



EFA Young Audience Award 2017

**Guideline for moderation & discussion
including questions for jury booklet**

The three nominated films:

**GOODBYE BERLIN
THE GIRL DOWN LOCH ÄNZI
MY LIFE AS A ZUCCHINI**

EFA Young Audience Award 2017

This year's nominations were chosen by an international committee consisting of Illia Dyadik (Children KinoFest /Ukraine), Michael Harbauer (Sächsischer Kinder- und JugendfilmDienst e.V. /Germany), Selma Mehadžić (Zagreb Film Festival/Croatia), Marta Nieto Postigo (Drac Màgic/Spain) and Hilde Steenssens (Filemon/Belgium).

On Young Audience Film Day on 7 May, the three nominated films will be screened to audiences of 12-14 year-olds in the following 31 countries across Europe:

AUSTRIA: St. Pölten & Vienna
BELGIUM: Brussels
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA: Sarajevo
BULGARIA: Sofia
CROATIA: Zagreb
CZECH REPUBLIC: Prague
DENMARK: Aalborg
ESTONIA: Tallinn
FINLAND: Helsinki
GERMANY: Berlin & Erfurt
GREECE: Athens
HUNGARY: Budapest
ISRAEL: Tel Aviv
ITALY: Florence, Rome & Turin
KOSOVO: Prizren
LATVIA: Riga
LITHUANIA: Vilnius
LUXEMBOURG: Luxembourg
FYR MACEDONIA: Skopje
MALTA: Valletta
MONTENEGRO: Podgorica
THE NETHERLANDS: Amsterdam
POLAND: Łódź, Warsaw & Wrocław
PORTUGAL: Lisbon
ROMANIA: Cluj-Napoca
SERBIA: Novi Sad
SLOVAKIA: Bratislava
SLOVENIA: Izola
SPAIN: Barcelona
TURKEY: Istanbul
UK: London

And it is the young audience that will act as a jury and vote for the winner right after the screenings. In a truly European vote, jury speakers will then transmit the national results live via video conference to Erfurt (Germany) where the winner will be announced in an award ceremony streamed live on:

http://yaa.europeanfilmawards.eu/en_EN/yaa-2017

Notes for the usage of the handout:

The following guide to the three films nominated for the EFA Young Audience Award focuses on the essential elements and does not purport to take all (significant) aspects of a film into consideration.

In forming a judgement of a film, the work's cinematic aspects are to be considered as important as the subject matter. While thematic aspects might be of great significance, choosing the right cinematic means (or cinematic genre) is essential to telling the story.

The guide itself is presented in the following way:

Each film is introduced on a single page that includes basic information and a summary. This approach has been chosen to ensure that all films are presented on a level playing field. There will also be a brief warning of any possible triggers. The latter is not only intended for young people with recent (and often traumatic) immigration experiences, but is also directed at all potential jury members.

This is followed by the film's most important thematic aspects as well as notes and information on the cinematic realization.

The introductory tips and notes about the films have been kept brief, and consist primarily of information that is useful to have in advance. Ultimately, the aim is to ensure that the young viewers all have an equal opportunity to watch the films without any predetermined ideas or influences from the teacher and thus to be able to form their own initial impression of the film – which can be explored in greater depth in the subsequent discussion.

The list of discussion questions we've provided are meant to be viewed as a catalyst for you and your students – a diving board for you to create your own. Likewise, the questions need not be 'worked through' in order. By nature, each viewing and discussion session will be shaped by its participants, and this fact must be taken into consideration. In other words, the issues that speak to young people, and which they themselves choose to address, should serve as the starting point of your discussion.

Standardized guidelines for judging a film (copies for the participants?) are not essential for reaching a judgement: Such guidelines are optional – a point we ask you to stress in advance.

GOODBYE BERLIN

OT: Tschick

Germany 2016, 93 min.

Feature film



Director Fatih Akin

Written by Lars Hubrich, Fatih Akin & Hark Bohm, based on the book "Tschick" (engl. "Why We Took the Car") by Wolfgang Herrndorf

Camera Rainer Klausmann

Editor Andrew Bird

Music Vince Pope

Cast Tristan Göbel (Maik), Anand Batlibeg Chuluunbaatar (Tschick), Mercedes Müller (Isa), Anja Schneider (Maik's mother), Uwe Bohm (Josef), Udo Samel (Mr. Wagenbach) among others.

Recommended from 12 years on

Awards (selection) Best Youth Film (Bavarian Film Awards 2017)

Genre screen adaptation, road movie, coming-of-age film

Summary

At school, the shy 14-year-old Maik from Berlin's Marzahn district is branded a "psycho". Just at the start of the summer holidays, his mother has to go to rehab once again; and his dad, a businessman, uses the opportunity to go on a "business trip" with his female assistant. When Tschick, the new boy in class, turns up at Maik's home in a Lada car he 'borrowed', the two friends suddenly decide to drive to Wallachia (Romania). It is to be a journey that will forever change Maik and the lives of others.

About the production and filmmakers

The young adult novel "Tschick" published in 2010 and written by the German author Wolfgang Herrndorf (1965-2013) is standard reading in many German schools. The novel was adapted for film by Fatih Akin, the son of Turkish immigrants. He is one of the most successful filmmakers in German and European cinema today.

Subjects

Growing up, family, friendship, love, social outsiders, identity, rebellion

Triggers

The two 14-year-olds, among them a Russian-born German national, repeatedly commit crimes (existing prejudices?), violent fantasies.

Website <http://www.tschick-film.de>

Essential topics

Growing up

In coming-of-age films, the main topic is always, of course, the difficulties of growing up. This includes the need to belong and be accepted, as well as the search for the "meaning" of life, suitable role models, and trying to discover one's (sexual) identity. It often involves a confrontation with one's parents or another adult role model. All these elements are present in the film, even though their journey into the adult world starts off with these two underage drivers taking a car out for a joyride.

In a feature film that attempts to portray how young people on the verge of adulthood feel about life, what teens do is less important than how and why they do it. Author Wolfgang Herrndorf, who wrote this best-selling novel, recalls in "Tschick" (engl. "Why We Took the Car") how he felt as a teenager. Director Fatih Akin who, incidentally, only joined the film project shortly before shooting began, has managed to crystallize the essential message of the book while adopting a cinematic style that accommodates the viewing habits of today's young adult audience.

Social outsiders

The story is told from the perspective of 14-year-old Maik, who feels like the only outsider in his entire class at school. His peers barely seem to notice him; and Maik is the only person who doesn't get invited to the birthday party of his popular classmate, Tatjana, with whom he is secretly in love. He is insultingly called "psycho" after describing – with undeniable literary talent – his alcoholic mother in a school essay. He and his rich parents live in a bungalow-style home with a swimming pool in the generally less-affluent district of Marzahn. It was in this part of East Berlin that the largest prefabricated housing block development of the GDR was built.

Just before the end of the school year, "Tschick", a Russian with German heritage, joins Maik's class. So-called "returnee settlers" like Tschick are ethnic Germans from the successor states of the former Soviet Union and other East European countries who are legally entitled to residency in Germany following an entry process. Initially the two teenagers can't stand each other, not least because the much taller Russian German often reeks of alcohol like Maik's mother. In class, Tschick is immediately labelled an "Asi" (antisocial person) and ostracised. This unpleasant fate seems to be the one thing the boys have in common. During their journey through provincial Eastern Germany in a stolen Lada (the biggest car manufacturer in Russia and Eastern Europe), they discover that there are other things they have in common. And Maik realizes that he can learn a whole lot from Tschick.

Friendship – Love – Sexuality

Although it later emerges that Tschick has homosexual tendencies and he constantly accuses Maik of being "gay" at first, sexuality does not play a role in this so-called buddy movie, which focuses more on the developing friendship between the two boys. Tschick even ends up teaching Maik how to impress girls. During their journey together, Maik falls in love with Isa, an outsider character who gets stranded at a dump on her way to Prague. Isa's self confidence, maturity and naturalness are the total opposite of Tatjana; and to Maik, Isa seems like a force of nature. The two of them end up kissing on their road trip, but it never gets beyond that, because Maik, unlike Isa, is mainly interested in tenderness and romance.

Orientation and the "search for meaning"

At the outset of the story, Maik doesn't really know where he belongs in life, and acceptance by his peers is actually only important in relation to Tatjana. In contrast, Tschick knows from the start that he doesn't want to "belong", and is driven by his craving for independence. For him, the goal of the journey is to reach Wallachia, a historical region in modern-day Romania – though his reasons for wanting to go there are not made clear. Maik decides to join Tschick on his adventure because he believes that the other boy is clued up (about life) and could "show him the way". Yet in reality Tschick is just as clueless and lacking in orientation as Maik. He constantly says that none of it "makes any sense". He doesn't seem to care exactly where Wallachia is, or what the fastest way of getting there is – the main thing is that they keep moving on. And no matter what happens, going back is not an option. At the same time, Tschick seems indifferent to other walks of life, as is evidenced when the boys encounter a greenie family in a village, and all Tschick can think about is getting something to eat.

Confrontations with parents

While Tschick's parents are not even mentioned in the film, Maik's parents play a major role in his life – and he is fed up with the lies of their daily lives. His mother constantly talks about the 'beauty spa', although she actually means the rehab centre; and his self-centred father is secretly having an affair with his secretary. More a burden than a blessing, neither of Maik's parents is much help to him. In their place, Tschick might take the role of Maik's more mature brother, despite their being the same age. After surviving a car crash and then getting pressured by his father to lie in court and incriminate and betray his friend, Maik finally manages to stand up to his dad during a long overdue confrontation. Outraged by his son's behaviour, Maik's father ultimately leaves his family, which doesn't particularly bother Maik or his mother.



Film literacy

A road movie and the meaning of the journey

In a road movie, the protagonists more or less voluntarily embark on a journey – which is not always taken in a car on a road. During the journey they encounter many new things and people and (usually) return to their starting point in the end – more mature and rich with experience. Thus the road movie corresponds to the ideal narrative form that Joseph Campbell has identified as existing in all cultures: It is the journey of a hero who sets out on his travels either alone or with companions and only returns home, purified, after facing many challenges.

The first-person narrator and the point-of-view camera

This film's story is told entirely from Maik's perspective. As the narrator, he leads the viewer through the story – which would doubtlessly be different if told from Tschick's point of view. Maik's subjectivity is expressed in the film by means of the camera angle, the editing, the slow-motion scenes, in muted audio segments, fade-ins and not least in the violent fantasies in which he shoots his father along with his girlfriend.

The landscape as a mirror



The unique atmosphere of the film is created in part through the landscape of Brandenburg in East Germany. It becomes an additional, silent protagonist in the story and acts as a mirror for the inner disposition of the two friends. The endless crop fields cut through by tree-lined roads, typical of East Germany, convey a feeling of unbridled freedom. Yet unexpected boundaries, coming even in the form of farm animals, confront them time and again. In the villages it seems like time has stood still; the streets are paved with cobblestones from before the GDR era, and the local policeman patrols his beat on a bicycle. Isolated wind turbines in the middle of the prairie seem to herald a new era; their presence, at the very least, is anachronistic. The landscape is in places strewn with trash, and even the dam is cast as an ambiguous symbol of an artificial border and a place of cleansing. The villages are almost devoid of people, and those who do live there are experimenting with alternative lifestyles: From the "cycling aristocrats" to the greenie family, are in certain ways similar to the two friends who are in search of meaning and a new direction in life.

Music and attitude to life

In "Goodbye Berlin" the music not only serves as a backdrop or as a means of underscoring emotions; it acquires an independent dramatic function by the repeated playing of a cassette featuring the piece "Ballade pour Adeline" the two boys find in the Lada. Indeed the song becomes the main musical theme. It was with this instrumental version of the melody that the French pianist Richard Clayderman made his international breakthrough in 1979. Sometimes described as kitschy, the piece represents Maik's romantic side, which is seen in his interactions with girls. By way of contrast, the 2015 song "Hurra, die Welt geht unter" by the Berlin hip-hop band K.I.Z., describes a post-apocalyptic world that is perhaps worth striving for. The song represents an anarchistic utopia in which the old social constraints and external forces of power and law are abolished. Maik and Tschick move back and forth between these two poles, and thus the music directly expresses their respective attitudes to life – between a child's longing for security and the rebellion of youth.

Before screening

- Brief info about the production, director, the novel and the author
- If required, a brief explanation: Berlin-Marzahn, Russian-German returnee settler
- What is a coming-of-age film, and what is a road movie?

Basic talking points (after screening)

- As an exception, the question "what is this film about"?
- Did the film succeed in portraying the youths' attitude to life?
- What are they rebelling against and why are they willing to break the law in doing so?
- Were the two main actors credible?
- Which of the characters did you like most and why?
- From whose perspective is the film's story told, and how do we know this?
- Does everything 'really' happen the way Maik tells it in the film?
- Why does the film include Maik's violent fantasies?
- Could the film reinforce existing prejudices? (e.g. against Russian Germans)?
- Why is the landscape so important in this film?
- What does the music in the film tell us about the two protagonists?
- What did you think about the film's ending (which by differs from the ending in the novel)?

THE GIRL DOWN LOCH ÄNZI

OT: Das Mädchen vom Änziloch
Switzerland 2016, 87 min.

Director Alice Schmid

Written and produced by Alice Schmid

Camera Aurelio Buchwalder

Editor Anja Bombelli

Music Thomas Jeker, Rea Dubach

Cast Laura Larissa Rösli (herself), Thom Straumann (himself) a. o.



Recommended from 10 years on

Awards (selection) Innerschweizer Filmpreis 2017, Albert Koechlin Stiftung

Genre documentary with elements of feature film, coming-of-age film

Summary

12-year-old Laura grows up in a farming family on a remote farm in the Swiss mountains between the cities of Bern and Lucerne. She writes down her dreams and fears in her secret computer diary. Many of her fantasies are centred around Loch Änzi, a deep rocky abyss shrouded in mystery where even the grown-ups don't dare to go. When a boy from the city comes to visit and do "countryside service", Laura gradually overcomes her fears and isolation.

About the production and filmmakers

In her work as a television documentary maker, screenwriter, director and author, Alice Schmid has consistently focused on topics related to children, young adults and violence, such as child soldiers and victims of landmines. Some years ago, she was included in the Generation section of the Berlinale with her documentary THE CHILDREN FROM THE NAPF which was filmed in the Swiss municipality of Romoos. Laura Larissa Rösli, the main protagonist in her new work, was also involved in the earlier film as a young girl. Since then, Alice Schmid has lived in Romoos.

Subjects

Growing up, family, friendship, fears, identity, tradition and modern life

Triggers

In the film, a rabbit is slaughtered and a pony dies. This could be challenging for animal loving children who are not familiar with life in the country or on a farm. However, the hints at the horror film genre (dealing with fear) should only be problematic in exceptional cases.

Website <http://www.aliceschmid.ch>

Essential topics

The dreams and fears of an adolescent in the country

At first sight, Laura Larissa Rösli probably doesn't correspond to the audience's expectations of a leading protagonist in a film. She considers herself far too fat, and the only thing she really likes about her appearance is her eyes. She suffers regular nightmares and often can't sleep well at night. She projects her private fears by immersing herself in the fate of a girl in Loch Änzi, who – for whatever reason – must have been even more of an outsider than Laura and was completely isolated. As Laura gradually opens up in front of the camera, she becomes more and more likeable: This makes it far easier to identify with her, since girls and perhaps also boys will recognize their own personal concerns in her story.

As she cautiously enters a friendship with a city boy her age named Thom, Laura finds herself confronted with two threatening elements of the unknown: Thom is both a member of the opposite sex and also a boy from a different, urban world with his own lifestyle and experiences. In anxious expectation, she creates two versions of Thom in her imagination: one good and one bad. Her innermost hope is that he will accept her and not consider her "silly". During the week that she spends with Thom, Laura finally has "a friend she can talk to", which helps her become emotionally stronger. At the same time, she is afraid that he might express the wish to climb down into Loch Änzi with her.

In the third part of the film, things take a completely different turn. Thom is back in the city, and doesn't contact Laura anymore. As a result, Laura decides to finally confront her fears all on her own. She climbs down into Loch Änzi, and it becomes a true journey of initiation for her, because once down there she discovers something: "You are fine just as you are. The world is your oyster!"

Tradition and contemporary life

The farm Laura's parents raise her on deserves particular attention: It is a place where tradition and contemporary life are in balance – providing us with insights into what life in the country is like and where it is headed. On the one hand, it is a traditional farm in the mountains where cattle and rabbits are bred, where hay is harvested, and where the slaughter and death of animals is (still) part of daily life. During the summer holidays, children and teenagers from the city are invited there to do "countryside service", in which they help out on the farm and experience life in the country first hand.



The farm is also a place where ponies are kept, and ostriches and turkeys are raised for meat production. Beyond this, Laura's family operates a kiln for the production of charcoal, a literal and figurative darker element of the story that dominates the last third of the film. In Europe – mainly in Romania – there are a just few surviving kilns like the one seen here, since the profession of the charcoal burner has almost completely died out.

The relationship between traditional and contemporary life is depicted in many other scenes in the film. The old camper van where Thom sleeps for a whole week and the modified motorbike Laura rides across the fields have both seen better days. And Laura is, naturally, a

big fan of video games, and no longer writes down her most private thoughts on paper, but instead uses a latest-generation MacBook.

Even the traditions of the elderly nun, whose advice is always welcome, is given a modern twist in the form of Laura's birthday present, a hollowed-out ostrich egg (at 1.3-1.8 kg, they are the largest eggs in the world), which is re-designed as a trendy night-light.

Nonetheless, in these enlightened times that have been transformed by modern technology, many age-old traditions are still upheld. The grown-ups meet at the inn for choir practice and still vividly recall the legend of the girl in Loch Änzi without dismissing the story as mere nonsense.



Film literacy

Documentary or feature film?

Nowadays, there is an increasing crossover between documentaries and feature works of fiction, and this has given rise to new narrative forms. According to the German documentary filmmaker Thomas Schadt, the fictional feature film represents a "possible reality" whereas the documentary portrays an "existing reality". Thus, *THE GIRL DOWN LOCH ÄNZI* is a fictional feature film in documentary form – or a documentary with numerous fictional elements. These elements can be recognized by the cinematic means employed, such as the sound (a threatening atmosphere evoked by the sound of a thunderstorm), the music (underscoring the emotions), the lighting and the colours (swirling mist, dark blue and black as they first approach Loch Änzi), as well as the cinematography (handheld cameras in crucial emotional situations for Laura). However, making the correct classification is less important for the jury when judging the film: Instead, their attention should be on the impact that is achieved using this narrative style, which even draws on elements of the horror film genre.

The film offers documentary insights into life in the countryside, but it actually delves far deeper into Laura's innermost feelings, how she overcomes her fears and her growing sense of self-worth. Even the four interspersed interview scenes with statically-filmed (staged) statements given by the adults, primarily serve to build up tension and to describe Laura's immediate living environment. The true perspectives of the adults are only reflected in these interviews to a limited extent, since they do not occupy a central role in the film.

The following examples show to what extent the film is "staged" in its composition, how it uses visual metaphors, and how it seeks to evoke associations in the viewer.



In the scene on the left, Laura stands in the barn practising with a hula hoop ring – an exercise article that is still popular today as a means of losing weight. The light falling from above and the overhead camera angle identify her as person who still has to grow into herself. Her corpulence is one of her problems, and her fears are concentrated in the circle formed by the ring, which at the same time symbolically refers to the threatening Loch Änzi. In the scene on the right, the two cords, which are actually used for fencing, symbolize the different perspectives Thom and Laura have about the story of Loch Änzi and their attempts at mutual understanding.

Before screening

- Brief info about the production, director and story setting
- Who has experienced life in the country or on a farm?
- Point out that in the first third of the film, animals die or are killed.
- Draw attention to the film's unusual narrative form (documentary and fiction)

Basic talking points (after screening)

- How do feel about the film's storytelling style? Why do you think it was chosen?
- Why do the adults play only marginal roles in the film?
- Which problems does Laura have to deal with in the film? How does she solve them?
- What do the legend and Loch Änzi mean to Laura?
- Did the film succeed in conveying her conflicting emotions?
- Who found it easy/not so easy to identify with Laura? What are your reasons?
- Is it primarily a film for girls?
- Does Thom come across badly in the film (for instance when he is called a coward)?
- Why does the film show the charcoal kiln so often?
- Why does the film include the scenes with the rabbit and the pony?
- What important experiences does Laura go through during the course of the film?
- What did you think of the ending (the dénouement of the story)?

MY LIFE AS A ZUCCHINI

OT: Ma vie de courgette

Switzerland, France 2016, 66 min.

Director Claude Barras

Written by Céline Sciamma,

based on the book "Autobiographie d'une courgette" by Gilles Paris

Camera David Toutevoix

Editor Valentin Potelli

Music Sophie Hunger

Puppets Gregory Beaussart

Animation Kim Keukeleire, Marcos Valin, Daniel Ramsay, Cesar Diaz Melendes, Marjolaine Parot, Brian Leif Hansen, Antony Elworthy, Juan Soto



Recommended from 8 years on

Awards (selection) among others ECFA Award Best Feature Film for Children 2017, European Animated Feature Film 2016 (EFA)

Genre screen adaptation, stop-motion animation with puppets, coming-of-age film

Summary

After the sudden death of his mother, 9-year-old Icare, whose nickname is Zucchini, is sent to a children's home. Under the care of the home's kind director and her staff, he is raised there with other children who, like him, have had to deal with difficult experiences in their lives. But the children learn to get along with one another, and Zucchini even "falls in love" with the brave Camille. And despite the intrigues contrived by Camille's aunt, a hopeful future lays ahead for everyone.

About the production / filmmakers

This puppet animation film is based on the award-winning young adult novel by the French author and journalist Gilles Paris. Whereas the novel is directed more at teenage readers, in Claude Barras' feature film début, he and scriptwriter Céline Sciamma have specifically set out to adapt the story for a younger audience. Sciamma is also a successful director (TOMBOY and other films) in her own right.

Subjects

Family, friendship, trauma, sense of belonging, solidarity, adoption

Triggers

All the children in the orphanage have been through traumatic experiences connected with their parents (deportation of a mother, drug addiction, alcoholism, psychological illness, murder, suicide and sexual abuse. Zucchini's mother dies after an accident that he himself partly caused. The fear of loss among orphaned children is referenced, as well as human reproduction and sexuality.

Website <http://www.zucchini-film.de/>

Essential topics

Childhood trauma

There are not many films made for children that deal with a wide range of traumatic childhood experiences in such a concentrated form without trivializing the subject or scaring off young viewers. Zucchini, the main character, has grown up without a father. At the children's home, he soon becomes aware that, in a moment of self-protection, he partly caused the sudden death of his alcoholic mother. Camille had to witness the violent death of her parents and is now being exploited by her aunt, who is only interested in receiving the child welfare payments. Simon's parents are drug dependent, and the mother of Béatrice, a child refugee, has been deported to Africa. Jujube's mother suffers a psychological illness, and Alice was sexually abused by her father. Ahmed's father is in prison because he robbed a petrol station, so he could buy his son a new pair of training shoes. All these traumatic experiences have left their mark on the children, although the film – which employs puppet animation rather than live action – avoids constantly focusing on these issues. Instead, the film is about something else, which the director aptly describes as follows:

"... this film is above all an homage to the neglected and mistreated children who have to make it through each day with their emotional and physical wounds. Zucchini, our young hero, has been through some hard times. After the death of his mother, he believes that he is all alone in the world. In the beginning, he doesn't imagine that he will meet people he can rely on in the children's home. But he also finds love there. After all, why shouldn't he be happy one day too? He has to learn a great deal about life and make his own way. That is the simple yet profound message that I would like to share with children. (...) I had this idea for an entertaining film, which would make viewers laugh and cry. It would be set in our society and show that you can be strong once you find the right friends."



Many details of the children's traumatic experiences are only hinted at in the film or are presented in a "new", optimistic context – and this is something that should also be focused on in the post-screening discussion if further explanation is required: During a trip in winter, the children are awestruck as they witness the tender affection shown by a mother comforting her child. Zucchini would like to see his mother's apartment once more, but this time in the company of Camille and Raymond. At the fairground, Camille, whose father kept a gun (the murder weapon) at home, wins the biggest soft toy at the shooting range. The very real horror of daily life with her aunt is contrasted with the fun and sheer pleasure she experiences in the staged horror of the ghost train.

It should also be mentioned that Simon, who has obviously watched his parents' porn films, gives the children a very crude "sex education lesson". And though such scenes, if anything, elicit embarrassed comments from a young audience, children from different cultural and religious backgrounds may take issue with the subject matter. However, it goes on to be seen in a positive context at the end of the film, when the children celebrate the arrival of their teacher's and carer's new baby.

Friendship and solidarity

Despite their differing experiences and cultural backgrounds, the children stick together and demonstrate how friendship can create a bridge between worlds. Yet it would be painting a far too rosy picture if Simon's character were not also portrayed as a troublemaker, a boy who assumes the role of a leader in order to cover up his own weaknesses. Consequently, he expects every new arrival to subordinate themselves to him. When Zucchini joins the group, he is not merely harassed by Simon – he is outright bullied. However, he later realizes that this method will not work on the newly-arrived Camille. Simon subsequently becomes friends with Zucchini when he realizes that he too had an unhappy life with his parents. Without Simon's help, Camille would ultimately stand little chance of asserting herself against her wicked aunt. In the end, Simon even manages to turn his attitude around: Instead of just seeing Zucchini's and Camille's adoption as a threat and confirmation of his rejection by his own parents, he recognizes in it an opportunity for himself and the other children. It represents hope of a future in which the remaining children in the home are not simply "forgotten".

Family values and role models

The film does not deem family values founded on the concept of parents and children trusting, helping and supporting each other to be set in stone. All the children long for a family, but reality is quite different for them. Many of their parents are, due to personal, social or societal reasons, simply not able to provide their children with a loving family home. Others, such as Camille's aunt, are only motivated by their own self-interests, or they are sick or violent. Even Raymond, who later adopts Zucchini and Camille, had no contact with his biological son for several years – although the film does not reveal exactly what transpired between them. Instead of pursuing an unattainable ideal, the film shows that there are other role models out there who are willing and able to look after the children. And such people do not necessarily have to be the adults in the home for children, who are often portrayed as unlikeable or even cruel and authoritarian in many films for children and teenagers. Indeed, the person might even be, like Raymond, a single, unmarried policeman who is granted sole custody of two children, despite the fact that this does not correspond to the existing adoption procedures in many countries.

Film literacy

Stop-motion technique

Just like a live-action film, animation films consist of 24 or 25 single frames per second, so that the eye perceives the individual images as a continuous, flowing motion. In contrast to hand-drawn animation, puppet animation does not use animated images or objects that are minimally moved on a surface, such as in cutout animation. The process used is known as the stop-motion technique. To ensure that the puppets' gestures appear as lifelike as possible, the face, in particular the eyes, must be altered slightly in every single shot. It is a very work-intensive technique. In the case of this one-hour film, the same amount of time was required for the actual film shoot as for the post-production computer processing and editing work that followed – and this was despite the team working on up to 15 true-to-scale sets at the same time. The 54 puppets, each around 25 cm high, that were needed for the film were all entirely handmade. In total, more than 100 people worked on the film for two years.



The form of the puppets

To ensure that the film and the puppets were created in a style suitable for children, and in this way to reduce any possible anxiety about the subjects dealt with in the story, simple forms were employed. Each of the characters is immediately recognizable by their individual traits, although this

does not inhibit their development or rule out a subsequent re-evaluation of them. In relation to their bodies, the puppets have oversized heads with large, round eyes: This corresponds to the typical baby schema, making them easier to identify with, while appealing to the nurturing and caring instincts of adults. It also makes even the most subtle changes in their facial expressions immediately apparent – including feelings such as joy, grief, anger, disappointment, fear, etc. Moreover, the film consistently avoids offering too much information at any one time. It is not necessary to show or describe every detail – sometimes a glance at the children's "emotion weatherboard", is enough to know how the respective characters are feeling at any given time.



Lighting

The lighting in the film deserves special attention: In addition to influencing the colours (warm and cold colours), it also contributes to the basic mood that the film seeks to convey to its audience. After the somewhat sinister introduction, which ends with the death of Zucchini's mother, the thunderstorm subsides and the sun emerges from behind the clouds. It now shines all day long, and even the classroom is flooded with light. After dark, there is at least one source of light that radiates confidence, takes away fears, and makes a happy ending seem likely.

Before screening

- Brief info about the production, director, the original book and the animation
- What is animation, and how does a stop-motion film with puppets work?
- What does the term patchwork family mean? Do you have know of any personally?
- Point out that although all the children have been through terrible experiences, there's a silver lining.
- If required, point out that the characters talk openly about sexuality (being culturally sensitive).

Basic talking points (after screening)

- Which characters were easiest to identify with?
- Is Zucchini responsible for the death of his mother?
- Why is he bullied by Simon when he first arrives at the orphanage?
- Does the orphanage match your own preconceptions about orphanages?
- Why is it (almost) only possible to tell a children's story like this using puppets?
- Aren't puppet films usually aimed at "little" children?
- Or is this film aimed at (younger and older) adults?
- In this context, how did this puppet film come across – and what "messages" does it convey?
- Which age group(s) does the film address in particular?
- Are there scenes that could nonetheless be considered problematic?
- Does the happy ending following the adoption seem consistent with the story or does it seem a bit artificial?
- Did the film succeed in conveying the difficult topics in the story?
- How (well) and with which (not only cinematic) means did it succeed in doing this?
- What does the film communicate about how we deal with the unknown?
- Does it open up new ways of looking at the relationship between children and adults?

Jury Booklet

Note for jury members

The following evaluation guidelines are intended as a personal guide to make it easier for you to remember what needs to be considered in your jury decision, and which aspects need to be taken into consideration when making such a decision.

You are completely free to choose whether to make use of these guidelines and fill out the text fields for your own reference, or if you want to take notes in a different way – or perhaps you prefer to just keep it all in your head. The main thing is that you are able to provide good arguments for your decision and that you stand by it.

This is just some space for your thoughts and ideas!

Questions:

In your opinion, what were the most important topics in the film?

How did the two main characters in the film come across to you?

In what way do the main characters develop in the course of the story?

Does the film tell a universal story that could be set anywhere in Europe? Or is it a story that is specific to the country or region in which it is set?

Does the landscape play a special role in the film? And if so, what role?

What (or which scene) did you find especially moving in the film?

Which things did you like less, or were for you hard to understand / illogical / implausible?

What cinematic aspect in particular caught your attention? (e.g. camera work, sound and music, editing, narrative style, animation techniques...)

For which target audience (age group) do you feel this film is best suited?

Why should this film be given the EFA Young Audience Award?

Additional notes:

Published by:
EFA PRODUCTIONS gGmbH
EUROPEAN FILM ACADEMY e.V.
Kurfürstendamm 225
10719 Berlin, Germany
www.europeanfilmawards.eu
Editor: Jürgen Biesinger

Photo rights: Studiocanal (Goodbye Berlin), Polyband (My Life as a Zucchini),
Ciné A.S. GmbH (The Girl Down Loch Änzi)
Compilation: Holger Twele, Germany
<http://www.holgertwele.de>

© EFA, May 2017