

# Gifted Resources Film/Discussion Series

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## Abstract

Films can be a powerful teaching tool and an effective springboard for generating discussion. Gifted Resources has developed and presented a series of discussions based on movies on topics relating to giftedness.

In this session participants will be shown how to manage the practicalities and legal issues of presenting a film discussion series for education, encouragement and enjoyment for teachers, students, parents and anyone who lives or works with gifted people.

## Why Films?

Films can be a powerful teaching tool.

Films are particularly suitable for teaching students who are visual learners

Films engage emotions as well as the intellect

The inspiration for the series came from using films as a base for study while we were homeschooling. We used the films Titanic, The Dish, The Last of the Mohicans, Men in Black, Big Cat Diary and several others as springboards for learning across a number of disciplines. Also we found that there were teaching units offered on the Internet at <http://www.teachwithmovies.org/> and reviews at <http://www.screenit.com/> and <http://www.family.org/pplace/pi/films/> and several other sites.

## How a film/discussion session works

A film on a topic relating to giftedness is screened either as a whole or in segments.

We have supper or afternoon tea.

An expert on the particular theme covered by the film leads a discussion of the topics raised in the film.

## How the film/discussion sessions can be used

Depending on which title is chosen and the manner in which it is handled the film/discussions can be used for parent groups, teacher training or professional development/in-service training or for gifted youth group activities. The notes can also be purchased for a D.I.Y. session.

**The advertising flyers** as well as giving the date, time and venue give an outline of the film; a mini biography of the facilitator and a list of some of the topics raised for discussion by the film.

**Little Man Tate** (1991)

**Starring:** Jodie Foster, Dianne Wiest

**Director:** Jodie Foster

**Synopsis:** Acclaimed drama about evolving relationships between child genius, protective mom, ambitious teacher. Critics praised its performances, script. This sentimental, warmly humorous ensemble piece is widely appealing to families, drama fans.

**Runtime:** 99 minutes

**Judy Parker will be the facilitator for the discussion.** Judy has extensive experience in assessing gifted students for over 25 years. She has presented many training courses and sessions for gifted education consultants, training psychologists, principal networks and special education teachers. She has presented numerous workshops for parent and teacher support networks and written several journal articles on gifted issues. She is the author of *Understanding and Programming for Gifted Children in Regular Classrooms*; *School Provisions for Gifted Students* and the DOE *Bright Futures* resource book. Judy has conducted major reviews of gifted programs.

### **Some of the Issues for discussion raised by this film are**

- Asynchronous development of gifted children
- Social / emotional issues—difficulty of finding peers— sensitivities
- Arranging appropriate provisions to cater for areas of talent

### **For each session the Attendees' Notes Folders include**

- Reviews of the film
- Notes on topics raised by the film
- A list of questions, topics and issues for discussion raised by the film
- Some plain paper and a pen for taking extra notes
- Information about the facilitator and programs/services offered by him/her
- Information offered by Gifted Resources on the topic

### **Facilitators Packs include**

- A DVD or video tape of the film
- A PowerPoint Presentation
- Reviews of the film including information about the director and main actors
- Notes on topics raised by the film
- A list of questions, topics and issues for discussion raised by the film
- Information offered by Gifted Resources on the topic

So far we have developed Discussion kits for these titles

- Little Man Tate
- Finding Forrester
- Good Will Hunting
- Contact
- A beautiful mind

We plan to develop similar Discussion kits for

- Antitrust
- October sky
- Amadeus
- Searching for Bobby Fischer
- Infinity
- Real genius
- Flirting
- Phenomenon
- Rainman
- Shine
- Billy Elliot

## **Legal Aspects**

Videos and DVDs carry a Warning statement such as

This DVD (including its soundtrack) is authorised for private use only. All other rights are reserved. Unless expressly authorised by law, or in writing by the copyright proprietor, any copying, public performance or other commercial use of this DVD or any part of it is strictly prohibited. This DVD is not to be exported, re-supplied and/or distributed by way of trade unless expressly authorised by law.

## **Public Screening Regulations**

To screen a film or video "in public", you generally need permission from:

- the owner of copyright in the moving images and sounds;
- the owner of copyright in the script or screenplay; and
- the owner of copyright in the music on the soundtrack.

For copyright purposes, screening a film or video outside the home is generally regarded as "in public". In one case, a court held that screening a training video to 11 employees of a bank when the bank was not open to the general public was a "public performance" of the music on the video. In another case, screening videos in motel rooms was "in public". Therefore, screening a film or video in a hotel, restaurant, nightclub, cafe, shopping centre or factory will generally be "in public". Permission may be needed even if the screening is organized by a

nonprofit organization, such as a church, social club, or sporting association, and even if a fee is not charged for viewing the film or video.

The fact that you own a video or film does not automatically entitle you to screen it publicly.<sup>1</sup>

A phone call to the Australasian Film and Video Security Office indicated that our Film/Discussion series would be classed as a Public Screening and I was referred to Roadshow Non-theatrical Film & Video Hire. Roadshow Non-theatrical Film & Video Hire is a commercial distributor of motion picture film and videos, operating under licence, representing various film studios including Warner Bros., Buena Vista International (including Walt Disney), Universal Pictures, Paramount Pictures, MGM, United Artists, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and numerous other Australian and overseas producers and distributors<sup>2</sup>.

Roadshow Non-theatrical Film & Video Hire could supply the films for us to screen and would charge approximately 1/3 of the takings (not the above costs profits). They could not supply all the titles required and referred me to 16MM who could supply some of the films.

Little Man Tate, which I particularly wanted to screen first as it was the anchor and foundation for the whole series, was not available from either Roadshow or 16MM.

I shared the difficulties I was encountering with friends on a mainly American gifted email list who came up with numerous suggestions such as screening at home. One of the list members pointed me in the direction of the Australian Copyright Council and suggested that our film/discussion series could be classed as a classroom situation.

## **Classroom situations**

Screening a film or video in class may not need permission

Under the Copyright Act, screening a film or video in class is not "in public" and does not require permission if:

- it is in the course of educational instruction which is not given for profit; and
- all the people in the audience are giving or receiving instruction, or are directly connected with the place where the instruction is given.

This exemption does not apply if:

- a film or video is shown for entertainment purposes;
- the educational instruction is given for profit; or
- parents (who are not giving or receiving instruction) are present.<sup>3</sup>

The Legal Department of the Australian Copyright Council advised that the Film/Discussion series could be considered as a classroom situation and therefore exempt from the need for permission to screen

## **Venues**

The first series was shown at Mooroolbark Community Centre Brice Ave. Mooroolbark, Victoria.

An encore showing of Little Man Tate was given at Federation Estate, Ringwood, Victoria.

Future venues could include schools, universities and offices.

We are currently seeking venues that will not be as expensive to hire so that our costs will be less and we will be able to charge less for admission.

## **Public Liability**

Public Liability Insurance was covered by an additional payment with the venue hire.

Currently we are seeking to get our own Public Liability cover so that we are able to use other venues which require the user to have their own insurance.

## **Practical Difficulties**

Some of the films were not easy to obtain

Setting prices so as to cover costs but yet remain affordable

Timing of the sessions to allow sufficient time for discussion

Attendees were requested to pre-book so that registration could be completed before the event however most still phoned or arrived on the evening

## Were the Film/Discussions successful?

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Film/Discussion series we asked the discussion facilitators to fill in a Presenter's Evaluation Form and the attendees to fill in an Attendee's Evaluation Form. The feedback will help us to improve future Film/Discussions we run; and showed us that, although for the first series the income did not cover the costs, the Film/Discussions were considered beneficial, informative and enjoyable.

## Feedback from Presenters

- Q** Did you enjoy the experience of being a guest expert discussion facilitator?  
All the facilitators enjoyed the experience.
- Q** Did you find the notes helpful in your preparation?  
All the presenters found the notes in the Facilitators pack helpful  
Comments:  
"Yes. Jo, you carefully had viewed the film and gleaned the issues thoughtfully."  
"Very helpful in helping me focus my thoughts".  
"Very much so. It was interesting to see such thorough research going into the preparation of notes for students and their teachers to use."
- Q** Did you feel that you gained any new insights or had any opinions strengthened by participation in the series?  
All presenters replied in the affirmative  
Comments:  
"Helped me to distil my thoughts yet again"  
"Yes I found it quite interesting how eager people seemed to be to talk to a gifted adult"  
"Yes to insights but no to the other part of the question, the opposite if anything. My doubts were increased because of the level of the discussion. I think it would be sad if people just had their prejudices confirmed by these discussions. We should be aiming at raising doubts and questions, not strengthening old opinions."
- Q** What method of presentation did you choose?  
(a) view whole film – discuss  
(b) introduction – view whole film – discuss  
(c) view segments of the film with discussion interspersed  
(d) other (please describe)
- The majority chose the format  
introduction – view whole film – discuss
- Q** Would you choose the same format if you presented the same film again?  
2 yes, 1 possibly- perhaps I would want to be less formal in speaking
- Q** Did you use the Powerpoint Presentation as an aid for the discussion? 1 yes 2 no  
Comment No, I preferred the personal discussion in such a short time
- Q** What suggestions do you have as improvements for the series?  
(a) All presenters would have liked to see more people attending the film/discussion  
(b) Show selected scenes and discuss after each – allows for more in depth discussion

## Feedback from Attendees

- Q** Did the venue and time suit you?  
Replies ranged from OK to excellent for the venue and Ok to too early for the time. Some of the attendees had an hour's drive.
- Q** Did you feel that the film gave you an increased empathy with gifted people?  
All attendees replied in the affirmative except 2 who said  
"not particularly" and  
"yes and no – I already had a great deal of empathy with them- but I could feel many of the experiences"

**Q** Did you feel that the film gave you an increased understanding of the issues covered?

Comments:

“Absolutely – I think it was a wonderful introduction to what life can be like for gifted children and some of the issues they can face.”

“Yes it has inspired me to buy the book to find out more about the issues and ideas in the film.”

“The film in conjunction with the discussion afterwards made an entertaining and highly educational evening.”

“Each time I see this film I increase my understanding of the complexity and multi dimensional issues around giftedness.”

**Q** Did you feel that you benefited from the discussion of the film?

Comments:

“Not much because it was too brief.”

“Yes, although it was too brief.”

“Yes, great to get others’ input.”

“The content was interesting but I wanted more.”

“Wide ranging discussion gave plenty of thought provoking comments.”

“Yes I found that extremely useful as it didn’t just stick to the film but moved into other areas.”

“Sharing other peoples ideas about controversial issues such as the conflict or otherwise between religious faith and scientific fact in a nurturing environment was very stimulating and made me feel that this is what gifted children particularly lack at school. Adults can pick and choose to a greater extent than children who they spend their time with.”

**Q** Did you find the notes, Internet site references and overhead transparencies useful?

All the attendees found the notes useful.

**Q** What do you think would improve the Film/Discussion series?

Lower cost.

More people attending.

Longer time allowed for discussion and questions.

Being able to move to another area for the discussion so that noise of packing up equipment did not distract from the discussion.

In summary the Film series appears to be an appropriate method of provoking discussion and aiding education, encouragement and enjoyment for teachers, students, parents and anyone who lives or works with gifted people.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Copyright Council Information sheet G31 Videos and films: screening in public Redfern NSW, March 2001

<sup>2</sup> Roadshow Non-theatrical Film & Video Hire Public exhibition of motion pictures in Australia

<sup>3</sup> Australian Copyright Council Information sheet G32 Videos and films: screening in class Redfern NSW, March 2001