SEARCHING FOR BOBBY FISCHER

An Instructional Guide for a "Made in NY" film for Upper - Elementary School Teachers and Students

Searching for Bobby Fischer is a film that tells the story of a New York City boy named Josh in the world of competitive chess. Based on a "real-life" character, the film explores the choices that Josh must make in balancing growing-up with the need to "just be a kid." The film can generate discussion and reinforce concepts and learning from the New York City Department of Education's ***Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts.***

Paramount Pictures' ***Searching for Bobby Fischer*** is also one of the many films and video productions made in New York City under the auspices of the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting, this year celebrating its 40th anniversary.

ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS BEFORE SEEING THE FILM

- Ask students if they know who Bobby Fischer is. "Have you ever heard about Bobby Fischer? Who is Bobby Fischer? What do you know about chess? Do any of you play chess? Describe how chess is played."
- As you watch ***Searching for Bobby Fischer,*** keep an eye out for the different New York City neighborhoods and settings represented in the film.
- As you watch the film, consider how you might describe the lesson of the movie. What is the message of the film?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FILM'S CONTENT

***BOBBY FISCHER* IS SET IN MANY DIFFERENT NEW YORK CITY LOCATIONS.**

- List and then describe the various settings in the film.
- In what settings does Josh feel most comfortable? Most uncomfortable? Why?

***BOBBY FISCHER* TELLS THE STORY OF COMPETITIVE CHESS.**

- What obstacles does Josh face in getting ready for the chess competitions? How does he overcome these challenges?
- How do you prepare for a competition?
- How do you deal with anxiety or nervousness in competition?
- Does the fact that chess is competitive destroy the love that Josh feels for the game? Explain. Why or why not?
- Is the goal of the competition to win...or do your best...? Which is a more meaningful goal and why? If you don't win, was it worth trying? Why or why not?

***SEARCHING FOR BOBBY FISCHER* IS A MOVIE MADE IN NEW YORK CITY TELLING THE STORY OF NEW YORK PEOPLE.**

- Sometimes the term "New York movie" is used to describe a movie that captures New York City life. Can ***Bobby Fischer*** be called a "New York movie"? Why?
- Could this movie be set in another city? How would it be different?

***SEARCHING FOR BOBBY FISCHER* EXPLORES THE INFLUENCE THAT ADULT MENTORS HAVE ON CHILDREN.**

- In the film, Josh has two chess teachers. Describe each of his teachers.
- How does each of his teachers' lives differ?
- How are their teaching methods different?
- How do they come together to help Josh?
- What lessons do his teachers learn?

JOSH'S FATHER WANTS HIS SON TO SUCCEED IN COMPETITIVE CHESS AND MAKES MANY CHOICES TO MOVE HIS SON ALONG THIS PATH.

- What are some of the choices that Josh's father makes for him?
- In the movie, Josh's father decides to take Josh out of a school that he loves to send him to a private school. Was this a "good decision"? Why or why not? Should Josh's father have made this decision without talking to his son? Was this decision justified knowing that Josh's father wanted the best for his son?

THE MOVIE IS ENTITLED *SEARCHING FOR BOBBY FISCHER* EVEN THOUGH BOBBY FISCHER IS NOT THE MAIN CHARACTER.

- Who is Bobby Fischer? Why was he important? Would you describe Bobby Fischer as a pop icon? Why or why not?
- Why do you think the film is called ***Searching for Bobby Fischer***? What would be another name for the movie?

ART MAKING / LITERACY IN THE ARTS - DISCUSSION ABOUT THE TECHNIQUES OF FILM AND VIDEO PRODUCTION

Searching for Bobby Fischer is a story of a chess prodigy named Josh Waitzkin. Josh's experience is compared to the life of chess grandmaster Bobby Fischer. The director makes parallels between Josh and Bobby Fischer by inserting archival film footage of Bobby Fischer into the film. In addition to the archival film, the director uses other filmmaking devices that students can identify and discuss.

- ***Searching for Bobby Fischer*** is a **fictional film** even though it is based on real characters and events. What makes a fictional film of this type different from a **documentary film?** Can you name any documentary films you have seen? What type of film, fictional or documentary, do you prefer and why?
- The **director** of ***Searching for Bobby Fischer*** uses **archival film** within a fictional movie. What is archival film? How is this type of film different from the film in the rest of the movie? From what time in history does this particular archival film **footage** come? What evidence do you have of it coming from another time? Why might the **filmmaker** choose to use "real event" film in a fictional story?
- ***Searching for Bobby Fischer*** begins with instrumental music, then adds the sound of spoken word. What mood does the musical **score** create? Define score. Why would the director make the choice to start the film with music instead of with the characters acting out the story?
- Why does the director choose to have Josh's voice appear before we meet the character? How does a **voice-over** allow the character to directly address the audience? Why would this voice-over device be useful in telling the story?

Please note that all the bolded terms above can be defined and used by students to access film literacy. Ask students to research and define the terms using an online movie glossary such as *All Movie Guide Glossary* at: **http://www.allmovie.com/avg_glossary.html**

ART MAKING

- ***Searching for Bobby Fischer*** tells the story of a young man who has different ideas about his future than his father does. Have you ever disagreed with your parents or guardians about what was best for you? What was the conflict? What did you think and do about the situation? Write these thoughts as a journal entry or as a dramatic monologue.
- What do you think happens to Josh in ten years? Does he keep playing chess? Why or why not?
- If you were to make a film about Josh as an adult, choose one scene from your movie and describe it.
  - What would the setting be?
  - What is the plot of the scene?
  - Who would be the characters in the scene?
  - Would some of the characters from ***Searching for Bobby Fischer*** be in your movie?

- What might the conflict be?
- What would be the theme of your scene?

- Create a storyboard for your scene, sketching out the "shots" you will use and the dialogue linked to each shot. For a storyboard template, please refer to: **http://www2.hawaii.edu/~ricky/etec/sboardtemplate.html**

MAKING CONNECTIONS / RESEARCH

***SEARCHING FOR BOBBY FISCHER* TELLS THE STORY OF A BOY IN THE WORLD OF COMPETITIVE CHESS.**

- What are the origins of chess? Where did the game come from?
- What are the skills and talents that playing chess is said to develop?
- ***Searching for Bobby Fischer*** is set in the early 1990's. Who are the competitive chess champions in the world today? What countries are they from?

CAREERS IN THE ARTS: FILMMAKING

LOOK AT THE CREDITS OF *SEARCHING FOR BOBBY FISCHER*, YOU WILL SEE THAT MANY PEOPLE ARE DOING MANY DIFFERENT JOBS REQUIRED TO MAKE A FILM.

- As a group, study the credits and list the different jobs shown in the film credits.
- Using the Internet, research and create short definitions of each job. What education is required for these jobs?
- The film uses many child actors. Who are child actors that you know? How does a child get to be an actor? What do you think the life of a child actor is like? Research the career of a particular child actor and write a short biography.

RESOURCES

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

For information about the ***Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts,*** arts activities for students and the "Arts and Cultural Education Services Guide"

http://www.nycenet.edu/projectarts/

THE NEW YORK CITY MAYOR'S OFFICE OF FILM, THEATRE AND BROADCASTING

Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre & Broadcasting is the one-stop shop for all entertainment needs in New York City. The agency markets New York City as a prime location, provides premiere customer service to production companies, facilitates production throughout the five boroughs and develops incentive programs for the industry. The City's "Made in NY" incentive program, which includes tax credits, free outdoor advertising, vendor discounts and a concierge service for the industry, led to a record-breaking year for production in New York City in 2005, where our production industry employs 100,000 New Yorkers and contributes $5 billion to our local economy annually.

www.nyc.gov/film

CITY OF NEW YORK

The City's official website contains information about all City government agencies and programs.

www.nyc.gov

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Commissioner

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