



EFA Young Audience Award 2019

Educational handout for the moderator
including an introduction for valuation

The three nominated films (*screening order*):

FIGHT GIRL (Vechtmeisje)

YAA 2019

For the first time, the nominations were chosen in a two-step procedure:

- 1.) An **international committee** consisting of EFA Board Member Vanessa Henneman (Netherlands) and experts Fabia Bettini (Alice nella Città/Italy), Keld Mathiesen (UCN - University College of Northern Denmark), Rajko Petrović (Five Stars Film Distribution/Serbia) and Lina Užkuraiytė (International Vilnius Film Festival for Children and Youth/Lithuania) pre-selected six films.
- 2.) A jury of **13-to-14-year-old former YAA participants** Jesse (London/UK), Konstantin (Chemnitz/Germany), Maria (Lisbon/Portugal), Friederike (Luxembourg) and Milica (Podgorica/Montenegro) then watched these six films and chose the three nominations.

On 5 May, the three nominated films will be screened simultaneously to audiences of 12-14-year-olds in the following 35 countries across Europe and beyond:

AUSTRALIA: Brisbane	LATVIA: Riga
AUSTRIA: St. Pölten & Vienna	LITHUANIA: Kaunas & Vilnius
BELGIUM: Brussels	LUXEMBOURG: Luxembourg
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA: Sarajevo	MALTA: Valletta
BULGARIA: Sofia	MONTENEGRO: Nikšić & Podgorica
CROATIA: Zagreb	NORTH MACEDONIA: Skopje
CZECH REPUBLIC: Prague	POLAND: Gdynia, Poznań, Warsaw & Wrocław
DENMARK: Aalborg, Aarhus, Copenhagen & Stege	PORTUGAL: Lisbon
ESTONIA: Tallinn	ROMANIA: Cluj-Napoca
FINLAND: Espoo	SERBIA: Gornji Milanovac
FRANCE: Bourg Saint Maurice – Les Arcs	SLOVAKIA: Bratislava
GERMANY: Berlin, Chemnitz & Erfurt	SLOVENIA: Izola
HUNGARY: Budapest	SPAIN: A Coruña, Barcelona, Madrid, Seville & Valencia
ICELAND: Reykjavik	SWEDEN: Malmö
IRELAND: Dublin & Galway	SWITZERLAND: Bellinzona & Zurich
ITALY: Florence, Rome & Turin	TURKEY: Istanbul
KOSOVO: Prizren	UK: Lewes, London & Sheffield

The EFA Young Audience Award is organised and presented by the European Film Academy and EFA Productions with the support of Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung (MDM) and the Creative Europe – Media Sub-Programme of the European Union. The national YAA events are organised with the support of the respective national partners. Media partner is FRED FM Film Radio.

Please note:

The following handout for the three films selected for the EFA Young Audience Award focuses on the essentials and does not claim to cover all (noteworthy) aspects of a film. In addition to thematic aspects for assessing the film, cinematic aspects are equally important. However important and significant a topic may be, the film has to also have succeeded in finding the appropriate form and the appropriate choice of cinematic means or (sub)genre.

First, the basic information of a film is conveyed on an overview page, whereby all films are given equal weight. It also briefly refers to possible triggers that could result from personal (traumatic) experiences or from cultural and religious backgrounds. Next, you'll find the most important thematic aspects as well as information on the cinematic rendition.

The tips and notes for the introduction of the film are always kept short and refer to useful preliminary information about the film and to the inquiry of relevant prior knowledge. After all, the young people should all have an equal chance to see a film without prejudice and any pedagogical influence and to form their own (first) opinions. These can of course be put into perspective and differentiated during the subsequent discussion.

The discussion points are also to be understood as mere suggestions. They do not have to be „processed“ in sequential order. Since every event is, above all, influenced and shaped by its participants, this circumstance must be given sufficient consideration. In other words: It is what particularly moves the young people and what they themselves bring up which should determine the discussion about the film.

The standardised guideline for the evaluation of a film (jury booklet for participants) is not a requirement for well-founded judgement. But it is an option, no more and no less.

As different as this year's three films, pre-selected by a young jury, may be in form and content, they also have a whole lot of similarities, which in the end give an important indication of what is of particular interest to young people right now and what kind of stories they would like to see in cinema beyond the international mainstream. All three films are great coming-of-age stories in which young people rebel against the rules and expectations of adults, seek and find their own way, and, in doing so, surpass themselves. Artistic and especially musical possibilities of expression are not always the focus of these stories, but in all three films, they play a role that goes far beyond chance. It is always the young people, who, without particular help from adults, are able to solve their own problems and face the challenges of their environments and to grow up with courage, imagination and creativity.



FIGHT GIRL (Vechtmeisje)

The Netherlands/Belgium, 2019, 84 min.

Directed by: Johan Timmers

Written by: Barbara Jurgens

Produced by: Ineke Kanters, Jan van der Zanden

Director of photography: Jeroen de Bruin

Editor: Philippe Ravoet

Sound Design: Thierry De Vries

Original Score: Stijn Cole, Tom Pintens, Latifa (titlesong)

Main Cast: Aiko Beemsterboer (Bo), Bas Keizer (Dani), Noa Farinum (Joy), Hilde De Baerdemaeker (Esther), Ali Ben Horsting (Alex), Dioni Jurado-Gomez (Jesse), Imanuelle Grives (Cecilia), Dana Goldberg (Emma) a. o.

Recommended from 12 years on

Awards (selection): Cinekid 2015: Eurimages Co-Production Development Award – Cinekid Amsterdam 2018: Cinekid Film Award for Best Dutch Family Film, Audience Award

Genre: coming of age-film, sports film

Summary

When her parents end up in an acrimonious divorce, the headstrong 12-year-old Bo moves to an Amsterdam suburb with her mother and her brother Dani. Her new neighbour Joy introduces her to a kickboxing club. She demonstrates natural talent and is very soon taking part in the Dutch championships. But her brother's illness and her parents' divorce are distracting Bo and threaten to ruin the contest. Bo has to learn restraint and accept that she can't control everything.

About production and filmmakers

Director Johann Timmers (born 1962) studied history in Amsterdam and directed numerous television films and series before making his feature films 'Wonderbroeders' (2014) and 'Vechtmeisje' (2018). For the already sixth film role of the 15-year-old leading actress Aiko Beemsterboer as Bo, she intensively prepared with four months of kickboxing training.

Subjects

Children from broken homes, kickboxing, growing up, friendship, self-control

Triggers

Children from broken homes and young people torn between two parents may find some of the scenes in the film stressful.

Website

<http://www.thefilmkitchen.nl/nl/portfolio/14/vechtmeisje>

Essential topics

Children from broken homes

Bo(dil) and her brother Dani(el) are tired of their parents arguing all the time and fighting on their children's backs. When the mother moves out with the two siblings, but only finds a small apartment in a big apartment building, Bo and Dani even have to share a room. While Bo openly screams out her anger and becomes more and more aggressive towards others, Dani, who sees himself as a musician, strongly withdraws. What makes things even more difficult for him is that he suffers from hyperglycaemia and goes into shock if he is not injected with insulin in time. Instead of giving him moral support, the parents instead blame each other for his illness, which also makes him a laughing stock at his new school. Bo feels responsible for her brother and wants to support him in his heart's desire, which is nothing more than to be the guitarist in lead singer Iziz's band, for whom he has already written a song, but doesn't dare to confide in her.



When the family court later decides which parent the children are better off with, Bo no longer wants to be a pawn for adults, and her parents in particular. She demands that they settle their dispute among themselves and leaves the courtroom with the support of her brother to take part in the kickboxing finals just in time.

Kickboxing and self-control

However, before she can muster the courage to take her destiny into her own hands, she must learn to direct her anger in an orderly fashion. She manages to do this by means of the martial art of kickboxing, which she rather accidentally comes across. She follows her new neighbour Joy to the Fightclub to return a boxing glove she lost on the street. Since Bo obviously has great talent, coach Cecilia gives her a chance and lets her train hard.

Just as the brother is musically gifted and sensitive while his sister is physically tougher, the film almost casually breaks up possible clichés and reservations about kickboxing. Bo's father, who is a dentist, is for example only concerned about his investment in her earlier dental corrections. The sport is of course just as suitable for women as it is for men and can be learned relatively quickly compared to other martial arts. In this martial art, hits with the feet and hands are combined with conventional boxing. This serves fitness and self-defence and is subject to clear rules, such as the obligatory teeth and head protection, boxing gloves, and the ban on hitting opponents in the back or when they are lying on the ground, as well as throwing the competitor. There are several variants of kickboxing, whereby the full contact variant shown in the film is carried out in a boxing ring and a fight can be decided both by points and by a knockout of the opponent.

The film places great emphasis on showing the individual learning process that also helps Bo cope with her everyday life. First of all, she has to find her balance and use her anger in the ring productively instead of wasting her energy. Then, she must learn to control herself and her anger. This is far more complicated than she thought, because when she defends her brother by openly resorting to violence, she has not only lost control of herself for a short time, but at the same time disgraced her sport and confirmed common prejudices against kickboxing. Only because she

openly admits her mistake in the Fightclub and emphasises that this is the only place where she can learn, she gets a second chance.



Pussy or tiger?

Bo has yet to learn the final lesson. And even the trainer is not completely convinced that the little kitten (Pussy) has already turned into a tiger. Having gone down in the final competition, Bo seems to be losing at the last second. Just in time she remembers what she learned in the Fightclub with the help of her two new friends Jay and Jesse. Head and gut must form a single unit for her to be able to win. It's not enough to fight with the gut, the head has to assume control. Her own success rubs off on the others. At the competition, the parents are suddenly completely focused on their daughter instead of arguing and the brother finally finds the courage to take his future as a musician into his own hands and manages to get lead singer Iziz to listen to his demo tape.

Film literacy

A coming-of-age story

Just like in a coming-of-age novel, the film tells the story of a maturing process on the way to becoming a responsible adult. Strictly speaking, there are even two stories told in parallel, the story of Bo and the story of her brother. To clearly show from the start that Bo is the central figure in the film, she is introduced as the first-person narrator, who reflects her thoughts and feelings at some points of the film. The viewer learns that the name Bo is the short form of Bodil, which means warrior and already anticipates that Bo will have to endure a series of battles in the course of the film. She is also characterised by her pet, a stick insect, which she keeps in a terrarium. These animals, originally from Vietnam, are masters of camouflage and can hardly be distinguished from a thin branch. Thus, one shouldn't be deceived by the rather dainty looking girl who actually carries a lot of power. When Bo finds herself, she gives the animal the freedom she has just won for herself.

Authentic sports staging

Some films lose some of their authenticity because the main characters are simply not believable in having learned new skills in a relatively short time, for example in a previously unpractised sport. It's different with this film. The elliptical narrative suggests that Bo trained hard and long for the competition. Above all, however, Bo is believable in actually being able to kickbox. She doesn't rely on doubles throughout the movie, and there are also no fast cuts that try to hide such tricks. For months, the actress intensively prepared and trained for her role. Especially in the finale, the camera is very close to the fight, which increases the drama and contributes to the emotionalization.



Colour dramaturgy

The consistent colour dramaturgy in the use of cold and warm colours, especially blue and red, in order to characterise the figures and visualise their emotional world, is to be emphasised. During a scene in the school gym, Bo's inner distance and detachment, in addition to the cold colour mood, are reinforced by the fact that she sits at a lofty height on the drawing floor of the hall. It makes sense for her to find her grounding in the Fightclub, which she can only enter by elevator, deep down and past warm-coloured wall elements. From then on, hardly a moment passes without her wearing something red, be it a headscarf, a training jacket or the red boxing gloves as an expression of warmth, energy and life.



SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

Before screening:

- Short information about the director and the main actress (kickboxing)
- What is kickboxing? Who has made their own experiences?

Basic talking points (after screening):

- Which story personally appealed to you more, that of Bo or that of her brother Dani?
- The film deliberately shifts the classic role models of the strong boy and the sensitive girl. What is your take on this?
- Is it immediately believable that Bo is good at kickboxing? How can you tell?
- Through the kickboxing training, Bo changes and learns a lot about herself. What exactly does she learn and how does it change her life?
- What does the metaphorical comparison between pussy and tiger quoted in the film mean - primarily for Bo, but not just for her?
- Which cinematic means (e.g. colouring) does the film use to visually convey the emotional world of the two main characters?

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