

EFA Young Audience Award 2020

Detailed information on the nominated films:

MY EXTRAORDINARY SUMMER WITH TESS

MIJN BIJZONDER RARE WEEK MET TESS



Foreword

This year it is particularly difficult to guess the winner from the three films nominated for the EFA Young Audience Award in advance. The films are of equal quality. As different as they may be in form and content, there are many similarities to be discovered.

All three feature films are debut films by young filmmakers. At least as far as the composition of the characters is concerned, they are based on successful literary models. They deal with the difficulties of growing up, including conflict and longing, as well as struggling with one's parents. The family, no matter its composition, is always a central focus of the stories. Animals play an important secondary role. Two of the films feature dinosaurs, but there are also a giant turtle and a squirrel. Arianna, Tess and Rocca are strong, confident girls, even if two of the three films are told from a boys' perspective. Above all, however, the films are always about very "special" children and young people and stand for the distinctiveness and uniqueness of each individual. And what is perhaps even more important is that they open up new perspectives and unusual views of our world and an optimistic vision of the future.

Everyone sees a film differently, and personal experience also plays a role. This affects all people, regardless of age, including professionals. Some may be unsure what to look out for when making an assessment, others may have already made a decision and even feel patronised by "educational" guidelines. The following guidelines do not claim to name all important aspects of a film in detail. They are only intended as a suggestion. You can, but you don't have to use them, and you certainly don't have to work through them systematically. The main thing is to find your own favourite and to be able to explain to others why you have made this particular choice.

Enjoy the films!



MY EXTRAORDINARY SUMMER WITH TESS

MIJN BIJZONDER RARE WEEK MET TESS

Netherlands, Germany 2019, 83 min.

Director: Steven Wouterlood

Performers: Sonny van Utteren, Josephine Arendsen, Julian Ras, Tjebbo Gerritsma, Suzan Boohaert, Johannes Kienast and others

Recommended from 8 years of age

Genre: family film, summer comedy, adventure film

Content

On the very first day of the family's holiday on the Dutch island of Terschellin, Sam's older brother breaks his leg - and Sam himself meets Tess, who is the same age. The girl behaves strangely, and she has a secret. She has found out that her father Hugo is alive and used a trick to invite him and his girlfriend for a week to the holiday home of her unsuspecting mother. Now, with Sam's help, she wants to secretly test whether Hugo is even suitable as a father. The week passes and Tess still doesn't know whether she should tell the truth.

About the production and the director

Steven Wouterlood was born in Utrecht in 1984 and made his feature film debut, which is based on a novel by Dutch writer Anna Woltz, with this film. Among other projects, he has previously directed an award-winning children's TV film and a TV series.

Topics

Friendship, family, identity, mortality, secrets, self-confidence and courage, loneliness and solitude, experiences and memories

Triggers

Especially children of separated or divorced parents may feel personally affected.

Questions about the film

Sam and Tess both seem a little strange at first. Does the film succeed in creating understanding for both of them and making their behaviour relatable?

(How) does the film manage to make such difficult topics as death, loneliness and the value of memories, which tend to appeal to an older generation, interesting for a young audience?

What did you take from the film personally, or for your everyday life?

Did you like that Tess is portrayed as more confident and active than Sam, and that Hugo's girlfriend, and not him, is behind the wheel of the car?

Does Sam end up overstepping his boundaries, or do you think his decision is absolutely right?

FILM-ANALYSIS:

Main topics

Where do I come from, and where am I going?

These are the existential questions that Sam and Tess, both ten years of age, deal with in this light summer and adventure comedy: Questions about their future and their origins and about the warmth and security of a family which is still missing or could soon be missing. Tess's mother has kept from her the fact that her father, with whom she spent a holiday in Argentina many years ago, has not died but is still alive and living in Berlin. With investigative skill, Tess finds his address and contacts Hugo about a fake contest in which he won the main prize, a week's stay in her unsuspecting mother's holiday home. Tess is dying to know what kind of person he is and why her mother has hardly given her any information about him except for one remaining holiday album. She secretly hopes that he likes children and will recognise her as his daughter.

Sam, on the other hand, has an intact family, even though his mother often suffers from migraines and his older brother patronises him. Interested in extinct dinosaurs, he sometimes wonders how the last of his kind might have fared. His brother then breaks his leg, and a poster in the doctor's waiting room points out that now is the time to "think of later". Suddenly Sam realises that as the youngest of his family, he will outlive all the others and end up all alone without his loved ones. How could he possibly stand that? To be on the safe side, he practises being alone in the middle of their vacation.



The value of memories

His daily training of being alone is anything but easy for Sam, especially since he just met Tess and has too little time for family activities anyway. Sam thinks that Tess is even stranger than he is, and that alone connects the two outsiders. But he doesn't understand why she has such a hard time finally telling her father the truth. Only through the encounter with old Hille, who lives all alone in a hut in the dunes as a jetsam collector and saves Sam's life, does Sam understand: being lonely and being alone are not the same thing. He is advised to collect many memories in his life, so that he can live off them later. Has Sam taken the wrong path with his training to overcome his fears of being alone? And what about Tess and her father? Do they already have shared, solid memories?

Boys and girls

Last but not least, the film is about the relationship between the sexes, which has changed dramatically in recent years. This is particularly evident in the friendship between Tess and Sam and is suggested through Sam's brother and especially Tess's single mother, who had not found it necessary to inform her daughter that her father is still alive. As a doctor's receptionist who considers self-pity to be a "typical male problem", she stands firmly on her own two feet. It never occurred to her that Tess might need a father. And although she notices that Sam and Tess are friends, she continues to pejoratively refer to him as a "mini tourist".



In the relationship between Tess and Sam, the girl clearly calls the shots. When he looks curiously over the garden fence at the beginning, she addresses him and asks him strange questions, which are less about his person than about her own intentions, in order to prepare herself as well as possible for the arrival of her father. Tess also doesn't apologise when she simply leaves Sam behind in the dunes and he has to walk the long way back to the village alone, because her mother believes that women apologise far too often and that this has to stop. During their shared bicycle tours, a somewhat shy looking Sam either sits on the luggage rack behind her, or she cycles ahead of him. This is a reversal of classic role patterns, which the film consciously seeks to question. Sam is both fascinated and made insecure by the self-confident girl. He even fears that Tess has no interest in him and might just want to "use" him for her own purposes. In the end, he defies her declared intentions in the firm belief that this is for her own good.

Filmic realisation (film language)

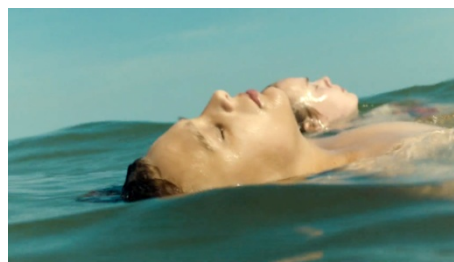
Low-angle and high-angle shots

As lively as Tess may be, Sam often seems rather contemplative when he withdraws into his world of thoughts. What makes the movie very thrilling, though, is its visual language, through which the feelings and thoughts of the two main characters are visualised and brought closer to us as an audience. Right at the beginning, the stylistic principle becomes apparent with two unusual camera angles into the sky, and from there, a high-angle shot back down on Sam. He frames a kite floating in the air with two fingers, which underlines the relativity of one's own perception and the assessment of distance. A counter-shot from the air shows Sam in the sand hole he has dug, which offers him shelter and peace from the surrounding outer world of the beach, while he reflects on the finiteness of all things - but it can also be seen as an open grave from which he crawls out willingly after being addressed by his father.



"Water" Feelings

On an island in the sea, surrounded by extensive sandy beaches and mud flats, water always has a meaning, even if only as a picturesque motif. In this film, and especially in two scenes, it is also used dramatically to illustrate danger and security, loneliness and harmonious togetherness. The mudflats are the perfect place for Sam to practice his solitude training. However, he realises too late that his life is in danger because of the approaching tide. Floating together with Tess in the gentle swell takes place with closed eyes without a visible counterpart, but it marks one of the most beautiful moments of the film, filled with harmony and light-heartedness.



Graphical shapes and symbols

Not only nature itself, but also graphical shapes are used dramaturgically. During his solitude training on the beach, Sam finds a weathered wooden construction that could offer some shade and protection from the sun. But the wood, whose original purpose can only be guessed at, has faded and does not allow for any living memories. The forked path from a high-angle shot, on the other hand, makes it clear that Sam and Tess's paths initially separate, only to perhaps reunite again behind the dune.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE FILMS BEFORE THE VOTE

The following questionnaire is intended as a guideline and a reminder in case you are unsure by which criteria to judge a film, and which aspects should be considered. However, it is entirely up to you whether you want to use this questionnaire or proceed in a completely different way in order to make a decision for the film of your choice. The main thing is that you can justify your decision and stand by it.

What do you think are the most important themes of the film?

What surprised you most about the film (characters, scenes, actions ...)?

Does the film succeed in breaking with common stereotypes and prejudices? Which ones in particular?

*Does the film tell a universal story that could also take place elsewhere?
Or is it a story that is inseparably linked to a specific country or region?*

*How realistic and authentic do the main characters of the film seem to you?
In other words: do you believe what they say, think, feel and do?*

How are the adults (not only the parents) represented in the film? Can they be role models, especially with regard to their behaviour towards their children?

Did you like the (special) humour of the film?

Was the film exciting, or were many of the events predictable for you?

What role did the landscape (nature or urban environment) play in the film?

Which scene of the film touched you most?

Were there also scenes that you found were less well done, that were inappropriate or illogical?

What stood out to you most about the filmic realisation (e.g. camera work, colour palette, lighting, music, special effects...)?

For which target and age group is the film best suited?

Why should this particular film receive the EFA Young Audience Award?

Further comments:

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