offer ideas here).
3. Ask students to think of an activity in which they participate in their everyday lives. Think: sports, art, family life, dance, reading, cooking, gaming, etc. Students will use the language frame practiced above to teach others about the real lessons and meaning behind their activities. Use the attached Activity Sheet where students can write and draw.

   Example: "Playing soccer is about kicking the ball into the goal to score points. But underneath that, it's really about...
   1. Learning to be a good teammate.
   2. Practicing to improve my skills.
   3. Learning how to be a good winner and good loser.

4. Students share and teach their classmates what they are learning to do in their activities.
NAME: __________________________________________

The Heart of The Matter: Digging for Deeper Meaning in Stories

Illustration

Activity: __________________________________________________________ is about

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
But underneath that, it’s really about...

1. _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
Friending My Fear: Growing a Capacity for Emotional and Mental Strength

Teacher Resources
-Paper, writing utensils

Teacher Note
This activity addresses the social and emotional side of learning centered on the very human emotion of fear. Students will explore the concept of fear, identify common and individual fears, and participate in a visualization practice that empowers them in facing (or avoiding) real life fears.

Directions

1. **Background:** In the film “Luce and The Rock”, Luce has a fear of the dark. She keeps the dark at bay by clutching her light sticks at night. Luce’s entire village fears the gigantic rock creature who showed up one day, lost and frightened. Luce faces both of these fears by befriending the rock and venturing out into the dark night.

2. **Discuss with students:** What is fear? Fear is a healthy human emotion. It is a signal to keep us safe and warns us of danger. Sometimes it is also healthy to challenge our fears so we can grow, experience new things, and teach our minds and bodies that we are capable of doing hard things.

3. **Brainstorm:** What are some fears people may have? Model answers of common fears (the dark, spiders, heights, snakes, getting lost, etc.), and record student ideas in a way that is visual.

4. **SEL (Social Emotional Learning) Practice:** Have students identify a fear they have. This can be a private activity to allow for vulnerability and honesty. Students may jot this down in a notebook and do a quick write about why this is a fear of theirs. Model your own first.

5. **Action:** Next, ask students to imagine their fear as a creature or being or monster of some type (think: Lazy Bloom’s “blobs,” the rock). What would it look like? Now, ask students to imagine disarming their fear by befriending that fear. What would that look like? A smile, holding a hand, offering to share their snack, playing together at recess? Students then draw a picture of their fear creature and themselves, befriending each other.

6. **Lesson:** Discuss what visualizing and actualizing facing a fear can do to shrink that fear. If we can understand where our fear comes from, we can think of healthy ways to face or avoid those fears.

7. Share as students are willing.
2023 ESSAY CONTEST

For an eighth year, Milwaukee Film is hosting an Essay Contest in conjunction with our Education Screenings. A judging panel will select the best essay and a runner-up from essays submitted in response to each screening’s standard, provided essay prompt. Winners and runners-up will receive an award in the form of a certificate and a gift card to a local bookstore. Submissions will be read anonymously, with name and school information removed from each essay prior to distribution to judges. Judges will assess each essay using a rubric informed by the Common Core State Standards for writing appropriate to the grade band into which the writing falls.

Submission Details:

- You may elect to send all of your students’ work or just a selection.
- For each submission, attach a completed and signed release slip (a set of these forms is attached).
- Mail all submissions to:

  Milwaukee Film attn: Essay Contest
  1037 W. McKinley Ave #200
  Milwaukee, WI 53205

- **Submissions must be postmarked by December 31, 2023**
- Teachers of winning entries will be notified by February 28th, 2024, and we will coordinate a date/time to present the award to the student. Due to anticipated volume, we unfortunately cannot inform all submissions’ teachers.

1st-3rd Grade | Shorts: Creation, Connection, Community | Essay Prompts:

1. You saw a number of short films at the Education Screenings united under the theme “Creation, Connection, Community.” Write a short essay that explains which film was your favorite and why. Use details to explain your reasons. Essays should be a minimum of three sentences and a maximum of ten sentences long.

2. You saw a number of short films at the Education Screenings united under the theme “Creation, Connection, Community.” Many of the films showcased someone sharing their gifts and talents: Rachel is an animator, Evan likes to drum, two sisters were always there for each other, and Granny Hayden helped babies being born. Share a specific example of a gift or talent you have and how you share it with the world. Essays should be a minimum of three sentences and a maximum of ten sentences long.

🖌 TEACHERS! Feel free to do preparatory work in your classroom to help students do their best writing on this topic. For example, you might use the film guide at the front of this packet to jog students’ memories of the films they saw. After students have completed a first draft, feel free to have them workshop their writing and revise/edit their work accordingly. Submissions may be handwritten or typed, depending on your resources.
MILWAUKEE FILM ESSAY CONTEST RELEASE FORM

Include a completed copy of this slip with each submission for the 2023 Essay Contest. Please type or print legibly.

Student Full Name ________________________________________________________________

Teacher Full Name ______________________________________________________________

Teacher Email _________________________________________________________________

Teacher Phone Number __________________________________________________________

School Name _________________________________________________________________

I hereby authorize the above-named child’s writing to be submitted for consideration in the Milwaukee Film 2022 Essay Contest:

Parent/Guardian Signature __________________________________ Date _____________

Parent/Guardian Full Name (printed) ____________________________________________

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