



WE SHALL OVERCOME

Years 7 – 10

FILM – A LANGUAGE WITHOUT BORDERS

A project of

VISION KINO
Netzwerk für Film und
Medienkompetenz

BFI Film
Forever

IFILM
DET DANSKE FILMINSTITUT

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Creative
Europe
MEDIA

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BACKGROUND OF THE PROGRAMME »FILM – A LANGUAGE WITHOUT BORDERS«

Film is a language without borders and connects people regardless of their origin, age, gender and life experience.

Migrant societies which have arisen as a result of political and social processes such as industrialisation, colonisation, mediatisation and globalisation, can use the power of film.

Based on this understanding, German non-profit organisation **VISION KINO**, together with the **BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE** and the **DANISH FILM INSTITUTE**, have developed this programme, consisting of eight European feature films for children and young adults, as well as three classic short films.

The selection of films is supplemented by educational materials which will provide students and teachers with opportunities to discuss emotions, identity and the common exploration of European film.

Supplementary didactic research in Denmark, England and Germany will examine the way in which the selected films offer children and young adults a collective movie experience as well as an opportunity for intercultural learning. Joint results from the three countries form the starting point for the dissemination of the programme in other European countries.

About us

“Film – A Language Without Borders” is a project of the British Film Institute, the Danish Film Institute and Vision Kino gGmbH and was developed by Mark Reid (BFI), Charlotte Giese (DFI) and Sarah Duve (Vision Kino gGmbH)



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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY GUIDE

These educational materials refer to the film WE SHALL OVERCOME from the programme "FILM - A LANGUAGE WITHOUT BORDERS". They are based on the publication "Materials for Film Education in Migration Societies" that contains information on the educational approach underlying the programme, as well as general teaching ideas and reflection offerings.

This particular study guide also provides suggestions for the reflection of your lessons. For your personal notes, boxes can be found at the end of each chapter.

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WE SHALL OVERCOME

FILM DETAILS



WE SHALL OVERCOME

ORIGINAL TITLE: DRØMMEN

DURATION: 109 MINS

DIRECTED BY: NIELS ARDEN OPLEV

WRITTEN BY: STEN BILLE & NIELS ARDEN OPLEV

Film Themes	Courage, Political Protest, Education System, Upbringing, Authorities, Music, Freedom, Justice
Teaching Subjects	Ethics, Religion, Philosophy, Social Studies, Politics, History, English
Countries / Year	Denmark, United Kingdom / 2005
Grade Levels	Years 7 to 10
Age Recommendation	11- to 14-year-olds
Cast	Janus Dissing Rathke, Jens Jørn Spottag, Anders W. Berthelsen a.o.
Production Company	Zentropa Entertainments
Distributor	Arsenal Filmverleih
Language	Danish, with English subtitles
Format	digital, colour
Rating	12

Awards: Crystal Bear for Best Feature in the Children's Section (Berlin International Film Festival 2006)

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SYNOPSIS

To mark the beginning of the new school year, as well as his 25th anniversary in his job, the headmaster of Frits' new school, gives a speech: "Welcome back after the summer holidays. I promise you, I will not rest on my laurels. Every new school year is a new fight. Every new day of school is a battle to be won."

The new starters do not yet know what he is referring to, but all of the other students, parents and colleagues know about the Headmaster's violent educational methods. Even Frits' mother, who works as a nurse at the school, is aware of it. But no one dares to stand in his way. 13-year-old Frits clashes with him on his very first day. When the new trainee teacher Freddie starts to teach Frits' class, the children experience how different school can be. Freddie listens to them, shows them how to look critically on political circumstances and historical misinterpretations and launches a rock band project.

On their new television set Frits and his family watch the protests of 1968 and witness the murder of Martin Luther King. Frits becomes increasingly pre-occupied with the American Civil Rights Movement and even starts calling himself Martin. He begins to criticise the inequalities in his own environment: Why should children accept to be mistreated by adults? Why is the father, who suffers from depression, always taken to a mental hospital instead of convalescing at home with his family?

After a prank gone wrong, the Headmaster mistreats Frits so badly that he tears off a part of his ear. The conflict between them goes public and people have to take sides. After a long fight for justice, in which Frits' parents support him courageously and his mother loses her job at the school, the Headmaster has to face a disciplinary inquiry. But in a sudden turn of events the Headmaster denies everything and accuses Frits' father of having mistreated his son. His power is too great: no one dares to contradict him, not even Freddie, who is under great pressure. After all, he must pass his probationary period as a trainee. In the end, it is the students themselves who, with a strike in the classroom, demand justice for Frits.

Recurrent scenes of violence in the film are shown very explicitly. Additionally, the father's illness and the lack of support from other students and adults can create a depressing feeling. The courageous Frits and the loving support of his parents keeps us optimistic. Nevertheless, the film should be discussed immediately after the screening in order to give the students the opportunity to discuss the film and to discuss their own experiences if necessary.

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BEFORE THE FILM

EXPECTATIONS OF THE FILM

The title WE SHALL OVERCOME leaves a lot of room for personal thoughts and expectations of the film.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

Discussing the Film Title

The students are presented with the film title.

- What do you think of the title?
- What could this film be about?
- What would your own film called WE SHALL OVERCOME be about?

TOPIC CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

WE SHALL OVERCOME is set in Denmark in 1969. A 13-year-old boy named Frits, inspired by his new teacher, becomes occupied with the American Civil Rights Movement. Even without any historical background information the film can be understood. However, if you take the film as a starting point to take a closer look at the topic of Civil Rights Movement, it is a good idea to introduce the topic before the film. These materials will later refer to certain aspects of movement.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

Discussion explaining the Civil Rights Movement (for older students)

The topic of Civil Rights Movement could be introduced in a discussion that explores the students' level of knowledge and explains terminology.

- What examples of human rights or civil rights can you think of?
- Who has heard of Martin Luther King before?
- What is a movement?
- Do you know of any other movements where citizens fought for or against something?

Research Assignment

- Who was Martin Luther King?
- What were the three main goals of the civil rights movement?

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SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- What prior knowledge of political protest movements do the students have?
- How did the students attain their prior knowledge of political protest movements?
- What expectations do students have of the film?
- What do students find interesting about the historical events of the Civil Rights Movement?



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AFTER THE FILM

DISCUSSING THE EXPERIENCE

After the film, ask the class to express their first reactions and then open up the room for questions. WE SHALL OVERCOME tells the story of Frits, who, encouraged by the spirit of 1968, stands up to his violent Headmaster to demand justice and an education free from fear.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

The following teaching suggestions can either be combined with each other or implemented individually.

Non-verbal discussion

The children draw an emoticon to say how they liked the movie. Then they draw the film's most important scene for them.

One by one, the following adjectives are read to the children: boring, beautiful, fast, slow, loud, quiet, funny, adventurous, scary, surprising. Where the adjective matches their movie experience, they stand up. Afterwards, they sit down again.

Film Discussion

- What would you like to say about the film?
- At the cinema, how did you feel after the film?
- What feelings did you have during the film?
- Are there any scenes or themes in the movie that you would like to talk about?
- What questions remained unanswered in the film? Is there something you did not understand?

Options for Counselling and Support

Frits is burdened with serious problems. He receives support from his parents, but his father, weighed down by his illness, cannot always help him. Perhaps some of the feelings that Frits has in the film reminds the students of their own experiences or experiences of friends (violence, illness, loneliness, powerlessness, being an outsider ...).

Students should be given room for such memories and thoughts. It is not necessary for the students to talk about it, but there should be mention of what students could do and where they could get help if they or others are being attacked or threatened with physical and psychological violence or are burdened with illness. Maybe the students already know where counselling is offered. An open conversation can establish their knowledge. Provide the children with opportunities (helplines, counselling centres, guidance counsellors, class teachers...), how they can get help and support, taking into account offers for students whose first language is not English.

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- Who can I talk to if I or any of my friends experience violence?
- Why does Frits' father collapse and is admitted to hospital?

Acting Out Key Scenes

In small groups of about 4 students a key scene from the film is reenacted. The scene is selected by the group, rehearsed and then presented to the group. Together, the scenes are matched with the story:

- Is the scene from the beginning, the middle or the end of the movie?
- Find a caption for the scene that describes what it is mainly about.
- What made you choose this particular scene?

Make Your Own Film Poster

After the students have watched the film, they create their own film poster (drawing, cuttings, photographs, ...). The film posters are then exhibited in the classroom and looked at together.

Further Questions for Discussion

Prior to the end credits it is revealed that the film is based on true events.

- How did your view of the film change when you found out that it is based on true events?
- In your opinion, what elements of the film happened in real life?

Every film has one or more messages.

- What do you think the filmmaker is trying to tell us with this film?
- Did anything in the film impress you? What did you learn from it?

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SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Did the students like the film?
- Which themes in the film did the students find most interesting?
- Which scenes did the students remember particularly well?
- Do the students know about violence as a disciplinary measure through others or from own experience?



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RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FILM

Frits stands up to the Headmaster and is very courageous. His parents and grandparents support his protest. However, he also faces rejection and mistrust from fellow classmates and teachers.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

Characterise Frits

Together, students look for characteristics that describe Frits. Each student gives an example of a scene from the film where this character trait is particularly apparent.

Group Worksheets Location Scenes

In the film one location is brought up repeatedly. During different turning points in the film Frits retreats to his favourite spot on the river.

A comparison of the location scenes can help to retrace the story's development and to discuss the relationships between Frits and the other characters in the film.

In small groups of 4-5, the students work on "Group Worksheet I: Location Scene (Father)", "Group Worksheet II: Location Scene (Iben)" and "Group Worksheet III: Location Scene (The Best Friend)."

Afterwards, the following questions are discussed together:

- When does Frits retreat to his favourite place on the river?
- Why does he take these people to his favorite spot?
- In which situations are these people helpful and in which situations are they not helpful?

Discussion about the Film Character Freddie



This picture of Freddie can help students to remember his role in the film.

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- What does Frits like about the trainee teacher Freddie?
- Why does Freddie support Frits' and his family's fight against the violent Headmaster?
- At the end of the film, while bidding his farewell to Frits, Freddie says: "You've had the courage I've never had". What does he mean by that?
- What should a teacher be like? Collect attributes a good teacher should have.

Moral Questions in the Film

Together, students are viewing the following film stills:



Picture (1)

- What happens in this scene?
- What do the children look like? What are their facial expressions?
- What facial expression does Frits have?



Picture (2)

- What happens in this scene?
- Why are the children jubilant?
- Do you think it's acceptable to be jubilant when someone has died?
- How does Frits deal with the Headmaster's death? How would you judge it?

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SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- What differing moral thoughts does the class have?
- What characters in the film were liked by the students?



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CINEMATIC TIME TRAVEL

The film can be seen as a trip back in time to the political and societal events of 1968. Some historical sources, like for instance the news items on television, or the speeches of Martin Luther King on vinyl, are provided by the film itself, others can be researched in addition.

IDEAS FOR TEACHING

Discussion: Film as Time Travel

- How did you realise that the film was set in the past?
- What did they not have then that we have today?
- What did they have then that we no longer have today?
- What did you notice about the characters' clothing and hairstyles?

Film Title, Visions and Dreams (for younger Students)

The film's original Danish title is THE DREAM ("Drømmen"). This relates to Martin Luther King's speech at the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom", in which he talks of equality and abolishing racism and racial segregation. Frits is highly moved by Martin Luther King's speech and feels empowered to stand up against injustice in his own environment.

Students write their own pamphlet titled "I Have a Dream" in which they think of which changes are currently needed to make this world more worthwhile and equal.

Worksheets Film Title and Analysis of Historical Sources (for older students)

The film's original Danish title is THE DREAM ("Drømmen"). This relates to Martin Luther King's speech at the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom", in which he talks of equality and abolishing racism and racial segregation. Frits is highly moved by Martin Luther King's speech and feels empowered to stand up against injustice in his own environment.

The English title "We Shall Overcome" is based on the protest song that was an important means of expression for the Civil Rights Movement. Teacher Freddie rehearsed the song with Frits' class for a show at the school fair.

The students look at one of the two texts that are printed on Worksheet I and Worksheet II. The worksheets include questions that will serve to aid the comprehension, analysis and interpretation of the texts. Afterwards, the texts will be presented to everyone.

Based on personal preferences, the song "We Shall Overcome" can be introduced to the class. Students might be able to think of other protest songs that they can present to the class.

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Interviewing Contemporary Witnesses

Within their personal environments, students search for contemporary witnesses of 1968 (family, neighbours, friends of their parents). It will be especially interesting if these persons have lived in different parts of the world during this time.

With the help of guidance questions students conduct an interview with the chosen person and keep an interview log. The interview could be recorded with a smartphone, for example.

Interview Guidance Questions

- What did you not have in the 1960s and 1970s that you have today?
- How did you imagine the future of today in the 1960s and 1970s?
- How would you describe the time around 1968?

Afterwards, students choose three quotes from their interviews that serve best to summarise the conversation and present them to the others.

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SUGGESTED REFLECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Did travelling back in the political and historical time of 1968 make the students more or less excited about the film? What could be the reason?
- What questions and thoughts that Frits is occupied with are still relevant for 13-year-olds today?

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GROUP WORKSHEET I
FILM SCENE (FATHER)




	
Who can be seen in the picture?	
Where are they?	
What do they do?	
What has Frits experienced immediately beforehand?	
What is Frits thinking in this scene?	
What is Frits feeling in this scene?	

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GROUP WORKSHEET II


FILM SCENE (IBEN)

	
Who can be seen in the picture?	
Where are they?	
What do they do?	
What has Frits experienced immediately beforehand?	
What is Frits thinking in this scene?	
What is Frits feeling in this scene?	

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GROUP WORKSHEET III

FILM SCENE (THE BEST FRIEND)

	
Who can be seen in the picture?	
Where are they?	
What do they do?	
What has Frits experienced immediately beforehand?	
What is Frits thinking in this scene?	
What is Frits feeling in this scene?	

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WORKSHEET I

“I HAVE A DREAM”

EXTRACT FROM MARTIN LUTHER KING'S SPEECH AT THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR JOBS AND FREEDOM, 1963

"I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character".¹

Questions for Background Research and Interpretation of Text

- What was the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom"? Who was marching?
- Who was Martin Luther King?
- What is the American Dream?
- How can Martin Luther King's wishes and demands be summarised?
- Did Martin Luther King's dream come true or did it not? Provide examples for your opinion.
- What does Frits find fascinating about the text? What is his dream?

¹ This is an excerpt from the entire speech by Martin Luther King, which can be found on the internet pages of the "US Embassies and Consulates". Link: <https://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/soc/traum.htm> (9.2.2018)

DER TRAUM

WORKSHEET II

“WE SHALL OVERCOME”

EXTRACT FROM THE VERSION BY PETE SEEGER

We shall overcome, (...)
We shall overcome,
We shall overcome, some day.

Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

We'll walk hand in hand,
We'll walk hand in hand,
We'll walk hand in hand, some day.

(...)

We shall live in peace,
We shall live in peace,
We shall live in peace, some day.

We are not afraid,
We are not afraid,
We are not afraid, today

(...)

The whole wide world around
The whole wide world around
The whole wide world around some day

Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

Questions for Background Research and Interpretation of the Text

- What is the history of the song? Which bands and singers have previously interpreted it?
- What are the lyrics about? What is the message?
- Why do the lyrics match the film's storyline so well? What is Frits trying to overcome?
- Which parts of the lyrics are particularly well-suited to the film's subject matter?