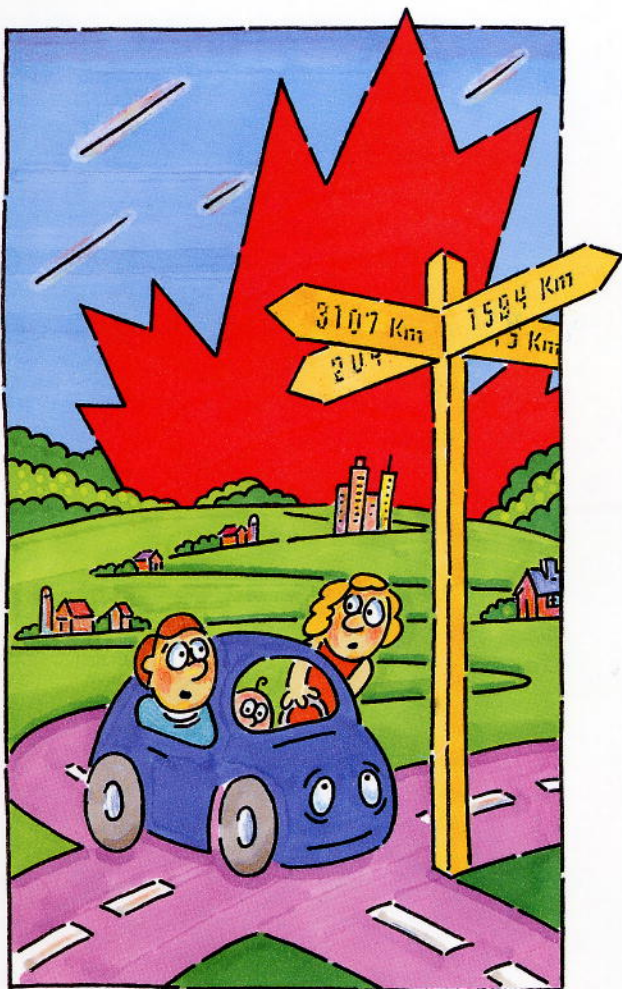


# Discuss It!



FOURTEEN FILMS  
TO SUPPORT THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

**Teacher's Guide**

**F**ounded in 1939 as a public producer, the National Film Board of Canada has completed many thousands of documentaries, dramas, animation films, and innovative works. Although its mandate is to reflect the social and cultural priorities of Canadians, in many ways the NFB has also become the image of Canada in all corners of the globe. *DISCUSS IT!* is a selection, made in consultation with educators both in Canada and abroad, of fourteen of the Board's titles. These were all produced originally as films and are now released in a video anthology for effective and convenient use. As part of the *REACHING OUT* Project it is hoped that they will make a significant contribution to the teaching of English both as a second, and as a foreign language.

The National Film Board acknowledges with pleasure the support it has received for this Project from the External Affairs and International Trade Canada Task Force on Central and Eastern Europe.

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# TEACHER'S GUIDE

for

## DISCUSS IT!

A video collection of films  
to support English-language  
teaching and learning

Produced by the  
National Film Board of Canada  
*REACHING OUT* Project

With support from  
External Affairs  
and  
International Trade Canada Task Force  
on Central and Eastern Europe

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*"One of the greatest pleasures of life is conversation"*

Rev. Sydney Smith (1877)

## WELCOME TO *DISCUSS IT!*

Conversation is basic to the learning of another language. It brings the oral and aural skills into play and demands that the mind "jump in" without going through the translation process which often inhibits learners. Many teachers today insist that conversation take place from the very beginning of their students' studies. However, the happy class of foreign language students expressing themselves creatively and spontaneously is based on conscious effort by the teacher, and doesn't simply happen!

The *DISCUSS IT!* video package is designed to stimulate students to want to talk and listen, and to help teachers to capitalize on this motivation to bring about further language skill development. Since foreign language teaching in classes is almost always to children or adults who are already capable of a degree of written and spoken expression in their native tongue, the suggestions in this *DISCUSS IT!* guide include learning activities for reading and writing as well as directed discussion.

Everyone loves a good movie. The 14 short animated films included in the *DISCUSS IT!* videocassette have all delighted audiences around the world. Two of them are even Oscar-winners. But they were selected to do more than entertain. Each one has the power to provoke thought, to awaken interest, and to precipitate discussion. Of course your involvement as teacher or group leader is essential to making this happen.

In your classroom you have already probably used newspapers, magazines, audiotapes, posters and pictures, to get your students talking. Any approach that works for you and your group is the “right” one. Now that you have *DISCUSS IT!* available, you can extend the variety and scope of your classroom sessions. They will be even more interesting for both you and your students.

Video in the foreign or second language class has some fascinating special possibilities. For one thing, it combines both picture and sound. This can add up to dramatic impact as well as to the introduction of many different native voices speaking the target language in your classroom. In addition, video is simple to play and flexible to use. After the first viewing, a video can be played again silently with learners adding new voice parts. Sections can be viewed over and over for specific activities. There are other advantages too. Animated videos seem to transcend any one language. The images and story lines touch universals and are often comprehensible even to those weak in listening skills.

Then there’s the confidence factor. Leave the room semi-darkened after playing the video, and some of your more hesitant speakers may blossom like flowers in the spring sunshine. Anonymity seems to free many people from the burden of perfection!

The *DISCUSS IT!* videos average under 8 minutes each. Some of them are without words at all. In most others, the language is relatively simple and is well-supported by the pictures and story. They can all be used with both adults and young people, from beginners to the most advanced. And you as a teacher will enjoy the experience too.

## HOW TO GET STARTED

We can't all gather our students around the fireplace with a refreshing drink for an evening of good talk. But we can set up the seating arrangements in the classroom for the greatest possible interaction. Open circles and U-shaped groupings are conducive to good discussion and are best-suited to viewing video. Participation during activity periods will increase if each student group is limited to 5 or 6 people. Unless the chairs are bolted to the floor, this is quite practical, although absolute beginners will require a competent teacher's assistant at the helm. This latter role may be assumed by more advanced students who certainly benefit from the challenge of giving leadership to their classmates.

The role of the EFL/ESL teacher in discussion groups is more similar to that of explorer than mechanic. If you've never really tried it before, prepare yourself well, then relax and enjoy the unfamiliar terrain. Not to say that you shouldn't remain alert and lead your group to new discoveries! The list of qualities that the textbooks say you should possess: *enthusiasm, inventiveness, sensitivity, interest in people, and patience*, sound like qualifications to enter the Promised Land. Do your best!

Both questions and answers are useful tools of discussion. Be careful that you as teacher don't lay claim to the exclusive role of questioner. And try to make your queries ring true with interest and authenticity.

## ...AND KEEP GOING...

Speaking out in a new tongue is a very demanding experience for most students. Adults are particularly frustrated by the limitations that their language skill places on their ability to express themselves fully. One reaction is to clam up completely, or try to become invisible. Along with your skills as a Supreme Being, here are a few simple techniques which will help to loosen things up.

- Begin with fairly controlled frameworks for conversation, and move gradually into more wide-open discussion.
- Open every class at a level in which even the weakest student can participate.

- Listen sincerely to even the most halting and simple answer.
- Encourage students to listen to their colleagues in order to evaluate their own performance and to give each person's ideas importance. This can often be promoted by asking the next question based on the last student's response.
- Lead students to use their existing vocabulary and structures in new ways and to use what they know to figure out the unknown.
- Learn to keep your own mouth closed and eyes attentive! A good leader often intervenes only sparsely.
- And what to do about those few students who won't stop talking? Firm but good-humoured attention is in order. Insist that they listen to classmates too.
- Encourage students to speak out with confidence and volume. Sometimes really small groups help those who are very shy.
- Correcting speech without inhibiting it is a real challenge. Some teachers take notes and discuss important mistakes afterwards so as not to interrupt the flow.
- Always have a couple of trump cards up your sleeve. If the discussion gets too boring or looks as if it's headed for a wild brawl, switch tactics.
- Where possible, encourage the students to relate the discussion of pictures, videos, or news to their own experiences, thoughts, and feelings. It works wonders for motivation.
- Extend your two-hour class by setting your students on the track of joyous language engagements outside the classroom. But please... not as "homework"!
- Conversation is a social act. Help your students to develop the sociable aspects of the group. And you must be part of it yourself.
- Thank the gods daily for idioms. Use them to advantage as conversation starters. While slang and street language are fascinating, they aren't the building blocks of language competence.



## A WORD OR TWO ABOUT WORDS

All the films in the *DISCUSS IT!* videocassette can be used for the practice of known vocabulary as well as for the introduction of new words. Even those without speech will lead to descriptive words and phrases being used. Some of the suggestions for particular films include expressions which you might wish to introduce before the screening. Full or partial transcripts are included where this may be useful.

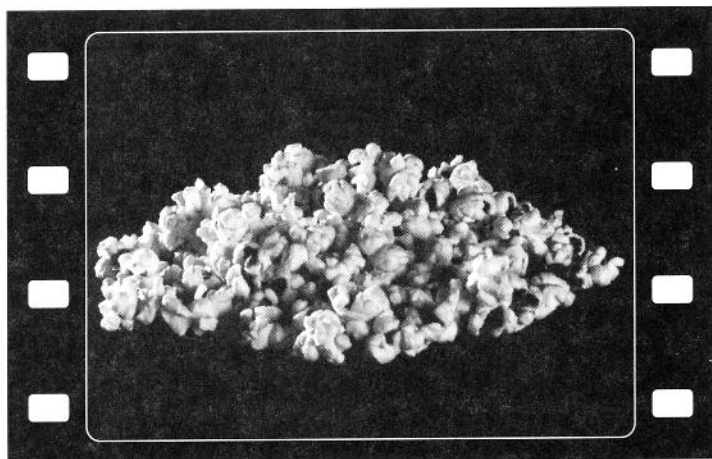
### ACTIVITIES, ACTIVITIES, ACTIVITIES...

Although each film description is followed by activities which relate specifically to it, most of these could be applied to other titles on the cassette as well. Many of them will also apply if you hijack a cassette of "*Godfather III*" or import the evening newscast into your classroom.

Following is a list of generally applicable activities.

- Question for simple factual answers.
- Raise questions which require inference.
- Ask questions that force students to make judgements.
- Summarize the central idea.
- Retell the story in whole or part.
- Suggest different beginnings, middles or endings to film stories.
- Give personal reactions to the films.
- See also the section *MORE GAMES AND ACTIVITIES*.

Enjoy!



## 1. ZEA

(5 min. 17 sec.)

### DESCRIPTION

A mysterious film with ballet-like movement accompanied by the grandeur of symphonic sound, *ZEA* definitely is intriguing. Undeniably beautiful, it presents a real challenge to the EFL/ESL teacher. Since it lacks both storyline and verbal language, it must be approached for the aural and visual stimulation it brings to your students. Following are a few suggestions to get you started.

### VIEWING

Students should have pens and paper at the ready before "START" is pushed on the VCR. This is a guessing game without the \$64,000 prize. But there will be a payoff in interest! Get your students to watch attentively and as soon as they identify the mystery object in the film, to write its name on a piece of paper and their own name on the blackboard. After the viewing, review their answers in order and ask them for clues and reasons that led to their conclusions. Even "wrong" answers are valid examples of

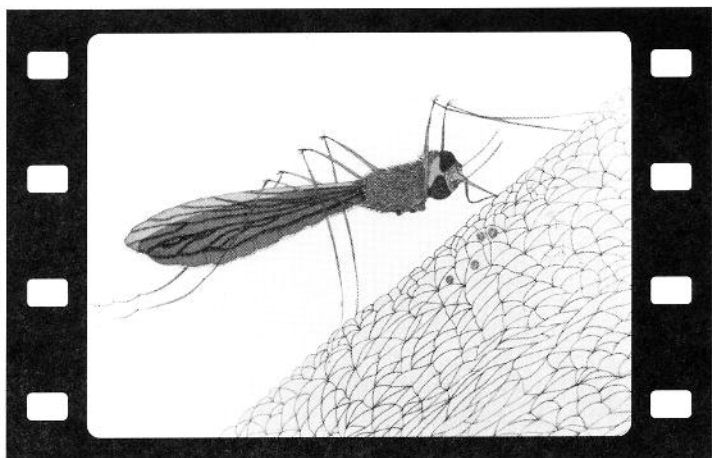
fertile imaginations at work!

*ZEA* offers great opportunities for building lists of descriptive words, for speculation (What might your guess have been, and how would the mood have altered if the film had been accompanied by synthesizer, rock, or calliope music?). It opens the way to discuss *scale*, *distortion*, and *perception*.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Divide the class into small groups. Each group selects a common object such as an apple, a shoe, or a comb. Students prepare a list of descriptive words for the object viewed from close-up, where it's never visible as a whole. After a given time, each group leader in turn describes the characteristics of her or his group's object, while the other groups try to guess what it is.
- With more advanced students, discuss the urgent human need to create order from chaos; to explain things; to make meaning. Discuss *micro* and *macro*. Have students explain the images as a creation myth or the "big bang". Check out the name *ZEA*. It's from the botanical word for popping corn, *Zea mays evereta*. So, in naming the film, the filmmaker really did give us a clue!
- Then there's always the possibility of making popcorn!





## 2. COSMIC ZOOM

(8 min.)

### DESCRIPTION

A relentless visual journey from the realms of the everyday world to the limits of outer space, and a return trip which passes through dimensions known to the human eye, then penetrates deep into the region of molecules, atoms, and those infinite organisms which are beyond the definition of optics. *COSMIC ZOOM* is a fine companion to *ZEA* (video #1). Its simplicity and clarity offer splendid opportunities to teach related vocabulary.

Ideas, phrases, and words related to *space*, *earth*, and the *human body*, could be “collected” by your students in the week preceding the viewing of this film.

### VIEWING

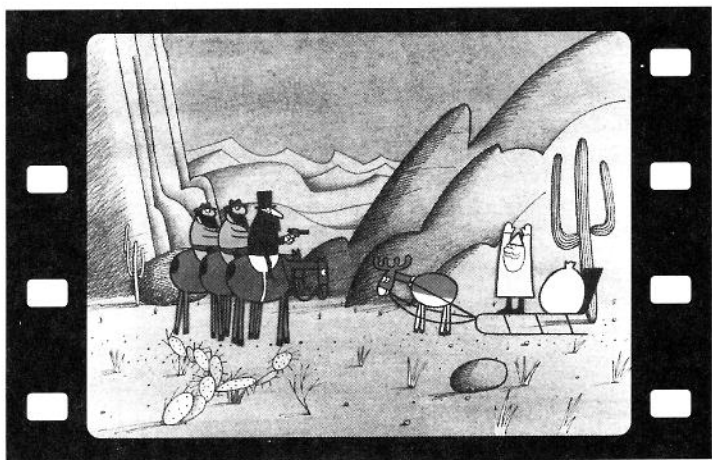
As the video is being played, students can check off words in their personal collection which they could use to describe some of the scenes in the film (e.g. *planets*, *galaxy*, *river*, *lake*, *ocean*, *blood*, *cells...*). Each one could

contribute one word to a blackboard list when the film is over. These words could then be numbered in order of their “appearance” in the film images and students asked to form a descriptive sentence for each one as related to *COSMIC ZOOM*. The “story” could be built up on the blackboard collectively, and organized into paragraphs.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Time for imagination! Student groups pick an object or perspective in the film, identify with it, and give it human characteristics (a good chance to teach *anthropomorphic!*). The boy in the boat, the mosquito, the dog, a blood cell, a spacecraft, a satellite, an airplane, are all possibilities. The groups are given five minutes to prepare descriptions of what they would see, hear, feel, and perhaps even think from their particular perspectives.
- Each student can contribute one sentence to the group description which is presented to classmates. For the boy in the boat it might go something like this. *“I am tired. It is hard work rowing this boat. The water is deep. I see a fish swimming. When will I reach shore?”*
- More advanced students could write and read their own descriptive paragraphs to the class.





### 3. THE GREAT TOY ROBBERY

(6 min. 45 sec.)

#### DESCRIPTION

All the cliches of the Western are brought together in this delightful cartoon and Santa Claus is thrown in for good measure! It's the day before Christmas and Santa is traversing cactus-dotted dry gulches, his mind intent on delivering a bag full of toys to all those eager little ones. But wait a minute! Three masked riders bear down on his sleigh, and the fun begins.

Set the stage for your students by making sure they know the North American Santa Claus tradition. Ask them about gift-giving in their native cultures at the time of Ramadan, Hannukah, Spring Festival, Christmas, and so on.

The Western needs no introduction. Just ask students to prepare two lists of descriptive words before the screening, one for the villains ("bad guys"), and one for the heroes ("good guys").

## VIEWING

**T**HE GREAT TOY ROBBERY can be screened many times without viewers becoming bored. It will provoke lots of discussion each time.

After the first viewing ask your students to compare the cowboy and the bandits in the film with their images of these roles in traditional Westerns. The word lists they have already prepared will be useful prompts for making *comparisons* and *contrasts*.

Introduce the idea of *satire*. Your class can provide examples of it from their own cultural backgrounds. Discuss other kinds of humour, and how they are different from satire. Play the video again and watch for the techniques the filmmaker uses to make the film satirical. To do this it would be useful for your students to understand *cliches* and to list all those employed in *THE GREAT TOY ROBBERY*.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Debate the question of whether the cowboy is really a hero.
- Play the *What If* game. Propose a “what if” to your class.
  - What if the cowboy had really been brave?
  - What if the robbers had shared the toys?
  - What if the bandits had quarrelled over the booty?
- Ask students to retell the story under these “what if” conditions. This could be done co-operatively with the teacher writing it on the blackboard, or as a group exercise to be read aloud to classmates.

## TEXT FOR *THE GREAT TOY ROBBERY*

**A** very simple text indeed. But several words may need explanation. *Get up!* and *Whoa!* are the commands given to a horse for “start” and “stop”. Of course *fellas* and *pardner* are Western talk for “fellows” and “partner”.

**Narrator:** *In the tough and rugged West, cowboy heroes ride alone. They have no past. Their hearts are pure. They never start a fight, but must be prepared to meet trouble at all times.*

**Cowboy:** *Get up! Get up! Go, boy...  
Whoa boy, whoa, whoa, whoa boy, whoa...  
Whoa boy, whoa!  
Hey fellas, can I play?*

**Bandit:** *Get out of here.*

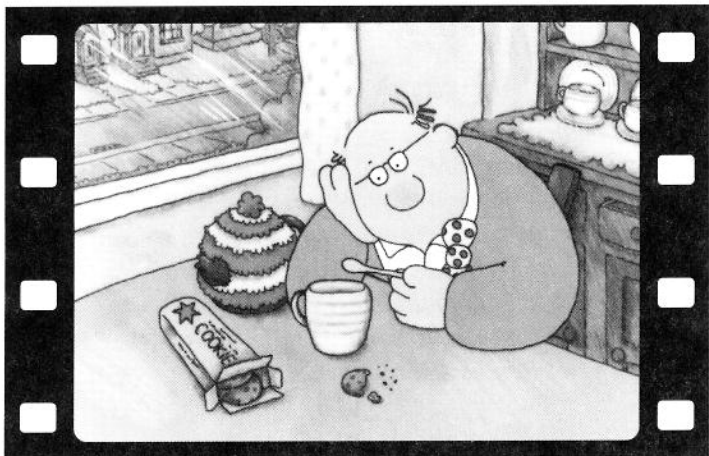
**Cowboy:** *Aw come on fellas.  
Get up! Get up! Go! Go!*

**Sheriff:** *Say pardner, have you seen this guy's sack of toys?*

**Santa:** *Thanks old boy. Have one, have one!  
Ho, ho, ho...*







## 4. GEORGE AND ROSEMARY

(8 min. 48 sec.)

### DESCRIPTION

A romantic comedy about two aging neighbours, *GEORGE AND ROSEMARY* is whimsy at its best. *Whimsy*, already a new word for your students to learn! But there is more in this delightful tale. Enough to touch even adolescents with the pain and poignancy involved in making the first step toward an intimate relationship.

The film is really quite easy to follow, even by viewers with limited listening comprehension. Of course there will be new words and expressions to learn, such as *passion* and *relative happiness*, but these need not be introduced before the viewing.

### VIEWING

Establish the ideas of *reality* and *fantasy* before playing the video. You may invite your students to share their own experiences in this realm. If *fantasy* is too embarrassing for personal recollections, your class members will each know at least one fairytale or legend involving fantasy, from their own culture. And it's never difficult to find examples of *reality*!

After the video has been shown, talk about how it is often easier to do things in fantasy than in real life. But sometimes it also works the other way! Examples please! Start by having students describe each of the fantasy sequences in the film, then get their own memories and imaginations working.

If they can't remember a suitable personal experience they can make one up. How was the experience before it happened? As it was flitting around in the comfort (or discomfort) of the imagination? Then, it really happened. What was the difference in happenings and in feelings between the *fantasy* and the *reality*? To get things started you can always make up a few examples such as:

- your first meeting with someone you really admire
- an interview for a job you desperately want
- entering a competition (sports, music, cooking)
- a "blind date"

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Improvisations will work well with *GEORGE AND ROSEMARY*. The teacher describes a situation involving two people. A pair of students act out the fantasy parts with appropriate dialogue for their thoughts. Another twosome does the same for the reality roles – what *really* happened.
- Choose sequences in the film such as George's actual arrival at Rosemary's door. Create dialogue for these moments.
- Change the roles or characters of George and Rosemary. For instance, she's shy and he's bold. Or she's aggressive and he's receptive. After establishing their new characters, collectively build up the story and the dialogue between the two, and write it on the blackboard. Then act it out in short scenes giving all students a chance to participate.

## TEXT FOR GEORGE AND ROSEMARY

There's nothing too difficult here except perhaps for *the pleasure of her company* (an elegant and flowery way of asking someone for a date or meeting), and *dug into* (ate heartily).

**Narrator:** *George Edgecomb lived on St. Basile Crescent, at number 42. On cold and rainy days he would stay snug indoors, playing checkers with his cat, putting ships in jars, or watching TV with a pizza. While on better days, when the sun was nice and warm, George would sit on his front porch, watching whatever passed by. There was, however, a more important reason for his outdoor activities. He had a passion for the lady across the street.*

**Narrator:** *One day, thought George Edgecomb, I will ask Rosemary Harris for the pleasure of her company. But not today. Tomorrow, thought George, will be the day.*

**Narrator:** *When George woke up in the morning, he put on his best shirt and tie, matching socks, and dug into a nice plate of bacon and eggs. George picked a bunch of flowers from his garden, and went to have a final inspection in the mirror. George thought he would call first.*

**Rosemary:** *Hello! Hello! Is that you Alice? Hello?*

**George:** *Hum...Hum...Hum...*

**Child:** *Do you want to buy some cookies mister?  
Chocolate chip.*

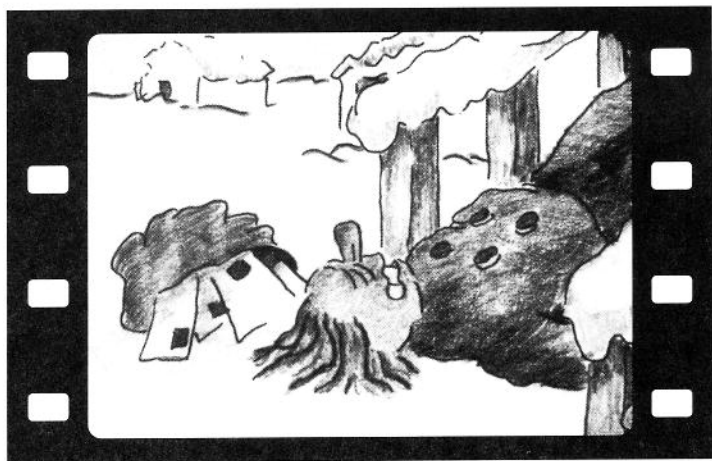
**Rosemary's Family:** *Hello! Hi!*

**Teenager:** *Evening Mr. Edgecomb.*

**George:** *Hum... Hum... Hum...*

**Narrator:** *And so George sold his house, and he and the cat moved across the road to Rosemary's, where they all lived together in relative happiness, for the rest of their lives.*





## SPECIAL DELIVERY

(7 min. 7 sec.)

### DESCRIPTION

This is not your ordinary simple story! Why didn't Ralph clean the snow off the front steps when his wife Alice told him to? If he hadn't ignored her request it might well have turned out to be another humdrum day. But then, there'd be no *SPECIAL DELIVERY*! This Academy Award winner looks like a mystery and sounds like a soap opera. One misadventure leads to another, and don't expect a conventional conclusion!

A little straightforward vocabulary preparation is advisable. But there are many ways to introduce new words and they're not necessarily boring. As you read over the transcript you won't find many complicated words, apart perhaps from *stupor*, *reflex*, *misapprehension*, *bail*, *coroner*, *surmised*, *wrath*, and *remorse*. Look at some of the phrases and expressions such as *A problem struck him!* and *to steady his nerves*. Let your students draw a new phrase or word from an old hat the week before you show *SPECIAL DELIVERY*. The following week, before the viewing they might each use their prize vocabulary in a brief paragraph which explains its meaning.

## VIEWING

When the video ends, a simple retelling of the story will quickly signal whether students understood it. If not, play it again immediately. It's a classic which stands up well to many viewings.

Ask students to re-use the phrase or word they drew from the hat, but this time specifically in a sentence related to the video.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Retell the story using *what ifs*.
  - What if Ralph had remembered his key when he went out to deliver the mail?
  - What if Ralph's wife had not had an affair with the mailman?
  - What if his wife had not realized that the mailman was dead and had gone back home?

Above all, try to keep the “what ifs” humorous! This could be a class effort with the teacher recording students' contributions on the blackboard, or it could be handled by groups or individuals, each choosing or making up a “what if” and completing the story.

- Four students (female or male) play the roles of Ralph, the two policemen, and the magistrate. They improvise the sequence in which the policemen take Ralph into court to be charged. The policemen tell their story, Ralph tells his story (remember, he can't admit it was his own house), the magistrate asks questions, then lays charges and releases him on bail. Remember, this is a humorous story!
- Suppose that someone else finds the mailman dead on Ralph's steps. Journalists from the local paper interview Ralph and his wife. Four students take on the roles, and, working in groups, ask their classmates to help them prepare dialogue. Then they dramatize the situation.
- Students may want to compare legal processes in different countries.

## TEXT FOR SPECIAL DELIVERY

The misadventures of Ralph Phelps are told mostly with simple words except as noted previously. Three phrases not mentioned before are *turn himself in* (voluntarily give himself up to the police), *drop the subject* (not pursue the conversation further), and *broken off with him* (stopped her relationship with him).

**Narrator:** *When Alice Phelps left home that day to go to her judo class, she told her husband Ralph to clean off the front walk before he left for work.*

**Alice:** *Is that all right with you?*

**Narrator:** *But Ralph never did what his wife told him to do. When Ralph returned home there was a body lying on his front stairs. It was the mailman! He had obviously slipped on the ice that Ralph hadn't cleaned away, and broken his neck. Ralph, fearing the wrath of the Letter Carriers' Union, carried the body into the house. He decided that he would put the body into the trunk of his car and dump it somewhere... before anyone noticed that the mailman was missing.*

**Narrator:** *A problem struck him. If the police investigated the disappearance of the mailman, there was a rather obvious clue. All the houses on the mailman's route preceding his own would have had a mail delivery that day. Those after his, would not. Ralph wondered if he should turn himself in. He remembered that a mailman had once broken his leg on a friend's property, and that cost the friend a lot of money. A broken neck was probably considered as bad as ten broken legs! Ralph poured a drink to steady his nerves. Then he undressed the mailman, and leaving the mailman comfortably in the living room chair, put on the mailman's uniform and went out to deliver the mail.*

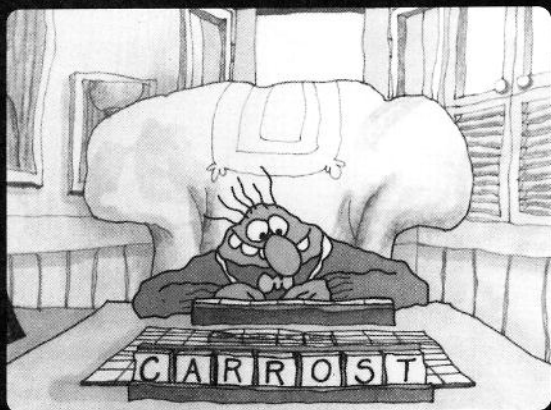
**Narrator:** *No one noticed that it was Ralph delivering the mail, instead of the regular mailman. When he got home, he found that his key was still in his own pants, not in the mailman's pants. He tried to get in a window. He was spotted by some policemen in a passing police car. They accused him of trying to break into the house. Ralph claimed that it was his own house. The policemen were doubtful that a mailman could afford such a large house. Ralph remembered that there was a body in his living room and dropped the subject. As they were taking him away, a policeman told Ralph that he was a disgrace to the Letter Carrier's Union.*

**Narrator:** *When Alice came home she found that the window had been forced open. She found the mailman, the pile of clothing, and the open bottle. She'd had an affair with the mailman some months before. She'd broken off with him, but it seemed he had come back.*

*He'd broken into the house to see her, and not finding her had drunk half a bottle of whiskey, ripped off his clothes, and fallen into a stupor. It was just like him, she thought. Fearing that Ralph would return soon and find them there, she dressed the mailman, put him in the car, drove to his apartment, carried him up the stairs, and put him to bed. She gave him a last kiss before leaving. For the first time she noticed he wasn't breathing. For the first time, another possibility occurred to her. Perhaps the mailman had been surprised by Ralph, and Ralph had killed him. Perhaps Ralph was out buying a gun at that moment to kill her too! Alice drove away to another province and started a new life under the name "Patricia".*

**Narrator:** *Meanwhile, Ralph was being released from the police station. The Letter Carriers' Union, still under the misapprehension that Ralph was the regular letter carrier, had paid his bail. When he got home he noticed that the body had disappeared. He burned the mailman's uniform and resolved to forget the whole thing. When the trial date for the mailman arrived, he did not show up. The authorities went to the mailman's apartment and found that he had passed away in bed. One of the policemen noticed that he looked different, but another said it was just because he was dead. The coroner was surprised to find that the mailman had died of a broken neck – in bed! He surmised that the mailman, filled with remorse for his crime, had dreamed that he was being hanged. The resulting reflex of his neck muscles had snapped his neck! After a while, Ralph stopped worrying about the fact that the body had disappeared and that his wife never came back. And in all the long and happy years that followed, Ralph never cleaned the walk!*





## 6. THE BIG SNIT

(9 min. 49 sec.)

### DESCRIPTION

**snit** *n. Informal.* a state of peevish annoyance: *He quit his job in a snit.* (The Penguin Canadian Dictionary)

In *THE BIG SNIT* there are two simultaneous states “of peevish annoyance”. A domestic quarrel is caricatured to the point where viewers will roll in the aisles with laughter. Then, mirth transforms into poignancy as the second snit reveals itself. Outside the narrow confines of the household squabble, a nuclear holocaust is underway. The two faces of comedy and tragedy become one. Warm and funny, this Academy Award nominee is known around the world for its sobering yet humorous view of the human condition, and its thought-provoking message.

This video is about people in a snit. So before viewing it, an explanation of *snit* is essential!

### VIEWING

After playing the video the first time, students will want to talk about it. What are the two snits that are taking place at the same time? Are they really quite similar in their



origins? How are they the same and how are they different?

Discuss the “peevish annoyances” of both husband and wife. The teacher might then lead off with one of her/his pet peeves, and ask each student to express two of their own.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Make lists of situations which create disputes between individuals. For example:
  - Two friends frequently borrow each other’s clothing. One often returns the clothing in a shabby state.
  - Two colleagues who enjoy working together have a problem. One borrows pens, and a stapler from the other, and rarely returns them. The other’s complaint is that the co-worker carelessly puts his coffee mug just anywhere; on desks, filing cabinets, and even on important papers, leaving stains everywhere.

Create dialogue for the scenes. Act them out. Take some of the students’ own *pet peeves* and, working in groups, prepare dialogue for the situations. Dramatize them. Create some radio dramas with simple sound effects based on *pet peeves*.

- In small groups, discuss the causes of war. Carry the arguments to a full classroom debate.
- Introduce the words and ideas of *viewpoint*, *perspective*, *perceptions*, and *hidden agenda*.
- Don’t forget to further capitalize on *THE BIG SNIT* by playing Scrabble or another word game!

## TEXT FOR *THE BIG SNIT*

The chief voices are a husband, a wife, a TV game show host, a TV announcer, and a parrot. The film parodies TV game shows and high school television competitions with its “Sawing for Teens” segment. The text is very oral and makes little sense without the visuals, but is reproduced below for reference.

- Her:** *Come on dear!*
- Him:** *Wait a minute!*
- Her:** *It's your turn.*
- Him:** *Ju...just a minute!*
- Her:** *All right! All right! You let me know when you're ready then.*
- TV Host:** *What time is it? Well? It's time for...*
- Audience:** *"Sawing For Teens"!*
- TV Host:** *Yes! And our leading teens in today's youth sawing are our teen sawing leaders from Lord Crayon Correspondence Technical Vocational School, Selso and Jonquin. Is everybody ready? OK teens! Begin to saw!*
- Announcer:** *We interrupt this program for an emergency broadcast. Good afternoon! A severe worldwide nuclear war has broken out. Take cover immediately. Do not remain seated. I repeat. A nuclear war has broken... Take cover... newspaper, or under a refrigerator. Please make sure all cigarettes are exting... (extinguished)*
- Him:** *Well pull my lips off! Looks like a bunch of people... eh... Must be some sort of eh... ah,... Is there some kind of parade on or something?*
- Her:** *Are you ready?*
- Him:** *Yeah, yeah. Don't... What are you doing?*
- Her:** *Ah! Did you look at my letters?*
- Him:** *No!*
- Her:** *You looked at my letters.*
- Him:** *I did not.*
- Her:** *You did!*
- Him:** *I... If you think I did, then you're just one of those people who thinks like that.*
- Her:** *You really disappoint me. You looked at my letters!*
- Him:** *Oh... well... well... Thank you very much. I did not. I could have you know, but I didn't.*
- Parrot:** *Awnk, who wants gum?*
- Him:** *I do not.*

**Her:** *Well, you do.*

**Him:** *I do not.*

**Her:** *You do so!*

**Him:** *I'm sorry, but I do not!*

**Her:** *You do! I've seen you do it a hundred times!*

**Him:** *I do not!*

**Her:** *And look, will you stop... sawing... the table!*

**Him:** *I do not!*

**Her:** *Why do you always saw everything in this house?*

**Him:** *Why are you always shaking your eyes?*

**Her:** *I... I don't shake them like I used to do.*

**Him:** *Yes you do. You're always shaking your eyes here, shaking your eyes there... Shaka... here, shaka... there. Why don't you go join the stupid sh... shakin' rock and roll band?*

**Her:** *I... I don't.*

**Him:** *Hey, shake your eyes at me lady, that's what they say.*

**Parrot:** *I do not.*

**Him:** *And I thought you wanted to play some Scrabble.*

**Her:** *I did! You don't... and stop sawing the table!*

**Him:** *I'm not!*

**Her:** *You are sawing the table!*

**Him:** *I'm not... I'm not! Ohh... ohh... What? Do you want to go outside? Is that what you want? What? Say! What? OK, there you go!*

**Him:** *Gee, it's days like this that you don't feel like doing anything.*

**Her:** *Come on! Let's finish the game!*





## 7. THE DINGLES

(7 min. 48 sec.)

### DESCRIPTION

**A**live, colourful, and with a simple storyline, *THE DINGLES* can be used to stimulate discussion, develop descriptive vocabulary and characterization skills, and engage in classification as a language tool. But first, who are these Dingles? Doris Dingle is the grandmotherly figure who presides over her family of three cats, Donna, DeeDee, and Dayoh. Already you may see an opportunity to introduce the idea of, if not the word, *alliteration!*

A sudden storm threatens their safety and only Doris' courage and ingenuity saves the family.

Before playing the video, read the text and single out any words which you feel should be introduced to your students. You needn't review *all* new vocabulary with them at this time, but you could at least introduce the cast by name.

### VIEWING

**D**epending on your class size, create five groups of students, each to focus on different aspects of the video while viewing. One will note all descriptive details of *the*

*storm*. Another will attend to the appearance, behaviour, and character of *Doris Dingle*. The remaining three will each choose one of the cats, *Donna*, *DeeDee*, or *Dayoh*, to describe both physically and in personality.

After the viewing the groups will take ten minutes to prepare their descriptions. All students should participate in the oral presentations and while they are being given, one member of each group might list key words on the blackboard. Groups should also be encouraged to replay the video without sound, stopping it at appropriate moments to illustrate their descriptions with sequences (or stills if the VCR is equipped for this).

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Using the four characters as examples, discuss stereotypes. Elicit from your students the stereotypes of cats in their culture and from their personal perspectives. Extend this to other animals. In a multicultural group, compare these findings, and try to explain them.
- Try using the three cats to develop notions of *classification*. Their behaviour rather than appearance should be emphasized. Extend the process of classifying to foods, books, and restaurants. Discuss the difficulties and limitations of classifying things, as well as the advantages.
- Play with *alliteration* using the cats' names to make up simple sentences. Extend this to two-line verses which will also require *rhyming*. Language learning can be playful and enjoyable.
- What's in a name? Discuss how the cats' names suit (or don't suit) their personalities. Extend this to the students' opinions as to whether their own names suit them.

## TEXT FOR THE DINGLES

There is a single voice, that of the storyteller. Depending on your students' cultural backgrounds, you may have to explain *digging a hole to China*, *patio chairs*, *plastic gnomes*, *whirligigs*, *union suit*, and other expressions. Use the visuals in the video to do this.

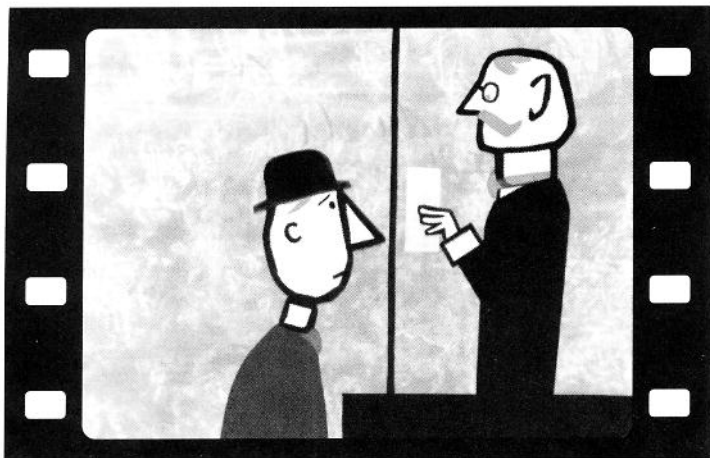
## **Narrator:**

*Doris Dingle had three cats, Dayoh, Donna, and DeeDee. And she loved them with all her heart. Donna, a snobby Siamese, spent most of the time sorting through her collection of bird feathers. DeeDee preferred to tap Doris Dingle's cheek with her paw. Until Doris opened her mouth so wide that DeeDee could count her fillings. Dayoh was just an all round good guy who was digging a hole to China. When Doris called him, she would yell "Dayoh, Dayoh!", and he would come bouncing, bopping, and hand-springing. Every day was a wonderful day for the Dingles. But their favourite time was breakfast.*

*After eating, they would drink cat mint tea in the sunshine. Then go about their business in the backyard. One lovely day, Donna was tanning her tail, while Dayoh worked on his digging. DeeDee had just curled herself down into the dandelion picking basket, when something happened. It started out with a little breeze that blew away a few feathers. Then a wind that tipped over a big bag of peat moss. Suddenly a huge "whish" blew Doris Dingle's skirt right over her head. When Doris looked up she saw a little poodle, dog-paddling across the sky. Then Mr. Gonzo's union suit blew by like a big red kite with a clothesline tail. Then his patio chairs and all the plastic gnomes, flamingos and whirligigs. Just then, DeeDee came flying right by her, and landed flat against the fence, spread out like a maple leaf. Then Donna... and Dayoh... and flower pots, garbage pails, and lawn chairs, and garden hoses, all dumped into a big rubble pile.*

*But even though Doris was very scared, she made a plan. Lifting her big apron, she tore the bottom into three long strips. She tied one around each cat and then knotted all three to the waistband of her apron. "Onward to the patio doors," Doris shouted, and they were off with their bellies to the ground, as flat as bearskin mats. The lightning struck the fencepost and shot the Dingles like missiles, right through the patio door into the house. Safely inside, the first thing they did was have a nice hot bath. While the storm flashed and crashed outdoors, Donna, DeeDee and Dayoh sat in a circle on the rug, and had warm milk and honey with butter on top. Doris had a little cat mint cordial to settle her nerves. That night when Doris went to bed, Donna, DeeDee, and Dayoh crawled into Doris Dingle's feather blanket. Two minutes later they were all zzzzzing (snoring) as the rain pitty-pattered on the roof. Everything was just as it should be. The end.*





## 8. MY FINANCIAL CAREER

(6 min. 38 sec.)

### DESCRIPTION

This is the humorous tale of a fearful soul and his adventure with The Bank. It is based on a short story by the late Canadian writer, Stephen Leacock. Set in an era when banks were all oak and marble, and the manager sat pompously in his well-furnished office like some minor emperor, *MY FINANCIAL CAREER* speaks of all engagements between the timid and the mighty. Our “Mr. Milquetoast” (one who is very timid) sets out to open a bank account. The consequences are both hilarious and disastrous. And maybe, just maybe, it will remind us of experiences and feelings from our own lives.

Since there is a lot of narration in this video, check the text first and introduce only those new words which are crucial to the understanding of a first viewing. If your students have English-only or first language-English dictionaries, you may want to give them each one of the words to look up and explain to their colleagues.

## VIEWING

Students should pay particular attention to the ways in which the filmmakers emphasize *authority and power*, and how they depict *weakness and humiliation*. These themes can be used for post-viewing discussion. For example, as the video opens, a very small and meek-looking man is walking up the steps of a huge, impressive, pillared building.

Discussion can follow other lines as well. A list in sequence of the actions in the bank can be compiled and then the man's "mistakes" identified. Discussion as to what he should have done can follow. It might also be interesting to talk about the bank staff and how they ought to have behaved.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Class members working in groups could construct dialogue for the alternate scenario developed in discussion. Mr. Milquetoast now becomes Mr. Minihero! Try replaying the video without sound, with students reading or improvising the new narration.
- Complete sentences which begin "*I am (or "I was") intimidated by...*". Begin sentences which end "*... is always intimidating.*"
- Select other sequential processes or situations such as starting a car, baking a cake, arriving late for an important appointment, going to the dentist, or planting a tree. First, record the process step-by-step. Ask students to work in pairs to dramatize each situation complete with commentary or dialogue. Encourage humour. Their colleagues can critique each process and propose corrections to the procedures. If your students are too shy or inhibited, *you* play out the processes complete with mistakes and engage the entire class as critics.
- Talk about why *MY FINANCIAL CAREER* is funny.



- Get serious! With your students' help, build up a list of current banking vocabulary. Discuss the steps in opening a bank account, in depositing and withdrawing money, and in getting a loan. If there is interest, discuss credit cards – how to get them and how to use them.
- Ask students to tell or write about experiences in which they were intimidated by an institution or authority, and were made to feel foolish.

## TEXT FOR MY FINANCIAL CAREER

Although there is just one voice, it takes on the parts of three characters – “Mr. Milquetoast”, an accountant, and the manager. In addition to new vocabulary, some students will not understand the references to *Pinkerton's* (a private detective agency founded in the U.S.A. and now operating security services internationally), *Baron Rothschild* (head of a famous international banking family whose fortunes developed in Europe during the Napoleonic Wars), and *Gould* (early American capitalist whose wealth came through control of railroads).

### Narrator:

*When I go into a bank, I get rattled. The clerks rattle me; the sight of money rattles me; everything rattles me. The moment I cross the threshold of a bank and attempt to transact business there, I become an irresponsible idiot. I knew this beforehand, but my salary had been raised by fifty dollars a month, and I felt that the bank was the only place for it. So I shambled in and looked timidly 'round at the clerks. I had an idea that a person about to open an account must needs consult the manager. I went up to a wicket marked "Accountant". The accountant was a tall, cool devil. The very sight of him rattled me. My voice was sepulchral.*

*"Can I see the manager?" I said, and added solemnly, "alone". I don't know why I said "alone".*

*"Certainly", said the accountant, and fetched him. The manager was a grave calm man.*

*"Are you the manager?" I said. God knows I didn't doubt it.*

*"Yes", he said.*

*"Can I see you", I asked, "alone?" I didn't want to say "alone" again, but without it the thing seemed self-evident. The manager looked at me in some alarm. He felt that I had an awful secret to reveal.*

*"Come in here", he said, and led the way to a private room. He turned the key in the lock. "We are safe from interruption here", he said. "Sit down." We both sat down and looked at each other. I found no voice to speak. "You are one of Pinkerton's men, I presume", he said. He had gathered from my mysterious manner that I was a detective. I knew what he was thinking and it made me worse.*

*"No, not from Pinkerton's", I said, seeming to imply that I came from a rival agency. "To tell the truth", I went on, as if I had been prompted to lie about it, "I'm not a detective at all. I have come to open an account. I intend to keep all my money in this bank." The manager looked relieved, but still serious. He concluded now that I was a son of Baron Rothschild, or a young Gould.*

*"A large account, I suppose", he said.*

*"Fairly large", I whispered. "I propose to deposit fifty-six dollars now and fifty dollars a month regularly."*

*The manager got up and opened the door. He called to the accountant. "Mr. Montgomery", he said unkindly loud, "this gentleman is opening an account. He will deposit fifty-six dollars. Good morning."*

*I rose. A big iron door stood open at the side of the room. "Good morning", I said, and stepped into the safe.*

*"Come out", said the manager coldly, and showed me the other way.*

*I went up to the accountant's wicket and poked the ball of money at him with a quick convulsive movement. My face was ghastly pale. "Here", I said, "deposit it." The tone of the words seemed to mean "Let us do this painful thing while the fit is on us".*

*He took the money and gave it to another clerk. He made me write the sum on a slip and sign my name in a book. I no longer knew what I was doing. The bank swam before my eyes. "Is it deposited?" I asked in a hollow, vibrating voice.*

*"It is", said the accountant.*

*"Then I want to draw a cheque." My idea was to draw out six dollars of it for present use. Someone gave me a cheque-book through a wicket, and someone else began telling me how to write it out. The people in the bank had the impression that I was an invalid millionaire. I wrote something on the cheque and thrust it in at the clerk. He looked at it.*

*"What! Are you drawing it all out again?" he asked in surprise.*

*Then I realized that I had written fifty-six instead of six. I was too far gone to reason now. I had a feeling that it was impossible to explain the thing. All the clerks had stopped writing to look at me. Reckless with misery, I made a plunge. "Yes, the whole thing."*

*"You withdraw your money from the bank?"*

*"Every cent of it."*

*"Are you not going to deposit any more?" said the clerk, astonished.*

*"Never." An idiot hope struck me that they might think something had insulted me while I was writing the cheque and that I had changed my mind. I made a wretched attempt to look like a man with a fearfully quick temper. The clerk prepared to pay the money.*

*"How will you have it?" he said.*

*"What?"*

*"How will you have it?"*

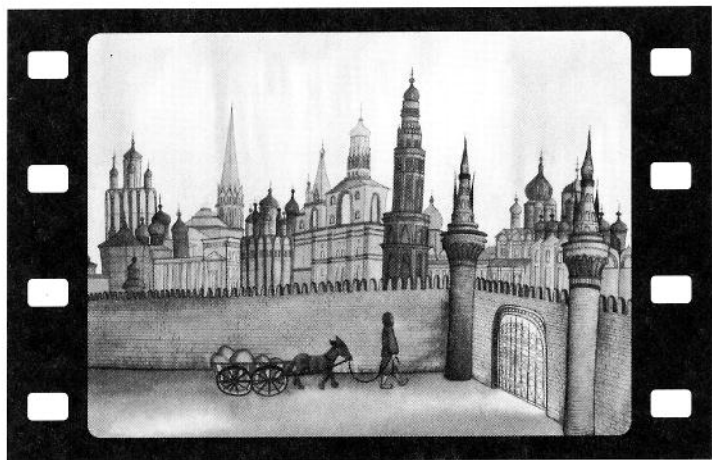
*"Oh", I caught his meaning and answered without even trying to think, "in fifties."*

*He gave me a fifty-dollar bill. "And the six?" he asked dryly.*

*"In sixes", I said. He gave it to me and I rushed out.*

*As the big door swung behind me I caught the echo of a roar of laughter that went up to the ceiling of the bank. Since then I bank no more. I keep my money in cash in my trousers pocket and my savings in silver dollars in a sock.*





## 9. ONIONS AND GARLIC

(4 min. 2 sec.)

### DESCRIPTION

From Eastern Europe, this Jewish parable is brought alive with rich and textured illustrations and skillful camera movement. The story is old, yet the dream is eternal. Two men take their precious commodities to an adjoining kingdom in the hopes of becoming wealthy. Each is rewarded, although quite differently.

Introduce the *parable* as a simple story with a moral. Ask your students for the names of one or two famous parables which represent their cultural/religious backgrounds. *The Prodigal Son* is one of the most famous from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Before viewing, a few words should be clarified. Obviously it would help students if they knew the meaning of both *onions* and *garlic*! Names of the two main characters, *Saul the Dreamer* and *Eli*, should also be written on the blackboard and pronounced.

Challenge the class to decide on the moral of the story while they are watching the video.

## VIEWING

After the TV is switched off, brainstorm for quick, and even incomplete responses to the challenge. Write key words and phrases on the blackboard. Review the list, asking the students who contributed to justify their decisions. Encourage debate, diversity, and humour. At elementary levels of language learning the teacher may have to ask many explicit questions in order to help students to articulate their ideas.

### ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Working individually, have students complete in writing a sentence commencing “*The moral of Onions and Garlic is...* ”. After each has read her or his statement aloud, group them according to similarity of idea. With advanced students this could be extended into a classification exercise, with labels such as *conventional*, *creative*, and *practical*, being applied to each group.
- Discuss *fables* and how they use mainly animal characters to express values and sometimes to expose official wrongdoing.
- Compile a list of morals from parables, fables, and proverbs known to the students. Compare these to traditional English-language expressions of morality.
  - “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.”
  - “Honesty is the best policy.”
  - “Far hills always look greener.”
  - “Waste not, want not.”
- Choose one of the sayings and create a story collectively which illustrates it. This can also be done as a group activity to be read aloud to the class as a whole.
- Select one of the stories, write dialogue for it, then dramatize.

- View the video again and do character studies of Saul the Dreamer and Eli based on their words, actions, and appearance. Beginning students might use only words or phrases, while advanced students will work with sentences and paragraphs.
- Discuss what is inferred from the descriptions of one man as “dreamy” and the other one as “sly”. Do students agree with these words? Ask them to justify their accord or disagreement.

## TEXT FOR ONIONS AND GARLIC

**S**traightforward text is used imaginatively. Some students may be confused over the particular meaning of *fired* (“aroused” or “strongly awakened”).

### **Narrator:**

*Once upon a time in a peaceful village there lived a man called Saul the Dreamer. Saul had a free and roving spirit, an adventurous disposition, and an open and friendly nature.*

*One day Saul met a pilgrim. The pilgrim told Saul fascinating tales of a faraway kingdom – a land where no one had ever heard of onions. “A whole kingdom without onions, you say? How can anyone enjoy food without onions?”*

*His imagination fired, Saul was ready with an idea. “I will treat them to their first taste of this vegetable!” He loaded his wagon with sacks of onions and set out on his long journey. The kingdom was far, far away, and he travelled many months to get there.*

*On arrival, Saul the Dreamer wasted no time admiring the golden towers of the magnificent city. He headed straight for the royal palace and presented himself to the king. “Your Majesty, I have come to introduce to you a new vegetable, the king of the garden, the onion! It has a unique flavour and will improve the taste of all food beyond belief! Your Highness, I urge you to try it!”*

*The king gave his consent. “Very well, I shall try your onions. But if this strange plant should prove distasteful to anyone,*

*I shall have you beheaded!"*

*A formal dinner was prepared, featuring the onions. The nobility of the mighty kingdom, as well as the common folk, were ordered to attend. As night fell, a delicious fragrance wafted from the palace kitchens and the guests gathered with great anticipation. Saul was ordered to be the first to sample the food. Then the guests had their turn, according to rank. Finally, the moment came. The king himself tasted the onions. Everyone agreed. The food was delicious! It was a great discovery!*

*Eagerly the king bought the whole wagonload of onions for himself, paying Saul their weight in gold. More than content, Saul headed home. When he arrived, his friends joined in the celebration of his good fortune. Saul the Dreamer never tired of telling his story of the generous king of the land where gold was cheaper than onions!*

*Overhearing all this, the Sly Eli had a plan. He vowed to win an even greater fortune than Saul's. "Garlic is not only more expensive, but infinitely more fragrant than onions. I will sell some garlic to that king and shall accept nothing less than diamonds in exchange."*

*He quickly gathered a cartload of garlic and left without even saying goodbye. He followed in the footsteps of his lucky neighbour. As Saul had done before him, Eli succeeded in convincing the king to try his delicacy. Eli had predicted correctly. The garlic was relished by all, even more than the onions. The aroma was simply superb! They've never tasted anything quite so delicious!*

*The king wanted to reward Eli fairly for the divine food, and mere gold just would not be adequate. His payment should be the most precious commodity in all the kingdom! And so, Eli started his homeward journey with the most valuable item in the king's treasury... a cartload of onions!*





## 10. SUMMER LEGEND

(8 min. 15 sec.)

### DESCRIPTION

Through all time, people have sought to explain the origins of the universe in which they live, and give meaning to its many facets. The Micmac peoples, indigenous to the Canadian Atlantic provinces, are no exception. *SUMMER LEGEND* is based upon their legend which tells how the cycle of seasons came to be. It is an explanation in which the frosty giant Winter is overcome by Glooscap, the Great Spirit, and the warmth of Summer in the form of a beautiful maiden. Through vivid imagery combined with the storyteller's skill, this ancient tale is kept alive in contemporary form.

It won't be difficult to explain *legend* to your students. Every culture in the world must possess this historical means of preserving and passing on knowledge, meaning, and values.

Yes, there will be some new vocabulary to learn before the video is first shown. Read the section "Text of *SUMMER LEGEND*" to decide for yourself which words are necessary before the viewing. Just enough for "enjoyable comprehension".



Prepare and review with the class several questions which follow the storyline and which can be answered by watching the video. Scale these to the level of your students. Their answers will form a summary of the legend.

## VIEWING

When the video ends, enlist your students to build up a basic set of answers on the blackboard. Rewind the tape and play it again. This time, direct attention to descriptive details such as sound, mood, colour, and texture which can be translated into adjectives, adverbs, and more lively verbs to enhance the written account. As the video is playing, students should jot down lists of appropriate words of this type on pieces of paper.

Now divide the class into groups of somewhat equal talent. Each group will take the basic story and rewrite it using the word lists to enhance its descriptive qualities. Results should be read aloud in an atmosphere of friendly competition.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Discuss other legends, particularly those from the students' own cultures.
- Make up a topic suitable for the creation of a legend, such as:
  - how day and night came about
  - why the giraffe has a long neck
  - where the oceans came from

Have fun just imagining the topics possible. Work in groups to develop the ideas either orally or in writing. If an oral approach is taken, the stories should allow for each group member to have a voice part. Present them as radio dramas or skits complete with sound effects.

- Ask students "What happened when..." questions. For example, "What happened when Glooscap captured the Princess?"
- Play the video again, asking students to select any scene they wish from it. Then they must describe that scene in detail including sounds, action, colours, story, and mood.

## TEXT FOR SUMMER LEGEND

There are only two words or expressions which are out of the ordinary, *Glooscap*, *the Great Spirit* and *loon*. The latter is a large swimming bird which is found in the Northern Hemisphere. Its unique cries have become a symbol of Canada's North. It appears on the one dollar Canadian coin which is often called a "loony". *Glooscap* is a mythic and heroic figure of Canada's Eastern Woodland Indians, a giant in size and powers, and a performer in many of the creation stories of these peoples.

### **Narrator:**

*Long ago, at the dawning of man, when Glooscap, the Great Spirit, walked amongst his people, there came a time of dreadful cold. Streams and rivers turned to ice. Snow covered the land. And man could no longer hunt and fish for his food. Fires flickered and died. The people feared they would perish from hunger and cold.*

*But Lord Glooscap heard their cries. He strode through the forest seeking the cause of their misfortune. And at the edge of the trees, on a wide white plain, he came face to face with the terrible Giant Winter. As they stood together, each could feel the strength of the other. The Giant lit a pipe and smoked in silence for a time. Then he offered it to his visitor. Glooscap smoked, and listened as Winter began to speak. Soon the listener fell into a charmed sleep. The Giant talked on. His voice was the voice of frost, and with its magic spell he hoped to keep Glooscap a prisoner forever.*

*Through the mists of sleep, Glooscap heard his messengers, the loons. They told him that in a land far to the South lived a beautiful Princess who could bring hope to his people. Held captive by the spell of frost, Glooscap slept on. But his magic, too, was powerful. After many months he broke free from the cold enchantment, and fled toward the Great Sea Water. He stood at the shore and called to the Spirits of the Deep to help him. Soon a great whale appeared. And Glooscap rode on her back until they reached the land of which the loons had spoken.*

*Here the grass was soft and green. Little streams ran beneath trees clouded with blossom. Flowers turned their faces to the sky, and bright birds and butterflies filled the air. There was a sound of music. Glooscap listened. Then, in a clearing he saw a group of lovely maidens weaving garlands of fragrant flowers. In their midst stood a girl of such perfect beauty that Glooscap knew his search had ended. This was the Princess he was seeking. She was Summer. The fairest Summer of all.*

*Just then the loons flew over the clearing, and the maidens turned to watch the strange birds. In that instant Glooscap spirited away their Princess and held her by his magic. He carried Summer so lightly that he skimmed the treetops as he set out for the North again. Yet the way was long, and a moon passed before he stood once more in the snows of Winter and faced the Giant. Now, with Summer by his side, Glooscap had the stronger magic. He talked, and sweat beaded the Giant's brow and ran down his face. Still he talked, and Winter slowly began to melt away. "Stop", cried Winter, "You have won." Then the snow disappeared and the land reawakened.*

*Glooscap said to the Princess, "Your coming brings joy to my people. They welcome you and beg you to stay. When six months have passed, you may return for a season to your home in the South. Then Winter may visit us like a brother, as once he did." Now, each year when it is time for the Princess to come to Glooscap's people, Winter retreats and the land wakens again to Summer.*





## 11. THE SAND CASTLE

(13 min. 12 sec.)

### DESCRIPTION

A child's seashore dream of creating castles, walls, moats, and vast networks of superhighways, takes on new meaning in this Academy Award-winning video. *THE SAND CASTLE* is a modern day creation myth. The creator himself emerges from the shifting sands of endless time and sets about his work with boundless energy. "The Sandman" not only creates a whole landscape of hills and valleys, buildings and structures, but he then proceeds to populate this world with a strange assortment of living creatures, all well-adapted to suit their specialized functions.

An unscheduled visitor arrives amidst this near-utopian bustle. The wind. And it blows and blows. A video with a message, but without words!

### VIEWING

During the introduction the class should be prepared to meet imaginary and nameless creatures on the screen and to make up a suitable name for each one. In literate cultures this is a must, since "naming is knowing"! Ask students to keep their pens at the ready to note not only the physical traits but also the

behaviour of each creature. In order to keep track of the new creatures until they are named, they can be given numbers in order of appearance, beginning with #1 for “The Sandman”.

The video is over. Now the name creation game begins. Step one consists of associating the physical features and behaviour of each creature with possible names. Build up a double column on the blackboard. On one side list the attributes such as “three legs”, “snake-like movement”, “snout”, “aggressive”, “burrows”. In the other column begin to jot down descriptive words, prefixes, and suffixes, which could be formed into novel names. “Tri” and “sits” (from the three-legged “critter”) could combine to be a “Trisits”.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- There are other ways to form names. Try them. Playful rhyming is one approach. The creature which rolls could be dubbed “Moler the Roller”. A side-trip discussion about pronunciation and the long “o” is sure to result from this venture!
- Try *acronyms* too. The creatures with only heads and arms who just keep on piling up sand might become the “Head & Arm Pilers”, or “Haps” for short.
- Names can be totally arbitrary too. Made from nothing as it were. Try this approach to give students opportunities for free word play with the sounds of English.
- Finally, with your students help make a long list of English-language given names, male and female, on the blackboard. Let students argue their choices for the Sand Castle People.
- Leave names alone for a while. View the video again. Put the story into words. Take one sequence and create dialogue for it. Dramatize as you might for radio.
- Discuss the story in terms of *sad* and *happy*, *optimistic* and *pessimistic*. Give reasons for opinions.
- The film ends in silence. Take the ending and continue it. What happens next?
- The moral of this story is not stated. Get your students to decide “What it means”.





## 12. THE CAT CAME BACK

(7 min. 37 sec.)

### DESCRIPTION

This zany interpretation of an old folk song will set your students to tapping their toes, clapping their hands, and joining in the singing. There's nothing like a little music in the English class to overcome inhibitions, loosen up the vocal cords, and add cultural richness through this common language! As a bonus, *THE CAT CAME BACK* tells a good story and can be a real discussion starter.

It all centres around old Mr. Johnson and his yellow cat. At first, their relationship is a happy one. But it quickly turns to hatred. Their adventures and misadventures as the old man tries to rid himself of the persistent and unwanted visitor are full of action, humour, suspense, and disaster.

Along with a simple introduction of the video, introduce the word *goner*.

## VIEWING

View the video first for fun and enjoyment as well as comprehension. Then try a little role-playing with each student as a TV news reporter. Review the different situations in the film which they are to cover. You may wish to work in groups and assign a different event to each one. Written and oral responses and dramatization are all possible. Play the video again while the students are encouraged to make notes. Here are some suggestions for the events which you may ask them to report.

- An on-the-spot TV reporter covers Mr. Johnson's first attempt to get rid of the cat. There is a choice to make. The reporter can remain by his or her car at the roadside and speculate on what is happening in the woods, or, can follow Mr. Johnson through the woods (and get lost with him!).
- On the second attempt, Mr. Johnson is interviewed as he emerges from the water. The reporter asks probing questions about what happened. Mr. Johnson may be completely truthful, or he may attempt to cover up what really happened. Investigative journalism at its best!
- Mr. Johnson is interviewed after the third attempt. While the reporter seeks the truth, the old man can choose to be honest or devious.
- The fourth attempt is a studio news report supported by interviews. The runaway railway hand-car or "jigger" and Johnson's mysterious disappearance are reported along with interviews of witnesses, including the cow!
- After the final disaster, the reporter will interview a policeman and a fireman. They are puzzled about the cause and offer various explanations. They might even conclude from finding the man's body lying atop the cat's corpse that Mr. Johnson was bravely trying to save his pet!

This exercise can be as simple or as complicated as the students' competence permits. Even young children are

familiar with the techniques of TV news and with a little help will get the idea. Don't hesitate to play the video a dozen times if desirable.

Above all, this is a wacky film and classroom activities should carry on its crazy humour.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Hold an inquest into the final disaster and the events leading up to it.
- Suggest other ways Mr. Johnson might have rid himself of the cat, and how they inevitably would have gone wrong. Describe the action as it happened through group work or as a collaboration of the entire class.
- Explain how the ending (the appearance of nine ghosts) refers to the old saying, "A cat has nine lives". Ask students for other similar expressions.

## TEXT FOR *THE CAT CAME BACK*

Mostly simple and very repetitive, the words of the song will be on your students' lips after the first showing. Two difficulties might be *goner* (slang or informal for "beyond help" or "dead", it's a noun which comes from the verb form "gone"), and *puddy* (baby talk for "pussy" from "pussycat").

**Mr. Johnson:** *What?*

**Cat:** *Meow!*

**Mr. Johnson:** *Come here... come here...*

**Cat:** *Meow!*

**Chorus:** *Now ole (old) Mr. Johnson had troubles of his own  
He had a yellow cat that wouldn't leave his home  
A special plan, with deception as the key  
One little cat... how hard could it be  
How hard could it be...*



*But the Cat came back the very next day  
The Cat came back... they thought he was a goner  
But... the Cat came back... He just wouldn't stay away*

**Mr. Johnson:** *Well!*

**Chorus:** *But the Cat came back the very next day  
The Cat came back... they thought he was a goner  
But..the Cat came back... he just wouldn't stay away*

*But the Cat came back the very next day  
The Cat came back... they thought he was a goner  
But..the Cat came back... he just wouldn't stay away*

**Mr. Johnson:** *What the fff...!  
Cat*

**Chorus:** *Well ole Mr. Johnson had troubles of his own  
Still the yellow cat wouldn't leave his home  
Steps were needed to remove the little curse  
The ole man knew it couldn't get any worse*

**Mr. Johnson:** *Hello puddy cat*

**Chorus:** *But the Cat came back the very next day  
The Cat came back... they thought he was a goner  
But the Cat came back... he just wouldn't stay  
away... wouldn't stay away*





### 13. NEIGHBOURS

(8 min. 10 sec.)

#### DESCRIPTION

The story is a simple parable about two neighbours. Their friendly relationship turns to hatred, inspired by possessiveness toward a single pretty flower which springs up on the border between their properties. Argument escalates to violence, and in the end all is lost. *NEIGHBOURS* is a classic film with an innovative technique. Made in 1952 by world-renowned animator Norman McLaren, it won an Academy Award and continues to be acclaimed internationally for its profound message and its artistic qualities. All done without words, except for a concluding admonition in a dozen languages, "Love Your Neighbour".

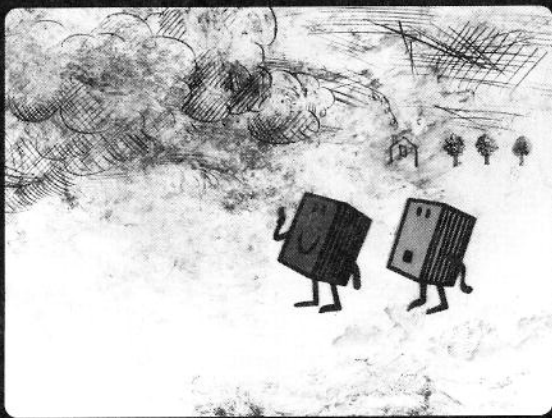
## VIEWING

**I**ntroduce the video by asking for the meaning of the word *neighbours*. After the first viewing, brainstorm for the message of the film *NEIGHBOURS*. Ask students to contribute words and phrases to a list you will build up on the blackboard. Then ask to have each item used in a complete statement. Write these on the board in numbered sequence. Each student will then choose the statement which she or he considers most appropriate. Discuss and debate the choices.

### ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Write paragraphs elaborating on the one-sentence statements of meaning. Write another one explaining your reasons.
- Retell the story either orally or in writing, in groups or as a class. Use descriptive words to express the feelings and mood.
- Create dialogue for the video. Dramatize with four students playing parts. Add a narrator. Rewrite the ending to resolve the dispute in a civilized way. Dramatize the new scenario. When developing dialogue, try to engage all students in a collective effort.
- Imagine the film being made today. Discuss differences that would be almost certain in a modern version. The style of movement in *NEIGHBOURS* is called *pixillation*. What kind of special effects would be used now? Would the portrayal of the wives be different?





## 14. BALABLOK

(7 min. 27 sec.)

### DESCRIPTION

**A**ntagonism and intolerance as one facet of the human condition are vividly portrayed in this work by famous Czech animator, Bretislav Pojar. Cubes oppose spheres, violence and prejudice transcend reason and understanding, and in the end, irony wins out. No dialogue or commentary is necessary. The characters' sounds and actions tell everything. A fitting companion to *NEIGHBOURS*, this video begs an answer to the question, "Isn't there a better way?"

### VIEWING

**T**his video needs only the simplest of introductions. After viewing, ask what the war was really about. Elicit descriptions of how the fighting ended. Relate the conclusion to a recent world situation where appropriate. Challenge students to suggest other ways of preventing and settling disputes.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Get from your students a list of human differences which can cause friction (e.g. colour, language, habits and customs, personalities...). Ask them to choose one from the list, and construct a simple statement giving one cause (e.g. *Colour causes friction because...*). Discuss and debate the responses.
- Introduce the word escalation. Ask for examples of escalation in the video.
- Prepare your own word list based on the video (e.g. *power, tolerance, stereotyping, fear, force, brutality, aggression, peace, conformity, hatred...*). Ask for sentences using each of the words in the context of *BALABLOK*.
- Compare and contrast *NEIGHBOURS* and *BALABLOK*.



## MORE ACTIVITIES AND GAMES

Following is just a sampling of the limitless activities which can be created to provide learning activities after a video screening. Add to this list from your own experience and ingenuity.

### DEBATES

Many of the films can be used to spark debate. The topic should be controversial yet not lead to heated arguments. Rather than assign students to sides, they should be allowed to support the side with which they agree. It's better for learning English!

Teams of 2–4 work best. There must be sufficient preparation time. Notes are fine but don't let students read their arguments. Normally, one member will open the debate and also close it with a summary of her or his group's views. Set a time limit for each speaker. Three minutes should do. Teams take turns making presentations.

To get maximum involvement, after the sides have each presented their case, invite audience questioning. It should be specifically directed to one team or the other. The teacher may wish to ask questions as well. End the debate before the subject is exhausted, or if it shows signs of becoming too passionate.

### TWENTY QUESTIONS

There's a dictionary full of vocabulary suggested by the *DISCUSS IT!* films. Tap into it to play a variety of this old favourite parlour game. Many versions are possible. Here is one.

One student acts as quizmaster. She or he chooses a word based on a film just seen, or one shown previously, and the questions begin. The answers must be given as YES, or NO. *Is it a noun? Is it living? Is it a form of transportation?* And so on, until the answer is found or all twenty questions are used up. The more skilled the students, the more general will be the categories they choose at the outset. Encourage students to ask questions which contain information which will further their search for the word, rather than just guessing the answer randomly. Such queries as *"Is it bigger than a cat?"* and *"Does it fly?"* help to include or rule out whole categories of choice.

When the game is related to a particular film title, questions about the events in the film can be used to work toward the answer.

## TRUE OR FALSE

Following any of the films, the class is divided into two teams which stand in parallel lines facing the teacher, who begins by making a statement based on the film, which can be answered TRUE or FALSE. The first pair in the two rows gets a chance to respond. The first one with the correct answer scores a point, after which the two drop to the back of the lines. The game ends when everyone has had a turn, or, when a certain score is reached, or, at the end of a predetermined length of time.

Statements can be as simple or complex as your class requires. For example, after *The Great Toy Robbery* is viewed, the assertions could range from *The robbers would not share their toys* to *The cowboy put his foot in the spittoon and fell down.*

## TELEPHONE

Several students remain outside the classroom while a classmate describes an incident from one of the films to those remaining in the room. When they re-enter, another student who heard the story whispers it to one of the group. This student in turn whispers it to a colleague and so on until all those excluded from the room have heard it. The last listener repeats it aloud. The results are often hilarious and the listening and speaking exercises are useful.

## INTERVIEWS

Most of the *DISCUSS IT!* films lend themselves to mock interviews. The approaches are endless. Here are several.

A) One student prepares a list of questions for a film character. A second student is given a short time to prepare answers, after which a radio or TV-type news show is staged.

B) Repeat "A" but conduct it as a talk show instead. Use minor characters who observed the action, as well as the chief participants. For instance, the barman in *The Great Toy Robbery*, or the fish on the wall in *The Cat Came Back*. Yes, animal characters and even inanimate objects can be given voices in the English class! How about a kernel of popping corn in *Zea* recounting its experience?

C) One student plays the role of biographer to a selected film character. Classmates are to be interviewed. Some of them take on the parts of objects or other characters. Invent characters if you like. In *George and Rosemary*, how about Rosemary's aunt, George's old boss, or the local storekeeper?



D) In a variation on the previous exercise, the biographer might become a researcher for a magazine, seeking information for an article on the event itself. Give free rein to the imagination at all times.

## HOW-TO-DO-IT

A useful exercise in careful watching and listening can be had by reviewing step-by-step how one of the characters in a film did something. Sequential expression and descriptive skills can be developed either in groups or with the entire class using this activity. For example, in *Special Delivery*, the students can respond to *What did the wife do when she found the body? First she... Then she... Finally she...*

## MOVIE CRITIQUES

Decide first on the audience for the review or critique (teachers, the general public, children, a film magazine, another class of English students). Based on this decision, establish some simple evaluation criteria before viewing the film for this activity. Such factors as interest, visual quality, uniqueness of approach, clarity of sound, development of characters, and educational value, can be considered and agreed upon. The results can be done orally, or written and then read aloud. Students can work individually, in groups, or as an entire class, as is appropriate.



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
AND PURCHASES**

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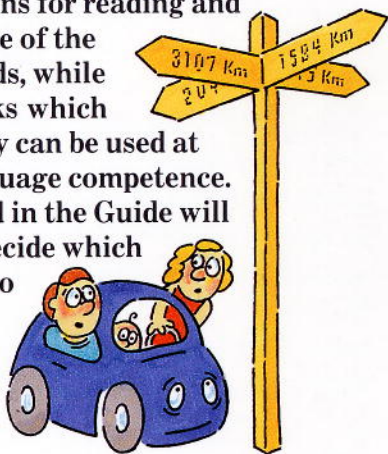
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# Discuss It!

**D**ISCUSS IT! is useful to both professional and volunteer teachers who believe that conversation is a basic skill in the learning of English as another language.

This delightful video anthology of 14 classic shorts from the National Film Board of Canada includes Oscar-winners such as *Neighbours* and *The Sand Castle*, which will stimulate students to talk and interact with their teachers and classmates.

An accompanying Teacher's Guide focuses on listening and speaking activities, and includes suggestions for reading and writing exercises. Some of the films are without words, while others have voice tracks which vary in difficulty. Many can be used at different levels of language competence. Information contained in the Guide will assist the teacher to decide which films to use, and how to use them.



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