

# RIGHTS *from the* HEART



## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

A collection of animation films  
inspired by the United Nations Convention  
on the Rights of the Child

Part

3

Recommended for ages 13 to 17



# FILMS

## DUEL

Director: Pavel Koutsky  
Producer: Milan Rychecky (Anifilm Studio)  
Country: Czech Republic, 6 min 45 s

## NARCO BLUES

Directors: Bretislav Pojar, Ivan Vit  
Producer: Michal Podhradsky (aiF Studio)  
Country: Czech Republic, 8 min 14 s

## THE CORA PLAYER

Director: Cilia Sawadogo  
Producers: Gaston Kaboré (Cinécom Production),  
Françoise Wera (Opracom)  
Country: Burkina Faso, 7 min 5 s

## LOCKED

Director: Bhimsain  
Producer: Bhimsain (Climb Films)  
Country: India, 5 min 54 s

## TRADE

Director: Kireet Khurana  
Producer: Bhimsain (Climb Films)  
Country: India 6 min. 37 sec.

## MASKS

Director: Elisa Rivas  
Producer: Norma Martinez (ICAIC)  
Country: Cuba, 8 min 12 s

## DEATHTRAP

Director: Diane Chartrand  
Producer: Thérèse Descary (NFB)  
Country: Canada, 7 min 3 s

Executive Producer: Thérèse Descary

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An international co-production initiated by the National Film Board of Canada

The third part of the ***Rights from the Heart*** collection is an international co-production initiated by the National Film Board of Canada's French Program Animation Studio, supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage, UNICEF International, Premiere Medien GmbH & Co. KG, Télé-Québec and TFO TVOntario.

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# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

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# THE RIGHTS FROM THE HEART COLLECTION

In 1990, a historic international event took place with the coming into effect of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) wanted to emphasize the importance of the Convention and to make it better known to those most affected by it, namely, children and teenagers. The NFB's French Program Animation Studio, with a number of financial partners, therefore developed ***Rights from the Heart***, a three-part collection of animated films, with one part designed for children aged 5 to 8, one for preteens aged 9 to 12, and one for teenagers aged 13 to 17.

A plea on behalf of the world's children, ***Rights from the Heart*** is both an educational tool and a work of art. In a unique collaboration between educators and animation filmmakers, certain themes were identified from the preamble and the different articles of the Convention to produce this collection of films without words, suitable for classroom or home use anywhere in the world.

Part 3 of the collection is the result of international collaboration as well, since it was produced by a consortium which the NFB formed with Cuba (ICAIC), the Czech Republic (aiF Studio and Anifilm), Burkina Faso (Cinécom Production and Opracom) and India (Climb Films). The originality of Part 3 lies in the many opportunities it provides for seeing how human rights apply in an intercultural context. The teaching suggestions are all intended to show the relationship between rich and poor countries, avoid value judgments and promote understanding of cultural differences.

Targeting teenagers aged 13 to 17, this final part of the collection consists of seven films lasting 6 to 9 minutes each.

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This Educator's Guide is meant for teachers and others working with 13- to 17-year-olds and suggests activities to help structure the use of the films. However, the aim is not to systematically teach teenagers about the Convention articles but to make them aware that they have rights, that these rights are recognized by an international convention and that it is the duty of the adults caring for them to ensure that these rights are respected.

# THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989. Drawn up by a special committee formed of representatives of some 30 non-governmental organizations involved in safeguarding human rights, it consists of 54 articles detailing the individual rights of all persons under the age of 18. Basically, it states that children have the right to develop their abilities to the fullest without suffering from hunger, poverty, negligence, exploitation or any other forms of injustice.

The Convention came into effect on September 2, 1990, after 10 years of study and negotiations. When a country signs the Convention, it undertakes to implement the provisions of the Convention within its territory. A 10-member international committee of experts subsequently verifies progress made in fulfilling these obligations. Canada ratified the Convention in December 1991 and was the 103rd nation to do so.

The Convention aims to create a balance between the rights of children and the duties of the parents or other adults responsible for their survival, development and safety. This was achieved by giving children the right to participate in decisions concerning themselves and their future.

The Convention also attempts to solve a number of pressing problems—some of which were being addressed for the first time by an international convention, including those of refugee children (Article 22), protection from sexual and other forms of exploitation (Articles 34 and 36), drugs (Article 33), children in trouble with the law (Article 40), international adoption (Article 21), children affected by armed conflict (Articles 38 and 39), children with disabilities (Article 23) and Indigenous or minority children (Article 30).

Education is addressed in two important articles (28 and 29), which received the support of the World Conference on Education for All, held in Thailand in March 1990. According to the Convention, primary education must be compulsory and free for all. It must promote the development of children's personalities, talents and abilities, while at the same time respecting their identity, language and cultural values. The Convention emphasizes that girls and boys must be provided with equal opportunities.

The strength of the Convention lies in its ability to adapt to the reality of each signatory nation. The authors and legislators did not try to avoid difficult issues but found a way to harmonize different cultural, religious and other values so as to meet the needs of children throughout the world.

# SUGGESTED APPROACH

This Educator's Guide suggests a three-step approach with variations allowing the user to take into account a film's level of difficulty for a given audience. The steps include preparing teachers to screen the films with the students; placing the films in context and helping students to understand them; and expanding on the concept of children's rights.

The first step, Lesson Planning (4.1), mainly involves identifying the role to be played by a film based on how accessible it will be for a given class, choosing the curriculum objectives in which to incorporate the **Rights from the Heart** activities, and then selecting activities to place the film in context and expand on the concept of children's rights so as to meet these objectives.

The next step, Placing the Film in Context (4.2), includes activities to pique the students' interest before the screening and enhance their understanding of the film so that they get the most out of it. The idea is to ensure that students have all the details they need to grasp the message and to help the class to arrive at a common understanding of the problem before going on to the next step.

The final step, Expanding on the Concept of Children's Rights (4.3), should enable students to make the Link between the situation described in the film and situations that affect them in their immediate environment, in their own or other countries, and to understand the role of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in this regard. The rights on which a film is based do not appear in the film; they must be reviewed for students, who should be encouraged to discuss young people's rights in conjunction with the concept of responsibility. This is the perfect step at which to have the students try to find solutions. It is important to be extremely careful when broaching the difficult issues of sexual abuse, family relationships and suicide to be certain to avoid stirring up feelings of guilt or powerlessness which could push certain teenagers even further toward the brink of despair. The teacher should therefore conclude consideration of a film by asking the students to give examples of measures already taken by adults to solve the problems raised, and to identify resources in their area and comment on their effectiveness. The students should be encouraged to come up with new and original solutions. The activity could be extended by asking students to collectively choose a simple action that would be easy for the class to undertake and that is linked as closely as possible to the problem and the right discussed.

A number of activities are suggested. The teacher may choose those best suited to the subjects taught and the characteristics of the class. The activities are all organized so that teenagers can progress from a general contact with the content of a film to an awareness of their legal rights. If the teacher presents the entire series over a short space of time, for example during a children's rights week, repetition can be avoided by using the suggested variations.

## LESSON PLANNING

This step is all the more necessary because not every film in Part 3 of the **Rights from the Heart** collection is precisely targeted for an audience ranging from 13 to 17 years of age. Some films are clearly more adapted by theme and treatment to 13- and 14-year-olds (**The Cora Player**, **Locked**), some are more easily understood by students aged 15 to 17 (**Trade**, **Duel**), and others are suitable for both children and adults (**Masks**). It is therefore important to carefully choose the most suitable type of educational use. When a film deals with a topic closely related to the curriculum and the concerns of the class but has a simple treatment, it could serve to introduce an activity for expanding on the concept of children's rights (**Narco Blues** in Grades 9, 10 and 11). For a film with a more difficult content or treatment, however, it might be worthwhile to start with a preparatory screening followed by a second one (**Deathtrap** in Grades 7, 8 and 9). The approach taken by the teacher should thus be adapted to the curriculum and the students.

For each of the films, seven pieces of information are provided to facilitate the teacher's planning:

- a) the theme that guided the making of the film;
- b) the articles of the Convention illustrated by the film;
- c) a narrative of the events (synopsis) indicating how to interpret the story so as to be able to address the issue of teenagers' rights;
- d) opening questions to prepare students for the first screening;
- e) details to help in understanding the message, including abstract notions to bring out, and specific cultural behaviours or prejudices to avoid when using the film in class;
- f) key moments of the story, divided into the usual three parts of a narrative: initial situation (set-up), conflict and resolution;
- g) a few suggestions regarding discussion topics for each film.

To prepare, the teacher should:

- first watch the film;
- read the Synopsis section, which provides the interpretation to give to the film so that the screening meets its objectives;
- choose the film to present, depending on the students' interests, the curriculum or the event to be commemorated;
- in the Details to Help in Understanding the Message section for each film, identify those that are likely to elude students;
- decide how easily accessible the film will be for the students and whether to have one or two screenings;
- choose two activities based on this decision: one to place the film in context, and one to expand on the concept of children's rights;
- arrange for the appropriate support materials, using the complementary activities suggested for the given level and curriculum, if necessary.

## **PLACING THE FILM IN CONTEXT**

This step should allow the film to be screened in the best conditions in relation to the objectives and the students' age group. If the film is to be used to introduce an immediately following extension activity (i.e., expanding on the concept of children's rights), the activities in the Preparing Students for the Screening section can be used before the screening and those in the Enhancing Understanding of the Film section can be used afterwards. If time does not allow for this, you can move on immediately to the Enhancing Understanding activities. This will be the time to explain references specific to certain cultures without which the film would

lose all dramatic value (4.2.1). If a second screening is planned because of the film's level of difficulty, one of the Preparing Students activities could take place before the first screening and one of the Enhancing Understanding activities could be used before and after the second screening.

## **Preparing Students for the Screening**

These activities should arouse students' interest, develop suspense and motivate them, while enabling them to take a position on the subject so that they better grasp the film's message afterward. Experience shows that by giving students a goal for the screening, we sharpen their interest and attention, and by guiding their interpretation, we enable them to embrace more content and make more relevant connections.

To optimize the students' interest in the film, the teacher can:

- follow the suggestions made for each of the films under the heading Opening Questions. All you need to do is to choose one or two relevant questions and begin the screening, or to form teams, asking each team to find the answer to one question;
- write on the board three rights from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and tell the students that at the end of the screening, they should be able to identify which of the rights was illustrated by the film and justify their choice;
- repeat the film's theme or write it on the board and ask the students to be ready to state, at the end of the screening, in which country the story takes place, and to explain their choice with reference to auditory and visual clues in the film. They can also be asked to write a few lines about how they imagine the main character or characters (appearance, clothing, personality, race, etc.) and then to compare their replies with the film after the screening;
- for the films *Trade* and *The Cora Player*, tell the students that the story takes place in a different culture and ask them to point out everything that seems to characterize this cultural difference, reminding them to include not only clothing and homes but also behaviours, especially those they find ridiculous, exaggerated or incomprehensible;
- describe the initial situation (set-up) and resolution of the story and ask them to form teams and describe the events that they think constitute the conflict;
- have the students read the Convention article illustrated by the film and ask them to summarize in a few words the theme that they would choose to help friends their own age understand this right.

## Enhancing Understanding of the Film

These activities are for use when a single screening is planned, i.e., when it is considered that the film will be easily understood by a given group of students (**Narco Blues**). They are also for use during a second screening to iron out comprehension difficulties for the more difficult films (**Deathtrap, Duel**). It is up to the teacher to use these activities in the most suitable way given the students' age, the degree of difficulty of the subject dealt with, and the film's accessibility. Even if just one screening has been planned, it can be worthwhile to ask students if they would like to see the film again. For example, if you have led a discussion comparing two cultures, there can be increased interest in observing and noting specific or additional details.

To help the students orient themselves in relation to the film, teachers can do the following:

- Before the screening, review the basic concepts on which the films are based, asking some or all of the following questions: What substances are considered to be drugs? What is social class? What connection can be drawn between prejudice and discrimination? What is a personality? What ties do wealthy countries have with developing countries? How does one become poor? What is the difference between multiculturalism and internationalism? When can labour be considered forced? Can you give examples of a lack of self-respect? What is censorship? What are rights? What are duties?
- After the screening, lead the discussion in such a way as to adjust and refine students' understanding. You need only draw their attention to a few specific details and to make the appropriate connections. In some cases, you will need to take into account the particular cultural context in which the story takes place (*Trade, The Cora Player*). To do this, you can refer to the Details to Help in Understanding the Message section provided for each film. Do not hesitate to question students about difficult passages that they have not mentioned or that seem to have prevented full understanding of the film, while discussing the validity of their interpretations and having the students justify them with reference to auditory and visual clues.

If the film is shown to junior high students, they could then be asked:

- to individually complete the following sentence: "The film's message is that...";
- to form teams and come up with a summary of the synopsis, consisting of one sentence describing the initial situation (set-up), one sentence describing the conflict and one sentence describing the resolution, based on key moments in the film. Even if the Educator's Guide sometimes suggests more than one possibility, it is important to insist that the students agree on a single sentence so that they have an in-depth discussion of the film's basic message;
- to imagine a different resolution and explain how the underlying right would be better illustrated by it;
- to distinguish secondary aspects of the film from aspects that are essential to understanding the message, so as to bring out similarities to their own situation or culture.

If the film is shown to senior high students, they should instead be asked:

- to identify passages that do not seem realistic. Ask questions such as the following:
- Could such a story happen like that for you in your situation? What would be different for you? Would you be capable of solving the problem? If so, how?;
- to invent another ending, i.e., a solution to the problem if the film does not provide one or, if it does, a different and more original solution. Allow the students to express all their hypotheses in the comparison with their own situation before formulating the problem to be solved;
- to say what they would have done if they had been in the position of the central character of the story, and why they would have acted or reacted in this way.

## EXPANDING ON THE CONCEPT OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The aim of the films in Part 3 of the **Rights from the Heart** collection is to raise teenagers' awareness of their rights and to encourage them to put into practice the values proclaimed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although it is generally believed that children are entitled to all rights, young people aged 13 to 17 have not always been able to clearly articulate this awareness of their rights, which are still often confused with the satisfaction of very immediate needs, and they are often hard put to demand respect when circumstances require it. That is why adults around them must enlighten and support them. This involves calling upon their experience so that they become aware of the limits of these rights, upon their courage so that they learn how to express these rights, and upon their imagination so that they find creative solutions.

This can be done by using the suggestions for discussion for each of the films to provide food for thought, raise their awareness, and improve their judgment and ability to make decisions compatible with all of their rights.

Students could also be asked:

- to say what difference they see between their personal desires and their rights. Reference might be made to the difference between a desire for adventure and the right not to be used in a drug ring; the desire to act like an adult and the right not to be forced to work during one's teenage years; the desire to engage in sexual activity and the right not to be sexually exploited or abused; the desire to do whatever one likes and the right to develop an original personality; the desire to be free of all constraints and the right to freedom but not to the extent of harming oneself; the desire to say whatever comes into one's head and the right to freedom of thought and expression;
- to discuss where their rights end and those of others begin. Reference might be made to the right to healthy leisure activities and parents' right to provide such activities within their means; the right to be in love with the person of one's choice and parents' right to be respected, even if they disagree; the right to originality and others' right not to be subjected to it; the right to a basic quality of life and others' right to their physical integrity (forced labour, sexual exploitation); the right to solve one's own problems and the right to life; the right to education and information and the right to be different;
- to consider whether they can find applicable solutions in their own environment to the problem posed by the film. Divide the students into groups and ask them to answer one of the following questions depending on the film dealt with in class: Should adults force teen-

agers to work, whether it be in factories, as prostitutes or at any other type of work? Are parents alone responsible for poverty and how it affects their relationship with their children? Should parents always encourage their teenagers' originality? Should parents let their teenagers learn from experience without intervening? Should young people have to rely entirely on themselves in their early teen years? Should teenagers challenge the models imposed on them? Should teenagers be concerned about social class? Should teenagers expect their family or community to help them if they are in distress? Can teenagers resist the imposition of social models and roles by themselves?;

- to imagine solutions to the problems discussed in the groups and present these solutions to the class;
- to consider whether teenagers' rights are respected in their own environment. Insist that they identify the causes of any problems, discover what people in their community do to solve them and find models to serve as inspiration for actions they could take;
- to come up with collective actions involving the entire community which could give hope that problem situations could be changed. Discuss the feasibility of these actions.

## BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Whatever the order in which the films are shown, if they have been seen within a short period of time, a synthesis activity could be possible, especially if the activities take place during the same week. Without aiming for students to memorize each of the rights dealt with in the films, the teacher could review the main rights and the simple actions the class had decided to take to help ensure these rights would be respected.

The rights in question are: the right to freedom of expression, the right for teenagers to be protected against the use of drugs, the right to love the person of one's choice without discrimination, the right to be protected against economic exploitation, the right to be protected against sexual exploitation of all kinds, the right to freedom of thought and opinion, and the inherent right to life.

If all classes in the school are involved in a week of activities on the theme of children's rights, the week could end with an assembly at which each class would present the action(s) it had decided to take. The entire school could also choose a collective action in addition to those of the individual classes. This assembly could be held during a parent-teacher day so that parents could see the results of their children's reflections and lend a hand if necessary.



# THE FILMS

## DUEL



### Theme

Through a funnel inserted into his head, a child receives carefully sorted information that will make him a model citizen but, as he grows up, he rejects all forms of censorship since he wants to decide for himself.

### The Convention

#### Article 13

Children have the right to freedom of expression; this right includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers.

### Synopsis

At birth, a child is placed on an assembly line marking the passage of time. Objects representing knowledge (books, magazines and other printed matter, videocassettes and compact disks) whirl about him. Suddenly, an enormous pair

of hands plants a funnel in his head. From now on, all information that reaches him will be sorted, grated or shredded, then rammed through the funnel. As the child grows up, he wants access to more detailed and more complex information, but the censors always intervene with their scissors. They want to make him a model citizen like all the others rolling off the assembly line.

With his curiosity and thirst for knowledge, the young man rebels and embarks on a duel to the death with the censors. Attacked by an army of scissors and other cutting implements, he counterattacks by bombarding the enemy with huge quantities of information. The army of scissors retreats under the force of his attack. The young man is delighted. He has won the first battle in his struggle for freedom of expression. However, the scissors are still there, just waiting for a chance to rush into action.

## Opening questions

- What does the assembly line represent?
- What object symbolizes force-fed knowledge?
- When does the boy read Jules Verne?
- When does the boy start to think for himself?
- What does the assembly line produce?

## Details to help in understanding the message

- The assembly line is used to show that children are sometimes considered objects, products to be moulded and shaped as one wishes. Actions are imposed from on high without consulting the child or obtaining his consent. The assembly line also represents a certain standardization, the negation of the right to be different and original.
- The funnel leading directly into the child's head represents the imposition of knowledge, of a single model and a homogeneous way of thinking which comes from above and which the child seems powerless to resist until he reaches adolescence.
- However, there are a few moments of grace when the child does manage to recognize his own informational needs: playing with letters and numbers, reading Jules Verne, reading detective or spy novels, looking at magazines showing pictures of girls, listening to music, etc. In these rare moments of freedom of information, the child is always seen smiling, showing that he can still read for pleasure and relaxation and learn things not imposed by others.
- The scissors swing into action when the child finally starts thinking for himself, indicating that freedom of thought is perceived by the establishment as dangerous, something to be repressed and censored.

## Key moments

### Set-up

A child is placed on an assembly line with a funnel planted directly in his head.

### Conflict

He is force-fed all sorts of information throughout his development, with no freedom to choose what he reads or to read for any other reason than to meet others' expectations. When he gets rid of the funnel, he is pursued by the censors and engages them in a duel to the death.

### Resolution

The child wins the duel and finally achieves the freedom to think for himself.

## Suggestions for discussion

- Identify other forms of imposed thought, and behaviour and explain how they contribute to the homogenization of society.
- Where does one draw the line between parents' right to raise their children as they see fit and parents' unfair desire to demand that their children become exactly what they want?
- The right to freedom of thought underlies the right to freedom of expression. Show how the propaganda of consumer societies systematically homogenizes teenagers by inducing them to all purchase the same products. Give examples.
- Discuss influence. Who are you influenced by? Do these influences impede the development of individuality? How can you retain your judgment and critical sense under the influence of your friends? Are there good influences and bad influences? If you are influenced by someone else, are you still responsible for your actions? How can you usefully incorporate an influence into your own thought or creation?
- How is censorship exercised within the family, at school, at work, in society? Give examples and suggest how you could avoid this censorship while still respecting others.
- Divide the class into teams to debate the following statements: censorship is necessary when others' rights are threatened (hate literature or child pornography); there should never be censorship under any circumstances.

## NARCO BLUES



### Theme

An ordinary young teenager is drawn into the dangerous world of drugs until a bad trip opens his eyes.

### The Convention

#### Article 33

Children have the right to be protected from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties and not to be used in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances.

### Synopsis

A young teenager watches all his friends leave on vacation. He ends up hanging out alone on the street and, like so many others, gets drawn into a dangerous adventure. Not far from home, he meets a disturbing character, a drug pusher looking for clients. The pusher introduces him to an artificial paradise. He tries it a few times and soon develops a dangerous and expensive drug habit.

To buy the drug, the teenager empties his piggy bank, trades his favourite possessions and finally dips into his mother's purse. However, he is unable to come up with enough money and the unscrupulous pusher demands payment. The teenager is talked into helping the pusher commit a robbery. The two are surprised by the police but the teenager manages to get away. This incident leads to a bad trip which ultimately makes the teenager realize the danger of drugs.

## Opening questions

- What circumstances disposed the teenager to give in to the temptation of drugs?
- What is it about drugs that appeals to him? What needs does he think they fulfil?
- What does he do to avoid alerting those who could have helped him?
- Who are the teenager's true friends?

## Details to help in understanding the message

- The drug phenomenon depicted in the film is characteristic of countries where drug networks were beginning to take root, such as the countries of the former Soviet Union. The situation is simple and is quickly resolved through community intervention.
- Younger teenagers might not realize the scope of the problem and how hard it is to escape once hooked. It is therefore necessary to show the dangers of solitude, idleness and a lack of communication with adults and to emphasize the importance of seeking solutions.
- Older teenagers, who are used to Hollywood movies with their special effects, will likely find the film too simplistic. Ask them to enrich the story by proposing more realistic situations (set-up, conflict and resolution). By drawing a parallel with the situation in North America, you can help them understand the approaches and methods drug pushers use to prey upon teenagers.
- The film ends by implying that the teenager has finally understood the danger of drugs. However, since the drug pusher is still seen hanging around, the danger has not gone away. The teenager will have to refuse drugs many times during his life.

## Key moments

### Set-up

A young teenager finds himself alone after all his friends have left on vacation and ends up hanging around on the street.

### Conflict

A pusher offers him drugs which make him forget his loneliness. He soon becomes hooked and constantly needs to find new ways of paying for his drug. He falls into crime but luckily manages to evade the police.

### Resolution

Shaken by his narrow escape the teenager thinks about his life and decides to choose healthier pastimes, but the drug pusher is still lurking nearby.

## Suggestions for discussion

- What makes drugs tempting is the illusions they offer (the illusion of pleasure, of creativity, of overcoming shyness, of having lots of friends, etc.). Help the students draw up as complete a list as possible of these illusions. For each illusion, ask the following three questions: Why is it an illusion? How does it differ from reality? How is reality better?
- The mental states created by drugs are actually shortcuts to something that can be achieved in a much more meaningful, lasting and cheaper way in real life. Make a list of the positive states of mind sought through drugs and, for each, suggest ways to help achieve them without drugs (excelling at a favourite activity, sport or artistic or musical creation, succeeding in expressing oneself with friends and family, etc.).
- Discuss the following statement: being part of the drug culture creates a true feeling of belonging. Divide the students into two groups, one supporting the statement and one against it. Each group must justify his agreement or disagreement by comparing belonging to the drug culture with membership in other groups such as the family, the village or neighbourhood, a religion, a sports team, one's country, etc.
- Divide the students into two groups, one claiming that drugs are fun and the other saying that drugs are a form of self-inflicted harm. Each group must back up its opinion with at least three arguments and then present them to the class.
- Repeat the previous procedure with the following contradictory statements: drugs are a good way to make a quick buck / drugs are a good way to lose money fast; drugs set you free / drugs are a form of slavery.
- The following situations are designed to lead students to exercise judgment and gradually assume responsibility for asserting their right to life, health, enjoyment, recreational activities and a future. Ask the students what they would decide to do in the following situations: you have a very important exam tomorrow morning and your friends invite you to a dance where you know there will be drugs; you have a meeting with a teacher you find intimidating and a friend gives you a little marijuana to calm your nerves; you have lent a friend some money and he offers to pay you back with drugs; your group is short of ideas for its class project and suggests talking hallucinogens for inspiration.

## THE CORA PLAYER



### Theme

Two young Africans from different social backgrounds want to defy tradition and be free to love each other.

### The Convention

#### Article 12

Children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting themselves, and their views shall be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

### Synopsis

The story is set in the West African country of Burkina Faso. At the high school, a young female student gives a photo of herself to another student as a sign of affection. The young man is delighted and gives her a kiss. One day, she invites him home to study with her. When her father sees they are in love, he angrily throws the young man to the ground and orders him to play his cora for him. The father then tosses the musician a handful of coins to show they are not of the same social class. The young man belongs to the griot caste and does not have the right to court a girl outside that caste.

The unhappy young man returns home. Separated from the one he loves, he plays his cora and the musical notes fly across town to enfold her in their embrace. Later the young woman slips the griot into her home where the family and guests have gathered to celebrate a baptism. The young couple are soon spotted by the father, who again throws the griot to the ground and forces him to play for him. The young woman defiantly breaks into song and joins the young man on the ground. The other young people gather around them in support. Furiously brandishing a cane, the father rushes toward them but is stopped by the grandfather, the family patriarch. Thanks to his intervention and the young people's solidarity, love finally triumphs.

## Opening questions

- What are the visual and auditory clues that the story is set in a partly Muslim country?
- How can one tell that the young man and woman belong to different social classes?
- Why is her father so angry?
- What does the young man express through his music when the father throws him to the ground the second time?
- How can one tell that the grandfather sides with the young couple?
- Why is music so important to the story?

## Details to help in understanding the message

- The cora (or kora) is a stringed instrument made from a calabash gourd covered with cowhide. It is usually crafted by the musician who plays it.
- The sight of a mosque and the call of the muezzin at the beginning of the film signal that the action takes place in a partly Muslim country. The customs shown are those of West African cultures.
- Griots are musicians with a unique status in West African society. Traditionally wealthy families would have their own griot who would compose songs praising past and present members of the family and their exploits. Like living books, griots would transmit information regarding the family history and lineage (births, marriages, deaths, etc.) from generation to generation. As guardians of the oral tradition, griots play an important though subordinate role in society. Girls in the griot caste sing and dance.
- The class differences in the film can be seen in the characters' clothing and homes. The young griot wears traditional garb: a plain buttonless top and pants and simple sandals. His headgear is that traditionally associated with the griots though it is almost never worn any more. The members of the young woman's family wear fine boubous and jewellery. The father has a gold-headed cane and wears the chieftain's cap. There is also an obvious difference between the adobe houses of the poorer neighbourhoods and the father's fancy house with its entrance gate and inner courtyard.
- School is the only place where the social classes mix. The students associate with each other and can develop attachments which they will later have to persuade their families to accept. This leads to generational conflicts like that portrayed in the film. The clothing worn by the students (such as the young woman's boubou and pants) is more modern than that worn by her family.
- Traditionally, griots would sit down after other people in a gathering and at a lower level than nobles and dignitaries. The father suspects the nature of the relationship between his daughter and the griot from the way the young man acts toward her when they are studying together. He therefore throws the griot to the ground and gives him money for his services to remind him of his rank.
- The father's strong reaction is normal in that culture since breaking caste is considered very serious. That also explains why the dejected young man throws away the photo given to him by the young woman.
- Note the young woman having her feet painted with henna designs, a common decoration of Arab origin which lasts several weeks. Also note the noise one of the guests at the baptism makes between his teeth, a typical sign of disapproval in West African cultures.
- The turning point in the story is when the young woman breaks into song to show her disagreement with her father. She is singing as if she too were a griot, thus going against social convention.
- In West Africa, the grandfather is traditionally the ultimate authority in the family. That is why his son treats him with such respect. He is considered a wise man and his role is not to systematically intervene in routine matters but mainly in times of crisis. Since the patriarch usually upholds tradition, it is unlikely that he would actually side with a young female family member.

## Key moments

### Set-up

In a West African country, a young man and woman of different social classes love each other.

### Conflict

According to the traditions of this country, a griot is not allowed to court a woman belonging to an important family. When the father sees them studying together, he throws the young griot to the ground and makes him play music for him. With the help of her brothers, the young woman slips the young griot into her family.

### Resolution

The young woman manages to get her family to accept her choice through the intervention of her grandfather.

## Suggestions for discussion

Ask the students to say how Western culture differs from other cultures they know of in terms of friendships and marriage (monogamy, polygamy, freedom to choose own spouse, etc.).

- Describe situations involving social discrimination in America or Europe and then discuss the following question: Does social class affect our behaviour in everyday life? Encourage discussion between those who say yes and those who say no.
- Discrimination is often caused by fear. Have the students list the fears we tend to feel when faced with someone who is different (social class, race, language, sexual orientation, religion, etc.).
- Ask the students to give three examples of discrimination they have witnessed or experienced (in class, on the street, on television, etc.) and imagine simple ways of allaying their fears and respecting differences.

## LOCKED



### Theme

On his way to school, a boy is seized by an enormous hand and shut up in a hazardous lock factory, where he loses his childhood to forced labour.

### The Convention

#### Article 32

Children have the right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with their education or to be harmful to their health or their physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

### Synopsis

On the way to school, a boy is stopped by an enormous hand that grabs his schoolbag and throws it away. The hand then pushes him toward a huge padlock and forces him to enter through the keyhole. The schoolboy finds himself imprisoned in a hazardous lock factory. Like the other children there, he finds himself forced to operate a high-speed punch press. As he struggles to keep up with the machine, his hand slips and he loses a finger. He desperately tries to run away and is pursued by terrifying metal lock parts.

In his headlong flight, the boy falls down and loses consciousness. He has visions of his former playmates, the songs he used to play on his flute, and his loving mother. But he cannot escape his tragic fate. The boy is recaptured and returned to the factory, where he is put to polishing locks. He starts coughing up blood from the iron particles he inhales and which will soon prove fatal. The child dies on the job. The band heartlessly picks up his body and drops it into the padlock box symbolizing his stolen childhood.



## Opening questions

- What does the padlock represent?
- What country does the story take place in?
- Are there only children working in the factory?
- How does the film illustrate that forced labour denies children the right to an education?
- What happens to the boy in the end?

## Details to help in understanding the message

The boy's features, the musical instruments on the soundtrack and the skin colour of the enormous hand that forces him to work all indicate that the story is set in India. The padlock indicates that the boy has been made an unwilling prisoner.

- In India, children are forced to work for economic reasons, usually to help their families survive. The film does not suggest any solutions since the phenomenon of child labour is due to complex economic factors having to do with the relationship between rich and poor countries. The students should realize that better-off families in India do not want their children to work until they finish school.
- The real causes of child labour in countries such as India are colonization, which gradually altered the relationship between the inhabitants and work, and the loss of the country's natural resources through intensive production for export.
- Unfair generalizations should be avoided. In certain South American countries, social activists are demanding recognition for the Indigenous apprentice system under which young people work with a craftsman in order to learn a craft. This should not be considered forced labour.

## Key moments

### Set-up

A boy has his schoolbag taken from him and is put to work in a lock factory.

### Conflict

Despite his resistance, the boy is forced to operate a punch press and ends up losing a finger. He tries to run away but falls down and is caught. He is then put to polishing locks, but the iron particles he inhales make him ill.

### Resolution

The child dies on the job and his body is put in the padlock box.

## Suggestions for discussion

- Ask the students to develop and support a personal opinion on the following statement (they can be for it or against it or develop a more qualified position): economic progress is incompatible with the advancement of children's rights (modernity, production and child labour).
- Have the students find a common cause for Indian boys being forced to work in factories and Indian girls being forced to work in brothels (Trade). Assess the parents' responsibility (considering the poverty they live in) and the responsibility of various governments.
- Discuss the following statements: It is as unacceptable for children in Western countries to work before finishing school as it is for children in developing countries to work to help support their families, since in both cases their right to education is compromised.
- Determine with the students what conditions constitute forced labour, and write them on the board. In the discussion, take into account the evolving concept of work in the West. Work may be seen as an enriching and creative experience or as a necessity for survival.
- Divide the class into teams to debate each of the following contradictory statements: work is freedom / work is slavery; work is the source of life / work is a cause of death. Act as a moderator in the debates.

## TRADE



### Theme

A young girl's parents sell her to a pimp who in turn sells her to a brothel in the city, thus stealing her right to innocence.

### The Convention

#### Article 34

Children have the right to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, including the inducement or coercion to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, and from any exploitative use in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices and any exploitative use in pornography performances and materials.

### Synopsis

In India, a young village girl is taken away to the city by train. She knows nothing about the man her parents have entrusted her to and puts up no resistance. During the journey, she recalls good times spent with her family at a village fair, where she had a pretty flower tattooed on her band. On their arrival, the child is dazzled by the big city lights. She trustingly follows the stranger, who is taking her to a brothel. When she sees money passing from the hands of the madam to the pimp, she remembers that her father received a large sum of money from this same stranger. She realizes with horror that she has been sold.

A prisoner in the brothel, the young girl is dressed up in beautiful clothing and sparkling jewellery before being shut up in a filthy room. A wealthy customer appears. Through the blinds, she sees him hand a wad of bills to the madam. The man enters her room, drooling in his excitement. The child screams for help with all her might but her cries mingle with the whistling of the train as it flies into the night.

## Opening questions

- What country is the story set in?
- What does the young girl get tattooed on her arm?
- Where is the swastika found?
- What shows that it is a commercial transaction?
- How is the young girl dressed at the end of the film?
- What does the explosion of the train symbolize?

## Details to help in understanding the message

- India can be recognized by its colours, the women's clothing and make-up, the stylized decorative motifs (flowers, stars), borrowings from British culture such as double-decker buses, and the swastika painted on the houses. The swastika (from the Sanskrit word "swasti" meaning luck) is the sacred symbol of India and should not be confused with the Nazi swastika, which is turned in the other direction.
- The train is also an important element of the decor and symbolism of the film since it is the main means of transportation between Indian cities and especially between the country and the city. It often symbolizes the major passages of life: going off to live with one's husband, etc. Its explosion at the end of the film represents the shattering of the young girl's innocence and the ruining of her life.
- The train also represents the transformation of the country under the pressure of globalization. The train is the means of the rural exodus to the city, a phenomenon related to the loss of land as it is taken over by massive monocultures grown for export to bring foreign currency into India. At the station, we already see throngs of beggars, refugees from development.
- The pimp can be recognized by his appearance: city clothes, curled hair, the expression in his eyes, his pointed shoes, the red hearts on his glasses and shirt.
- Indian parents who sell their daughters have to do it because they are so poor that the lives of their other children are in danger. Selling daughters into prostitution is one way of fighting poverty. Sometimes the mother is the pimp's accomplice but usually a female friend of the family plays this role.
- In India, brothels are called kothas. Traditionally, the women who worked in the kothas handed down a cultural heritage from generation to generation. Like the geishas in Japan, their role was more one of entertaining men than of satisfying their sexual desires. The best female musicians, the women with a talent for singing and dancing, were found in the kothas. Their function was mainly spiritual. Music was sacred to the Hindus and could constitute entertainment only in the context of the kotha these days in India, as in most large cities in the world, there are red-light districts that cater only to the flesh trade.
- For her first sexual relation with a man, the young girl is dressed like a bride, as indicated by the red powder in her hair and the dot on her forehead. This indulges her dreams of marriage to compensate for her pain and the sacrifice of her life, as she will now have to give herself to any man who wants her.
- The music in the film is Westernized Indian pop music like that found in popular Indian films.

## Key moments

### Set-up

A young village girl in India goes off in a train with a stranger who looks like a wheeler-dealer.

### Conflict

She recalls good times with her family at a village fair. She is traded to a brothel for a wad of bills and remembers that the same man had given half that amount to her father when he took her away.

### Resolution

At the brothel, she is dressed up in the traditional clothing and jewellery of a bride and offered to a lecherous client.

## Suggestions for discussion

- The film is not intended to denounce the situation in India but to compare it with Western phenomena such as teenage prostitution. Show that these two apparently different social problems are both caused by poverty and neo-liberalism. Discuss the role of the state in protecting the rights of teenagers in all countries.
- Ask the students to adopt and defend a position regarding the following question: Do North American or European parents with a daughter who becomes a prostitute experience the same suffering as Indian parents? Do they understand that it is an economic crime?
- The poor teenagers engaged in prostitution in India come from impoverished families and generally understand the significance of the sacrifice they are making for their families. In the West, they sometimes come from well-to-do families. Compare the two situations. Discuss the following question: Which culture takes better care of its children in terms of the Convention?
- India is not a poor country but a country impoverished by rapid development methods borrowed from the West. In India, education and the redistribution of wealth have not kept pace as the rich in society have gotten richer. What are the responsibilities of developed countries with respect to children's rights in developing countries?
- The pimp made a profit by selling the girl he bought. Does the concept of profit necessarily conflict with children's rights and freedoms?

## MASKS



### **Theme**

A young man leads a lifelong struggle to be himself and not accept the masks imposed by his family and society.

### **The Convention**

#### **Article 14**

Children have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and parents have the duty to provide them with direction in the exercise of this right in a manner consistent with their capacities.

### **Synopsis**

The story starts with the birth of a baby, who starts to cry as soon as he sees his father "in disguise." The infant is already expressing his desire for authenticity. By the age of three, he instinctively rejects conventions. He is taken to a psychiatrist, who finds him perfectly normal. When he starts school, he is offered another mask. Once again he rejects the mask, and once again he ends up at the psychiatrist's office.

As a teenager, he makes off with his father's disguises and fills them with helium. As an adult, his creative approach to work fills his colleagues with envy. On his last visit to the psychiatrist, he meets a young woman who seems to have the same "problems" as he. It's love at first sight. From their union is born a child who starts to cry as soon as he sees his father wearing a motorcycle helmet. The father quickly removes this "mask."

## Opening questions

- What makes the babies in the film cry?
- What is the purpose of the “handicapped” disguise the father puts on?
- Identify two roles associated with jobs or professions.
- Could you say that even the speed at which a person works could be socially unacceptable?
- Which character got a step up by denouncing the person who was not wearing a mask?

## Details to help in understanding the message

- Masks represent imposed behaviour (don’t cry, act like a good father, watch your table manners, don’t say what you think to avoid hurting others’ feelings, limit your imagination so as not to stand out from the crowd, etc.) and roles we assume rather than just be ourselves (uniform worn by the worker, the executive secretary, the psychiatrist, etc.).
- The film shows how we not only hide behind masks but also use them to further our own ends: the father puts on the mask of an injured person in order to shirk work, the co-worker is promoted through his willingness to wear many different masks.
- At the end of the film, though the young parents may not wear masks, the grandfather will still be there to remind them of the conventions. The students should therefore be led to understand that all their lives they will have to choose between masks and their self-respect, that the struggle to be oneself is never won once and for all.

## Key moments

### Set-up

A baby who is born to a couple who always wear masks to cope with the different situations in their lives reacts strongly on seeing the masks.

### Conflict

When he is three years old, he rebels so strongly against convention that he is taken to a psychiatrist. When he is six years old, he refuses to wear the mask imposed by school, and his father takes him back to the psychiatrist. As a teenager, he continues to rebel by sabotaging his father’s disguises. Back at the psychiatrist’s, he sees through their tricks and meets a young girl who is involved in a similar struggle against convention.

### Resolution

The two young people start a family and discover that their child hates masks too.

## Suggestions for discussion

- Lead a discussion on what motivates people to wear masks (in the family, at school, at work).
- Organize a debate between two teams of students, one saying that you have to wear masks in society to avoid being hurt (outer security) and the other saying that the best protection is to be yourself (inner security). Have the other students act as a jury to choose the winning team based on the soundness of their arguments.
- Ask the students to divide themselves into two or more groups and debate whether the moral of the story is that those who succeed in life are those who wear masks, like the boss and the psychiatrist.
- Discuss the following dilemma: How can parents give their children the benefit of their experience and still let them grow up to be themselves?
- Propose innovative ways to reconcile teenagers’ right to express their non-conformism and the respect they owe the adults who are responsible for them.

## DEATHTRAP



### **Warning**

This film is about suicide. Before broaching such a sensitive subject, it is strongly recommended that teachers or group leaders be prepared to provide immediate, well-thought-out responses to teenagers who react to the film since some of them could be suicidal. Teachers and group leaders must thus be able to serve as first-line support by identifying students who are at risk and ensuring they have the necessary resources on hand to help them or ensuring that support is available from a resource person who can intervene immediately.

### **Theme**

A teenager feels imprisoned by his life and decides to end it. In saying goodbye to those he loves, he closes the doors to his heart one after the other. Discovering that his prison follows him even after death, he decides to return to life and try to destroy his inner prison.

### **The Convention**

#### Article 6

Children have the inherent right to life, and all States have the duty to ensure their survival and development to the maximum extent possible.

## Synopsis

The story opens with images of a fox running free and a mouse in a cage. A human character also feels he is in a cage and cannot bear the prisoner he sees reflected in his mirror. He puts a letter and some carefully selected personal belongings into a bag. Taking this bag and the caged animal, he goes out, closing behind him the door to his home. He then starts his round of farewell visits. He gives his surprised parents the cage but will not be comforted by them. To his worried friend, he gives his sketchbook with a drawing of himself disappearing but doesn't wait to answer her questions. His musician friend accepts the harmonica he gives him and starts to play it. By that time, the teenager has reached the home of his last friend but finds no one there and leaves a plant on the doorstep. At each house, he closes a door on his heart: the door to family, love, friendship, the world of sight, the world of sound and life in general.

He sets off to drown himself so as to escape from his prison and thus close the final door on himself. At the same time, the fox gets caught in a trap and howls in pain, alerting everyone around him. As the character's body lies in a sunken boat, his spirit is pulled toward the other world where he is appalled to realize that his prison has followed him. A mirror appears, revealing that the bars of his prison are formed by all the doors he has closed in the past. He decides to return to life and try to escape from this inner prison. His family and friends have already found the letter he left on the river bank and are searching the water for him. They catch his hands, which are reaching out for help, and pull him out of the water.

With their support and encouragement, the teenager is finally willing to open up to life, and the bars of his prison fly apart, letting life flow in.

## Opening questions

- What constitutes the trap for the teenager?
- What difference do you see between the fox's behaviour and the teenager's?
- What is the significance of the doors that close on his chest?
- What role is played by the mirror?
- What message is conveyed by the sketchbook he leaves his friend?
- How can you guess that the teenager is cutting himself off from life?

## Details to help in understanding the message

- The parallel between the fox and the teenager contrasts the fox's will to live and the teenager's wish to die. However, while the fox gets caught in a trap set by someone else, the teenager gets caught in his own trap. There is also a contrast between the fox's freedom and the mouse's imprisonment.
- The bars, doors and trap are the three main symbols in the story. The bars symbolize lack of freedom. The doors represent either acceptance or refusal of life, depending on whether they are open or closed. The closing of each door confines the character in an increasingly limited existence. That is the path that leads him toward death. The trap symbolizes suicide, since death is often mistakenly seen as freedom. Note that the teenager has already closed other doors of his life before the story begins, that is, before he closes the five doors which lead to suicide.
- The boat lying at the bottom of the river symbolizes the wreck of the teenager's life. Boats are an important symbol from Antiquity representing a change in existence, the passage from one world to the next.



## Key moments

### Set-up

A teenager feels like a prisoner of life and decides to end it.

### Conflict

He says goodbye to those he loves and gives away his cherished possessions, closing the doors of his life one after the other. He sets off to drown himself so as to escape from his prison, thus closing the final door. When he arrives in the other world, he is appalled to see that his prison still exists inside him.

### Resolution

He decides to return to life and opens the doors to his heart. He then rises to the surface and re-opens all the other doors he had closed, thus breaking the bars of his inner prison.

## Suggestions for discussion

- Compare the fox's situation with the teenager's in terms of the origin of the trap (exterior trap and inner trap). How did the teenager build his inner prison?
- Since suicide is often caused by an accumulation of small discouragements, give examples of small, everyday prisons that can lead to despondency. Find ways of making these prisons seem less serious and suggest solutions for each. Sometimes a very simple action will do.
- At the last house the teenager goes to, the friend is away. It is known that people who are considering suicide almost always make a last appeal for help to someone they trust. How can you recognize if someone is asking for help? The warning signs can vary greatly from person to person: some use irony, some cut themselves off, while others talk openly about it. All these signs are significant. Consult suicide-prevention experts and make a list of the warning signs you should recognize to be able to help a potential suicide in time.
- Discuss the importance of communication in overcoming loneliness and isolation and preventing the gradual closing of the doors to life. How can you talk about it and who should you talk to? How should you listen to someone else who is in that situation?
- Suicide is usually a form of violence directed against oneself. Recognize and discuss slower and less violent forms of suicide through which we also shut ourselves off from life: drinking too much, taking drugs, smoking cigarettes and driving dangerously.
- Suicide can also be a means of revenge against someone who has failed to fulfill our needs and expectations. Discuss the importance of accepting responsibility for one's own life and not letting oneself be defined by others, not being overly influenced by one's peers, not having unreasonable expectations of others and not depending on others for approval.
- Help the students identify organizations in their community that help those who have attempted suicide or are considering it.
- The right to life is a fundamental right recognized by the countries that have signed the Convention. What can governments do to prevent teenage suicide? Steer the discussion so that the students will realize that the right to life applies to all age groups in society.
- Have the students suggest measures that could be taken to prevent teenage suicide. Give examples of measures already being taken in schools and health and social service organizations.
- List the many joys of daily life: one's talents and achievements, the pleasure that can be found in music, dancing, movies, team sports, nature, religion, etc. Why don't we enjoy them as much as we should? Discuss the relationship between expectations and achievements, unrealistic dreams, the dangers of perfectionism, a tendency to focus on the negative aspects of life rather than the positive, etc.
- Have the students identify people in their community who seem to get a lot out of life and talk to them to see if this is true. They should ask about their secret for enjoying life and present a summary of their findings in class.