

BIG KIDS SHORT — 30th ANNUAL REGARD FESTIVAL

Study Guide



regard
SCOLAIRE

This guide is designed to prepare students for their cultural excursion and post-screening discussions in class.

For each short film, there is an Info Sheet that includes:

- Basic production information:
 - Title
 - Director
 - Origin
 - Year
 - Genre (fiction, documentary, animation or experimental)
 - Duration
 - Themes
 - Synopsis
- The trailer, if available
- An attention-related question about the film
- A space for students to give their star rating (1 to 5)

Each Info Sheet is followed by a page containing suggestions for preparation before you watch the film and for discussion after you've seen it.

A printable version of this guide containing only the Info Sheets will also be sent to you by email, or you can **download it**. It is intended to be handed out to students and used during the screening.



If you want to re-watch the films in class, **they will be available online from March 23th until the end of the school year.**

The day after the festival, you will receive an email with a private link to the program you watched.



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Audience vote

Which film will be your new fave? We want to know!

The film with the most votes will be crowned *Youth Audience's Favourite – Kids*.

Here's how to collect your students' votes:

1. After the screening, have a class discussion of each film and encourage students to form their own opinion.
2. Hold a vote by show of hands.
3. Make a note of the number of votes for each film.
4. **Enter the results in this online form.**

The final results will be announced at the end of April, after the final school screenings.

To get the discussion going and help students make their choice, you can discuss various aspects of the films, such as:

- The story
- The characters
- The images (colours, style, etc.)
- The music
- Feelings experienced while watching
- Etc.





Preparing for a trip to REGARD

At the REGARD Festival (and any other cultural event!), audience members have rights. Those rights help everyone attend screenings in a pleasant, respectful and open-minded setting where they can enjoy the artistic experience to the fullest.

Reminder: one person's freedom ends where the freedom of another person begins!

In other words, while exercising their rights, each student must take care not to infringe on the rights of their classmates

The audience member's rights:

- To experience their emotions (laugh, cry, be scared, etc.)
- To talk no louder than a soft whisper
- To remain silent
- To like or dislike a film
- To applaud during the end credits to show appreciation
- To attend a screening in a quiet setting where you can pay attention
- To ask questions after the screening (to friends, teachers, the REGARD team, etc.).

Freedom of speech

The Festival team strives to present a varied selection of short films, allowing students to situate their own tastes and interests. We encourage students to share their point of view and to welcome and respect the opinions of others.



Keywords

Cinema has its own special vocabulary! Here are some words often used by the REGARD team, along with their definitions.



Synopsis

A synopsis is a short, simple summary of a film. It's like a brief recap of a story. It gives people a spoiler-free idea of what the film is about.

Review

Reviewing a film means saying or writing your impressions of the film and examining all of its elements (story, images, music, acting, etc.). It can have positive or negative aspects – even both! Often, a review is accompanied by a star rating, like the 5-star ratings in this guide.

Director or Filmmaker

The person who guides the crew in making the film. He or she decides how the actors will perform their parts, where the camera should be placed for filming a scene, and even the music to be used to make the film more exciting!

Animation

Animation is the creation of the illusion of motion by capturing a series of single images. Once the images are assembled and played back quickly, you can see movement. In other words, an animated film is a long series of still images. Animation can be used to make all kinds of things move: objects, drawings, paper cutouts, puppets, people, etc.

Scene

A scene is a segment of a film that takes place in a single place and time. A film can have just one scene, or several.



The program of short films that you're about to see has eight films. They come from several Canadian provinces and territories, and three continents: North America, Europe and Africa. So this cultural outing will take you on a world tour in 90 minutes! Here's some information about the films so that you know about the context in which they were made.

The first film is ***The Girl who Cried Pearls***. It was made by a duo of master animators from Montreal, Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski. They've been working together in stop-motion animation for nearly 20 years. Their short film *Madame Tutli-Putli* earned them an Oscar nomination in 2008. *The Girl who Cried Pearls* is also nominated this year. The Oscars will be presented on March 15, so who knows? They might be bringing a statuette home to Montreal!

Next up is ***Elladj***, a documentary by Mike Schwartz, a filmmaker and photographer based in Los Angeles. He is the founder of Glimpse Films, a production company that makes films about people with amazing achievements, like Elladj Baldé.

DUCKS was imagined and created by AJ Jefferies (Alex James Jefferies). AJ lives in England and has been creating 3D characters and animations for video games and advertisements for 25 years. Since 2019, he has worked on his own projects, which always feature a quirky sense of humour.

Aaron Lemle, the director of ***Bat Boy***, studied neuroscience before he discovered his passion for cinema. His scientific background is evident in his work, since he makes films aimed at raising awareness about environmental protection and openness to difference.

Pow! was made by Joey Clift, a member of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe of Washington State. Joey is a comedian, writer and director who works in Los Angeles. His work often explores Indigenous culture, because while he was growing up he never saw any role models on TV or in movies. *Pow!* is directly inspired by his childhood memories, when his mother dragged him to powwows, where he would spend his time charging his GameBoy rather than dancing.

Ostrich is directed by Marie Kenov, who lives in Switzerland. She has two degrees: one in poster design and visual communication, and one in 2D animation. Since her film is full of posters and ads, you could say she put all of her expertise into it!

Lydia Matata, the director of ***FLOAT***, writes, produces and directs films in Nairobi, Kenya. She has made several fictional and documentary shorts, and she is also a member of the writing team for *Country Queen*, the first original Kenyan dramatic series produced by Netflix.

The final film in the program is ***We're Kinda Different***, by Manitoban filmmaker Ben Meinhardt. Ben has worked in animation for more than 20 years. His short films have been shown around the world at numerous festivals.

The whole REGARD team hopes you will appreciate these films as much as we do. Enjoy the screening!



The Girl who Cried Pearls



Directing

Chris Lavis et Maciek Szczerbowski

Origin

Quebec

Year

2025

Genre

Animation

Duration

17 m 28 s

Themes

Fraud, Love, Greed

Synopsis

In Montreal, at the dawn of the 20th century, a poor boy falls in love with a girl whose tears turn into pearls. He sells them to a ruthless pawnbroker, who hungers for more. Tempted by greed, the boy must choose between love and fortune. The choice could damn his soul.

Question

What price did the boy sell the first pearls for?



Appreciation

▶ Trailer



Preparation

The Girl who Cried Pearls is an animated film with a plot resembling a fairy tale. A fairy tale is a story that uses a classic five-part structure:

- Initial situation
- Triggering event
- Twists and turns
- Climax
- Final situation

Based only on the title of the film and your imagination, invent what might happen at each step and write it down in a notebook.

After watching the film, look at what you wrote and compare the film's choices with yours.



Post-viewing

This film was made with the animation technique known as stop-motion - a technique as old as cinema itself. It involves moving miniature characters and objects a little bit before taking each picture. Stop-motion filmmakers create their own models and move their characters so as to create movement, before finally assembling their film.

When we watch a film, we're watching thousands of still images one after another. In film, the frequency used is 24 frames per second. So each second of a movie is actually a series of 24 images shown one after another.





Elladj

**Directing**

Mike Schwartz

Origin

Alberta

Year

2025

Genre

Documentary

Duration

6 m

Themes

Identity, Determination,
Passion, Resilience

Synopsis

A glimpse of the remarkable Elladj Baldé, a Canadian figure skater who found his voice and fan base through wild ice skating. The film centers on the transformative power of embracing one's passion over measurable results.

Question

Why didn't Elladj compete in the Olympics?



Appreciation

▶ Trailer



Preparation

Elladj's career took an unexpected turn in 2020 (during the pandemic), when he posted a **video** that went viral. Since then, he has regularly posted videos of his daily and artistry life. Before getting to know him through the film, **check out his TikTok profile** and be amazed by his talent!



Post-viewing

The journalist in the film said: "When most of us think of ice skating, we think of beautiful dance routines, sometimes couples, sometimes love songs. That's just one of the stereotypes our next guest (Elladj) is shattering."

How do you understand this statement, now that you know Elladj and have seen how he skates? Do you think that you have to fit into a mould to be successful?



DUCKS

**Directing**

AJ Jefferies

Origin

United Kingdom

Year

2025

Genre

Animation

Duration

4 m 45 s

Themes

Animal welfare, Humour, Human impacts on the environment

Synopsis

A perfectly normal day in the park. The sun is shining, ducks are swimming and everything's as it should be...

Question

What's happening to the ducks?

[Appreciation](#)[▶ Trailer](#)



Preparation

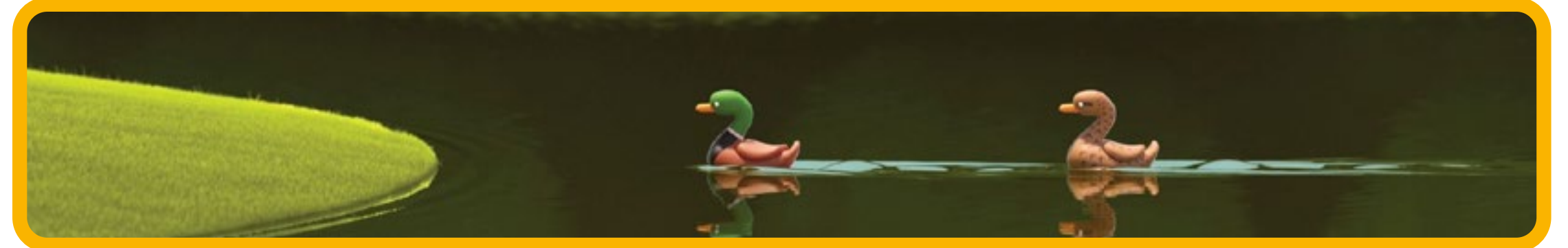
The film you are going to see is a 3D animation. Objects and characters in 3D have depth and thickness, a bit like virtual figurines or puppets that can be moved in a digital set, thanks to software.

On the other hand, in a 2D animation the characters and objects are drawn flat, like on a sheet of paper.

Can you name some 3D animation films?

Can you name some 2D ones?

Sample answers can be found in the last section of this guide.



Post-viewing

In the film, people give bread to the ducks. This seems like an ordinary act of kindness, but gradually the ducks start to mutate. Text displayed at the end tells us there's a direct link between feeding the ducks bread and how they change.

In reality, what are some of the real consequences of giving bread to ducks?

The film shows us that sometimes a gesture that we thought was kind can actually be harmful to the environment. For each example, explain how the action could cause problems. You can also think about other possible consequences.

- Picking flowers
- Moving a snail
- Feeding your pet without learning about its dietary needs

Sample answers can be found in the last section of this guide.





Bat Boy



Directing

Aaron Lemle

Origin

United States

Year

2024

Genre

Fiction

Duration

20 m 03 s

Themes

Passions, Environmental protection, Loneliness, Science

Synopsis

Andre, a young man on the autism spectrum, is passionate about the bats that live in the highway underpass next to his house in East LA. When the bats go missing one day, he enlists the help of a jaded UCLA biologist to find out what happened.

Question

What is Andre trying to make out of his grandmother's planter?



Appreciation



Preparation

The film tells the story of a boy fascinated by an animal that's often misunderstood: the bat. It shows that science can help us better understand and protect nature. What do you know about bats? Are the following statements true or false?

1. All bats are blind.
2. Bats are not important in nature.
3. There are more than one thousand species of bats in the world.
4. Bats only live in caves.



Post-viewing

In the film, Andre decides to act to protect the bats. Even though it's hard, he doesn't give up. He's committed to defending something that's counting for him, and he's doing whatever he can to help.

At the end, Andre isn't alone: he's working with the biology professor to help bats all over the city. That's citizen engagement: doing something for the common good, to the extent you are able.

Do you think you could also get involved for an important cause?



Pow!



Directing

Joey Clift

Origin

United States

Year

2025

Genre

Animation

Duration

8 m 16 s

Themes

Identity, Celebrating Indigenous culture, Family, Resilience

Synopsis

A Native American kid scrambles to charge his dying video game console at a bustling intertribal powwow.

Question

What is the name of the culinary specialty prepared during the powwow?



Appreciation

▶ Trailer



Preparation

The film takes place during a **powwow**. Do you know what kind of event a powwow is?

“A Pow Wow is an Indigenous cultural gathering that celebrates dance, music, drumming, and regalia (traditional sacred clothing) in a spirit of sharing and respect. [...] Historically ritualized and closely tied to spiritual ceremonies, it brought together members of First Nations to celebrate important events, affirm their identity, and strengthen bonds between communities.”

Source: Pow wow Wendake

If you're curious about powwows, you can attend one. There are many in Quebec, and everyone is welcome!

Post-viewing

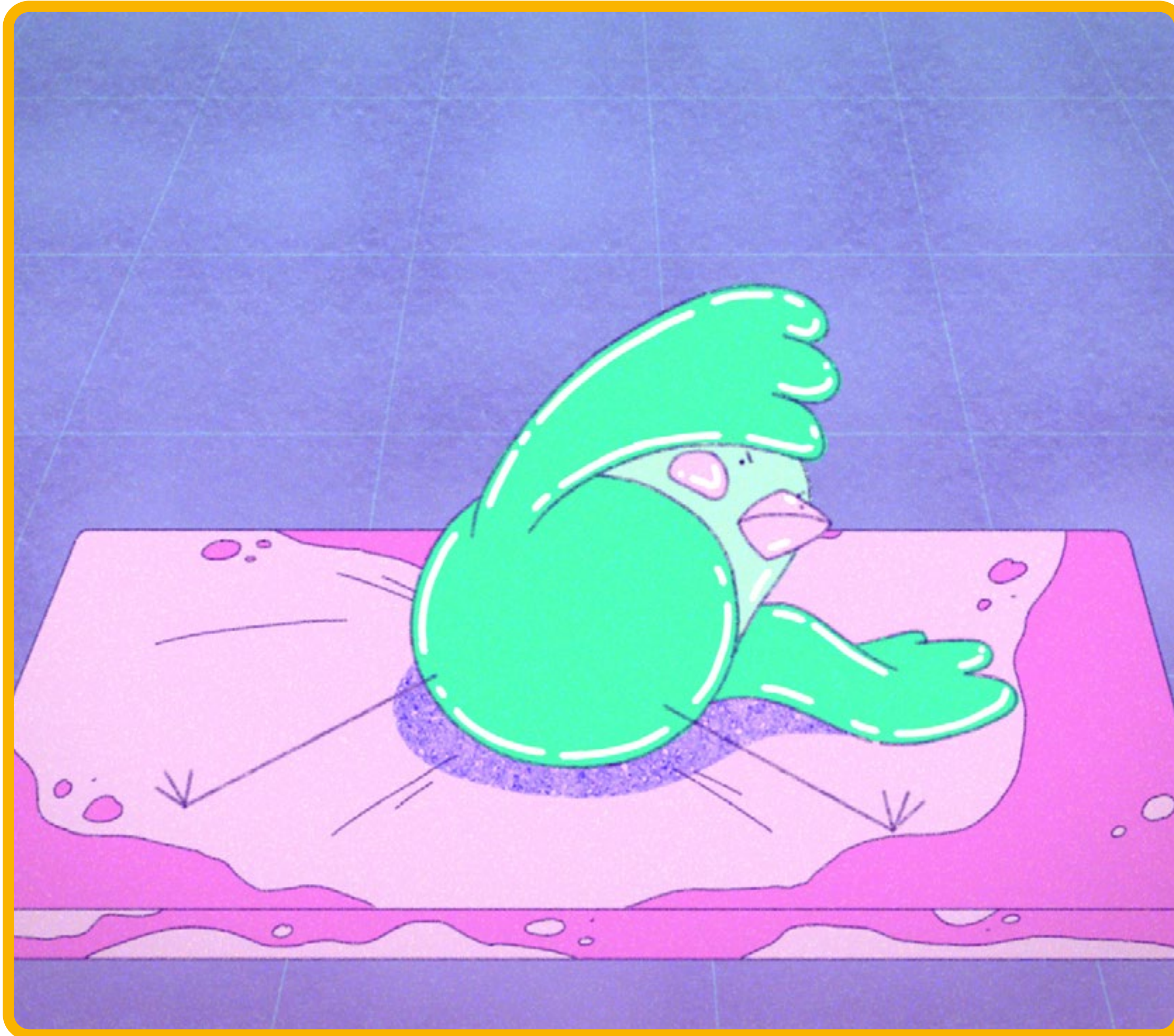
Did you notice the three distinct animation styles in the movie, meant to represent the point of view of a particular character? What about the character designs?

Joey Clift, the filmmaker, prepared a document explaining his creative choices and the work behind his film. [**Click here to go behind the scenes of Pow!**](#)





Ostrich



Directing

Marie Kenov

Origin

Switzerland

Year

2025

Genre

Animation

Duration

8 m 33 s

Themes

Social media, Beauty standards, Advertising

Synopsis

In awe of the ostriches, a sparrow wants to be just like them. By hitting the gym, following make-up tutorials and paying several visits to the neck-stretching studio, the little bird comes very close to achieving its goal.

Question

What advantage does the sparrow have that the ostrich doesn't?



Appreciation

▶ Trailer



Preparation

In class, talk about social media. What do you think about it? In your opinion, what are the biggest pluses and minuses of social media? How do you use your phone? Has your relationship with social media changed since new rules came into effect restricting the use of phones at school?



Post-viewing

The filmmaker chose to talk about a very human concept using birds.

1. Why do you think she chose birds instead of humans?
2. What does this choice add to the film?
3. Could other animals have been used? If yes, which ones and why?

Sample answers can be found in the last section of this guide.



FLOAT

**Directing**

Lydia Matata

Origin

Kenya

Year

2025

Genre

Fiction

Duration

12 m

Themes

Sports, Self-esteem,
Mutual aid, Solidarity

Synopsis

After the holidays, teenage swimming champion Wendo struggles with body changes and judgment at training. An unexpected bond with Mariam, a cleaner learning to swim in secret, helps her reclaim confidence and self-acceptance.

Question

When Mariam and Wendo are in the pool, they teach each other important lessons. What are they?



Appreciation

▶ Trailer



Preparation

Shots in a film have different names depending on the framing and camera position. Here are some examples you can identify while watching the film:

A wide shot shows all characters from head to toe, including their surroundings.



An American shot shows the character from thighs to head.



A closeup shot isolates a detail to draw attention to it.



For an overhead shot, the camera is above the characters and pointing down.



Post-viewing

In class, discuss the film's message.
What is the moral of the story?

Do you see any parallels with situations you've experienced personally?



We're Kinda Different



Directing

Ben Meinhardt

Origin

British Columbia

Year

2025

Genre

Animation

Duration

3 m 17 s

Themes

Difference, Acceptance,
Physical appearance, Humour

Synopsis

Follow the adventures of this peculiar hero as he sings his way through a mundane office building to profound results.

Question

Is the character going to die?



Appreciation



Preparation

The film uses absurdist humour for laughs, but also for showing that everyone is different and that's what makes us unique.

Absurdist humour is a kind of humour based on nonsense and illogic. It can involve bizarre, exaggerated or surrealist situations aimed at making the viewer laugh. In cinema, absurdist humour can be used to convey a message in a playful and subtle way.

The character in this film has a physique so different, it's absurd!

Draw an absurd character that will make your classmates laugh. Make sure it's truly unique!



Post-viewing

Listen to the film's final song and fill in the blanks below. You can even invent your own lyrics if you want to change the song!

Fill in the blanks:

We're kinda _____ in a special way

We make the _____ a better place

All the things that make us _____ are ok

Like the _____ my face



The Girl who Cried Pearls

What price did the boy sell the first pearls for?

He sold them for \$1 each.

Elladj

Why didn't Elladj compete in the Olympics?

Because they took the Top 3 in Canada to go to the Olympics, and he was fourth.

DUCKS

What's happening to the ducks?

The ducks are transforming - they're growing legs, arms and teeth!

Answers of the preparation's questions:

2D films: *The Princess and the Frog*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Hola Frida*, *Dounia and the Princess of Aleppo*, etc.

3D films: *Frozen*, *Inside Out*, *Zootopia*, *Racetime*, *Katak: The Brave Beluga*, *Butterfly Tale*, etc.

Answers of the post-viewing's questions:

Feeding ducks can cause illness, malnutrition, malformations, dependency on humans and water pollution..

1. Prevents plants from reproducing, deprives insects of food, may disrupt the equilibrium of the ecosystem.

2. You could seriously hurt it (tearing of muscles because of the suckers on its underside), remove it from its habitat and other snails, or expose it to predators.

3. Some foods can be bad for its health and lead to sickness.

Bat Boy

What is Andre trying to make out of his grandmother's planter?

He wants to make a box that the bats can use for shelter and protection.

Answers of the preparation's questions:

1. False. They use a special ability called echolocation to navigate in the dark, but they are not blind.

2. False. Bats play an important role in the ecosystem, for example by controlling the populations of undesirable insects and helping to spread seeds.

3. True. There are more than 1,400 species of bats on the planet.

4. False. Bats can live in caves, but also in trees, buildings, attics and under bridges.

Pow!

What is the name of the culinary specialty prepared during the powwow?

It is called frybread.

Ostrich

What advantage does the sparrow have that the ostrich doesn't?

The sparrow can fly.

Answers of the post-viewing's questions:

1. It makes the contrasts bigger and exaggerates the situation.

2. It adds humour and makes the film lighter, funnier and less like a lesson.

3. Other animals could have been used, but there needs to be a clear contrast for it to work.

FLOAT

When Mariam and Wendo are in the pool, they teach each other important lessons.

What are they?

Wendo teaches Mariam to float, and Mariam teaches Wendo to be self-confident.

We're Kinda Different

Is the character going to die?

Yes, in the sense that everyone dies someday, but currently he's in perfect health.