LESSON PLANS BASED ON MOVIES & FILM!

Search TWM | What's New | My Account

LEARNING GUIDE TO:

THE SANDLOT

SUBJECTS — Sports/Baseball
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING — Friendship; Leadership;
MORAL-ETHICAL EMPHASIS — Caring;

Age: 10+; MPAA Rating, PG; Comedy, Drama; 1993; 101 Minutes; Color;

Note to teachers: This Learning Guide is designed to provide ELA discussion questions and assignments for middle school or junior high. The Sandlot appears on the surface to be a lightweight comedy, but the film provokes an empathic reaction in virtually all viewers and can be of use in addressing the values and feelings young people experience during times of change in their lives. As such, it will lead students to put their best into assignments requiring them to exercise the skills required by The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts for Writing and for Speaking and Listening.

Description: A not very athletic boy nicknamed "Smalls" moves into a new neighborhood and seeks to find friends. The Sandlot opens to a summer of baseball, friendship, and growing up as the best player on the local team, Benny, takes Smalls into his circle. The team shares adventures dealing with a ferocious ball-eating dog behind the homerun fence. The story shows how relationships develop, including the relationship between Smalls and his stepfather.

Benefits of the Movie: Children of virtually all ages identify with the difficulties addressed in the film and learn valuable lessons about how to treat newcomers, how to adjust to change, and the power of friendship. Therefore, they will be interested in writing and other assignments relating to the movie.

Possible Problems: None.

Parenting Points: It is best not to interfere with the flow of the film as your child watches, but you may want to comment on the problems associated with chewing tobacco or provide information about Babe "The Bambino" Ruth. Ask and help your child to answer the Quick Discussion Question.

Selected Awards, Cast and Director:

Selected Awards: 1994 Young Artist Award: Outstanding Youth Ensemble in a Motion Picture

QUICK DISCUSSION QUESTION: What did you learn from this movie that you can use in your own life.

Suggested Response: There are several lessons from this film. Describing any one...
Featured Actors: Tom Guiry, Mike Vitar, Denis Leary, James Earl Jones.

Director: David Mickey Evans.

Helpful Background:

George Herman Ruth, known universally as Babe Ruth, remains an iconic sports figure more than 75 years after he retired from the New York Yankees. Ruth was a major factor in popularizing major league baseball. His charismatic personality, coupled with his ability to hit home runs, changed baseball forever. In 1927 he hit 60 home runs, a record that remained unbroken until 1961. Ruth was also called "the Bambino" but the nickname Babe stayed with him long after he retired. Babe Ruth died of cancer in 1948. In the minds of sports fans, not just fans of baseball, Ruth ranks with Muhammad Ali and Michael Jordan as all-time greats in their games.

In Greek and Roman mythology, Hercules (Herakles in the Greek) was the son of Zeus and the most beautiful and accomplished of all mortal women. He was a great warrior, possessing superior strength and skill. His enemy was Hera, the wife of Zeus, who was angry at Zeus for his infidelity. Hera sent Hercules into a blind frenzy in which he killed his wife and his children. Upon regaining his sanity, Hercules went to the oracle at Delphi for advice. He was told that to atone for his sins, he had to serve the king of Mycenae and perform twelve tasks, known as the twelve Labors of Hercules.

Suggestions for Teachers: Introduce the figure of Babe Ruth by having students who know about him describe his career for the class. Make sure that the information in the Helpful Background section is included in the discussion.

Play the film without interruption as time allows. At the end of the film ask the following discussion questions and have the students respond to scenes in writing. Prompts follow the discussion questions.

Discussion Questions:

1. See Discussion Questions for Use With any Film that is a Work of Fiction.

2. Smalls' mother pushes him to find friends out of doors, even though he is not especially interested in sports. What kind of pressure does this put on Smalls and what is revealed in his character by his efforts to meet new friends on the baseball field? Suggested Response: Smalls does not want to disappoint his mother and even though he knows he will be embarrassed on the baseball diamond, he pushes himself forward. This shows respect for his mother, resilience, and the ability to take the kinds of insults the boys hurl at him.

3. How is baseball tied into Small's efforts to establish a relationship with his stepfather? Suggested Response: Small's mother encouraged her son and his new father to practice throwing and catching together, but there was clearly no enthusiasm in this relationship. Small's step-father owned a prized baseball that had been signed...
by Babe Ruth and everything grew complicated when Smalls used the prized baseball during a game.

4. What seems to motivate Benny in his efforts to include Small's in the games?
   Suggested Response: Benny simply likes Smalls — and he can always use an outfielder for the ball games, which are a vehicle for Benny to practice his skills. With Smalls, the team will have nine players. Benny behaves with respect and fairness toward every boy on the team. He shows patience and generosity. Benny is one of those rare persons whose maturity easily translates into leadership.

5. The imaginative and creative side of young boys can be seen in three episodes in the film. What is imaginative and creative in the scene involving the swimming pool, the sleepover, and the efforts to get the ball from the dog known as "The Beast."
   Suggested Response: In the swimming pool scene, one boy fakes drowning in order to get attention from the beautiful lifeguard. At the sleepover the tall tale of the Beast is recited and the story serves to hold the boys together. There are several attempts to retrieve the baseball, involving contraptions made from scraps of tin, vacuum cleaners, and devices using ropes to lower one of the boys into the yard.

6. What ironies can be found in the way the film ends? Suggested Response: The boys learn that the Beast is not a mean dog after all and that his owner, Mr. Mertle, used to play baseball in the Negro Leagues and had been a friend of Babe Ruth. Although Mr. Mertle was blinded by a stray pitch back when he played, he is able to see into the problems Smalls faces with his step-father. He offers the solution to the problem by giving Smalls his "Murderer's Row" ball, signed by the best Yankee players in the team's prime. In exchange, the boys will visit with the old man and talk baseball. At the end of the film, Benny is a star baseball player and although Smalls never became a good player, he learned enough in his days in the sandlot to establish a fine career as a sports broadcaster.

Social-Emotional Learning Discussion Questions:

FRIENDSHIP

See Discussion Questions #s 2 and 6.

LEADERSHIP

See Discussion Questions #s 4 and 6.

Moral-Ethical Emphasis Discussion Questions (Character Counts)

Discussion Questions Relating to Ethical Issues will facilitate the use of this film to teach ethical principles and critical viewing. Additional questions are set out below.

CARING

(Be kind; Be compassionate and show you care; Express gratitude; Forgive others; Help people in need)

See Discussion Questions #s 4 and 6.

Links to the Internet: The Life and Times of Hercules.

Assignments, Projects and Activities: 

Teachwithmovies.com is a Character Counts "Six Pillars Partner" and uses The Six Pillars of Character to organize ethical principles.

Character Counts and the Six Pillars of Character are marks of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics.
The Sandlot - Writing Assignments for ELA Instruction

1. See Assignments, Projects, and Activities for Use With any Film that is a Work of Fiction.

2. Look up information about Babe Ruth and make a presentation to the class that includes some of the changes in baseball statistics and teams since the days when The Bambino charmed the public with his ability to hit home runs.

The following prompts can lead students to write a narrative of their own experiences. Adapt exercises from TWM's Narrative Writing Lesson Plan.

3. Write about a time when you pushed yourself to try something new, as did Smalls when he went to the Sandlot. Be sure to include what you learned from the experience.

4. Write about a friend you have known that behaved toward you as Benny behaved toward Smalls or about an experience when you played the role of Benny to someone else's Smalls. How did this friend help you adjust to something new? What kinds of fun activities did you enjoy together? What has happened to your friendship?

5. Write about which sport or physical activity such as football, basketball, baseball, or dance brings out the best in you. Describe your role in the sport.

6. Try to remember a time when you and friends or siblings got creative and made up stories or games or built something special. Be sure to use details so that your reader will be able to see and feel what is going on in your story.

Published July 15, 2011.

Spread the GOOD NEWS about TEACHWITHMOVIES.COM!

Recommend this site to a friend!