



Cinema/Chicago Education Program Screening : *Circus Kids*

Director : Alexandra Lipsitz

86 minutes

In English, and Hebrew with subtitles. Not rated

Please use the below synopsis, study ideas and questions, and helpful websites to lead your students in preparation and post-screening discussion. Following the film, students in the audience are required to respond to the screening with a one page essay that is sent to Cinema/Chicago. *

Synopsis

This stylish and uplifting world premiere documentary from the director of *Air Guitar Nation* follows a spirited St. Louis youth circus troupe on their journey to perform with a mixed Jewish/Arab troupe in Israel. The costumes are different. The routines are different. The language is different. The *food* is different. But can a multicultural group of teens find the harmony that has eluded this part of the world for so long?

Study Ideas/Questions

1. The St. Louis Arches is a troupe made of children from diverse backgrounds. These students have come together to work as a performing team. Discuss the relationships between the people in the groups you are a part of (school, friends, church, sports) and what differences and similarities you share. Without such group activities, do you think you would have met and spent time with those people? Explain.
2. What ideas do the American students have about the Israeli students before they meet them? What reactions do the Israeli students have after meeting the American students? Do you think these were fair ideas or thoughts?
3. When the two troupes meet each other for the first time, it's a little awkward and everyone is a little shy. What changes by the end of the film? How do they feel about each other and interact with each other as the film continues?
4. Each troupe tries to teach the other new circus performances and skills. Is this successful?
5. Have you ever traveled to another country? What did you expect before your trip? How was your experience different than what you imagined?
6. How does prejudice, racism and gender inequality factor into the film? Discuss instances in the film in which these issues arise. Is there prejudice and racism in your community? Do you think that group activities like those depicted in the film can help these issues? Explain.
7. How are the Israeli students different than the US students? How are they similar?
8. Read into the history of Galilee, and the Galilee riots of 2002 (see links below).

9. Rabbi Mark Rosenstein talks about how circus is a non-verbal way to bring people together. What are other activities or art forms that work the same way?
10. Matthew comments that if everyone spoke English, the two troupes would be working better together. Do you agree? When have you been challenged because of a language or cultural barrier? How did you overcome that challenge?
11. One of the Israeli students says that, even though they are friends and work together, there is still a separation between the Arab and Jewish students in the troupe. How are there still separations between the students in the St. Louis Arches? How is Ellie different than Iking, beyond gender and race?
12. What are some of the activities in the film, other than the circus, that force the students to interact and work together? Do you think these are successful attempts at bringing them closer?
13. The film is a documentary. Have you seen any other documentaries? Do you think the filmmaker did a good job of capturing the students in the film? Why or why not?

Useful websites

<http://circusday.org/Israel/index.html>

<http://www.circuskids.tv/index.html>

<http://www.cinemachicago.org/education/>

*Teachers who do not facilitate the completion of this requirement will not be invited to attend future Education Program Screenings