

# EXPERIENCE FILM

A BASIC GUIDE TO WATCHING FILM WITH CHILDREN  
AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN REFUGEE CAMPS



## INTRODUCTION

This guide will prepare persons working with children in refugee camps to use film as a part of the job. The guide is intended for users who are inexperienced with watching and talking about film with children. It provides advice on what must be considered when selecting films, and how you prepare a good shared experience with the children.

Children and youngsters who are staying in refugee camps often lack the opportunity to live ordinary lives with peace of mind, permanent schooling and long lasting friendships. For this group of children, watching films can be a much-needed pause and a source of good common experiences. Film excite, inspire play – and may create hope for the future.

## 5 GOOD REASONS TO USE FILM

Film...

### **1. Creates shared visual experiences**

The story of the film can often be understood entirely through the images. The children can therefore get shared experiences through watching films. Even if they speak different languages and don't understand the language in the movie.

### **2. Focuses on the universally human**

Film often tells stories about human basic conditions. Accordingly, film can create focus on what we have in common despite of what divides us.

### **3. Gives children an awareness of different cultures**

Film can give children knowledge about other cultures and languages. It be the country in which they are staying – or elsewhere in the world.

### **4. Gives children an opportunity to reflect**

Film can offer reflection on both the characters and life in general. It might even support and strengthen the children's imagination, confidence and self-esteem.

### **5. Creates a space to share personal feelings, thoughts and beliefs**

The conversation about the film can teach the children that it is ok to have an opinion and to share your thought and feelings.

## BEFORE YOU START...

### **Choose a film that fits the age group.**

- Always watch the film before you present it to the children! Make sure that the story in the film is easy to understand. The story must make sense, even if you don't understand all the lines.
- Remember that watching films can evoke strong emotions. To keep the children from reliving possible traumas, avoid films which include explicit violence or loss of family members. It is favourable if the film contains humorous or imaginary elements.

### **The experience must take place on terms of the children.**

- Never put pressure on the children to tell or elaborate their thoughts if they don't feel like it!
- Accept the children's reactions during the film. It is ok if they are not completely quiet or if someone feels the need to leave the room.
- Lower your expectations to what you can expect of the children. Possible trauma and the lack of structure and regular schooling can affect their social behaviour.
- Support the children. If you experience that one of the children gets worried, place yourself next to the child and let it know that you are present without correcting it.
- Create a safe zone. Watch the film in a familiar setting and consider leaving the lights on and reducing the volume of the film.
- If the children don't speak the same language, you can look up the most important words connected to the movie in their respective language. If possible use Google translate, which can help you pronounce the words.
- Be realistic when you plan the activities. Rather achieve a successful experience by watching a short film and make small simple activities than plan too much. If you choose a long film and plan many activities, you risk that the children will back out.
- Often a short film would be recommendable. Refugee children – and children in general, often find it difficult to concentrate for longer periods of time. Of course, you can choose a feature film if it is foreseeable and not too complex.

## 3 ESSENTIAL STEPS ON HOW TO WATCH AND TALK ABOUT FILM

### 1. Prepare the children *before* watching the film

**Tell the children about the film.**

- Explain the **facts about the film**; how long the film lasts, where the film has been produced, in which language the film is played out and if the film has been dubbed or texted.
- Tell about the **story of the film** in a brief and simple way. Highlight for example the most important characters. This will help the children understand the film.
- If possible, **use visual aids** in your presentation of the film. Print out screen shots from the film or use pictures from the internet showing important terms from the film.

**Talk about what will happen during the screening.**

- Tell the children that you will **turn down the lights** and that the film might include loud noises or music. Consider lowering the volume of the film to avoid upsetting the children.
- Tell the children they will have the best experience if they **stay quiet** during the film.
- Ask the children to **stay seated** when the film ends so that you can talk about the film.



## 2. Talk to the children *after* the film

- To **create a feeling of security** you can let the children discuss the film in pairs or small groups. Remember to explain to the children that there are no wrong answers.
- Let the children **express their experience** with the film through drawing, acting or body expressions.

### Examples of Questions...

- Was the film good, boring or something else?
- What happened in the film?
- Did you like the main character?
- What would you have done if you were the main character?
- How do you think the film should have ended?
- Did you recognize anything in the film from your own life?
- What do you think was the message of the film?

## 3. Use activities regarding sounds and visuals in the film

- Focus on the **sound** in the film. Examine how the music and sounds in the film affect our feelings. Ask the kids to close their eyes and play them different sounds or music from the film. Let the children draw what kind of feelings the sounds create in them. You can also try to play parts of the film and turn down the sound completely.
- Pay attention to the **colors** in the film. Go on a treasure hunt in the area to find items that have the same colors as key elements in the film. The children can draw the things they find on a piece of paper or, if possible, take pictures of it.
- Clap a **clip**. Show the children that the film has been edited together from various clips, by clapping each time a cut appears in the film. If the film has a high pace, you will find that you must clap very quickly. If the film is slow, you must clap more slowly. The activity works best with live action films.



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