

Discovering **South Africa**  
through Journeys in Film  
Educating for Global Understanding [www.journeysinfilm.org](http://www.journeysinfilm.org)



*Beat the Drum*  
An Interdisciplinary Guide for Teachers



# What people are saying about *Journeys in Film*:

“*Journeys in Film* has the potential for revolutionizing the way middle school children see the world. By introducing them to different cultures, religions, and civilizations through easily accessible media, this project will make it natural for these students to be more accepting of differences throughout their lives. It promises to have a positive effect on students who are likely to confront an increasingly diverse America and an increasingly global world economy. Attitudes toward tolerance once formed at an early age tend to remain fixed. College, even for those who attend it, is often too late to influence deeply seated attitudes. This program is not propagandistic. It has no specific political agenda in mind. Its goal is simply to open minds at an early age so that students can decide important life issues for themselves based on a fuller perspective and more global information. This is one of the most important educational initiatives I have ever encountered.”

**ALAN DERSHOWITZ**, Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, best-selling author, and a distinguished defender of civil liberties

“These are the first foreign language films many of the students in our classes had ever seen. The themes, cultural content, social-political context, and pacing are totally unlike the media they are very familiar with. We are all looking forward to more *Journeys in Film*!”

**6th-Grade Teacher**, New York, NY

“*Journeys in Film* offers a unique opportunity for our students to immerse themselves in another culture with a meaningful context supplied by the supporting curriculum. Currently implemented in a number of our schools, *Journeys in Film* teaches about both culture and the interpretation of culture. The students are guided to approach the films as an academic challenge. They take notes and tackle the symbolism, characterization, and the narrative. At the same time, the students are introduced to film as a literary medium and begin to explore the role of the film producer and the choices he or she makes.”

**ARNE DUNCAN**, Chief Executive Officer, Chicago Public Schools

“In today’s ever-changing, ever-surprising global economy, everything flows so easily across borders—ideas, capital, products, people, and even problems. This brings international issues to Americans’ doorsteps and makes cultural understanding a necessity for young people, just to navigate their neighborhoods, let alone compete for the jobs of the future. “Knowledge work” is growing in importance, and there are millions of increasingly well-educated English-speaking graduates from other countries—India, China, Europe—seeking the best jobs anywhere. Schools must rise to the challenge of improving basic skills while enlarging horizons, broadening perspectives, and teaching about the whole world. *Journeys in Film* provides the means to explore other cultures virtually, to gain the knowledge and skills for effective relationship-building, at home or abroad.”

**ROSABETH MOSS KANTER**, Arbuckle Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School, and best-selling author.

“This is a long overdue tool! It is necessary to educate our children about their own culture as well as that of others. The message of *Journeys in Film* is *the* message that American schools need to teach.”

**Educator-Workshop Participant, Tulsa, OK**

“We are extremely pleased with the films used in the *Journeys in Film* program and the cultural sensitivity development explicit in the curriculum.”

**7th-Grade Social Studies Teacher, Albuquerque, NM**

“The students are quite interested in learning about other students in their exact age group from around the world. This is truly an international learning experience.”

**7th-Grade Social Studies Teacher, Chicago, IL**

“After four years of surviving the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime, I was plucked out of that war zone and placed in Vermont to start my new life. I was 10 years old, didn’t speak a word of English, and knew nothing about America. Although I was excited to learn as much as I could about my new country, this cultural exchange was rarely mutual among my new friends and neighbors. But I am grateful that there were people and groups out there who went out of their way to find me, reach out to me, and extend a helping hand. In doing so, they taught me to replace fear with friendship, hate with love, and ignorance with understanding. *Journeys in Film* is that helping hand for many young Americans today. Using international films, they bring the global world to local arenas and reach out to war-affected children living in our midst, letting them know they are not alone. With their thought-provoking educational materials, *Journeys in Film* opens up hearts and minds of those who have been cloistered in their sheltered environments, and shows them the importance of learning about our global world. But *Journeys in Film* is more than an educational tool; it is a process that fosters compassion, kindness, and knowledge so that we all may live together in peace.”

**LOUNG UNG**, Spokesperson for The Cambodia Fund, best-selling author of *First They Killed My Father*, and *Lucky Child*

“I think the *Journeys in Film* program is wonderful! I feel confident that I can present these goals and ideas to colleagues, and they will be welcomed and accepted.”

**Educator-Workshop Participant, Tulsa, OK**

“It is a fascinating and valuable program that is opening up the eyes of our students to different cultures and different ways of life.”

**6th-Grade Teacher, Chicago, IL**

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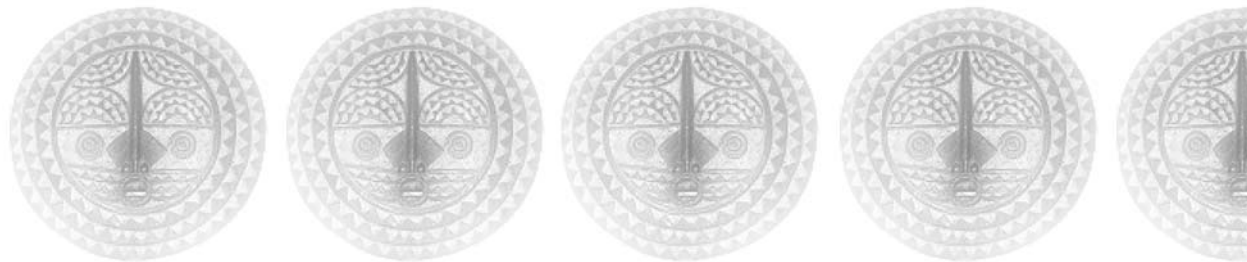
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The curriculum for *Beat the Drum* has been funded in full through a grant from *The Fledgling Fund*. Through its Creative Media Initiative, *The Fledgling Fund* supports film, photography, and Web-based and printed media projects that have the power to stimulate social change. *The Fledgling Fund* is pleased to support this project, which not only bears witness to the impact of HIV/AIDS on the children of South Africa, but also is an important tool in promoting cross-cultural understanding and awareness. More information about *The Fledgling Fund* can be found at [www.thefledglingfund.org](http://www.thefledglingfund.org).



# Prologue

In January of 2002, while attending the Palm Springs International Film Festival, I experienced an epiphany. After spending the week completely immersed in other cultures through film, I felt that I had traveled the world. Each film, itself a complete cultural learning package, presented a character or two who captivated my interest and evoked intense empathy. The films invited Hungarian orphans, tired Afghani workers struggling in Iran, sweet children living in Tehran, spunky Tokyo teenagers, savvy young Tibetan monks living in exile in India, a young boy in China, and a group of coming-of-age French teenagers as welcome guests into my heart. Their stories opened my mind, and I realized how little information or insight most young Americans have about people from other nations. I imagined how students would benefit from seeing these movies, especially while learning the history, geography, and culture of the country from which each film emerges.

Children seldom need to be coaxed into watching films, particularly if the story is good. Young students are visually attuned to cinematic images and enthusiastically respond to stories that expand an awareness of their world and teach them about cultures different from their own. With this in mind, I decided to establish *Journeys in Film* and began to search for dynamic foreign films and the expert educators and specialists who could design a substantial, comprehensive international education curriculum around them.

As a first generation American, I was always aware of the differences and similarities between myself and other kids in my neighborhood. My parents, both Holocaust survivors, brought to the United States their Eastern European traditions and values, and I grew up crossing cultures daily. To understand my parents and their personal stories better, I read voraciously and visualized

the land, the people, and the culture my parents came from. Eventually, films became an important source of my understanding about the vast diversity in our world. It was exciting for me to discover the world beyond my provincial hometown. I could reach out in my imagination and connect to countries so far beyond my own mental and physical boundaries, inspired by people so unlike me.

I believe students will experience this sense of living in another world, however temporarily, when offered the opportunity to study films and cultures of other children living in societies beyond their own neighborhoods. My hope is that the impressions and lessons from the films selected by *Journeys in Film* will continue to echo in their hearts and minds for years to come, inspiring today's students to become cross-culturally competent, productive, and compassionate adults.

I dedicate *Journeys in Film* to my brave parents, Maurice and Julia Strahl. They taught me that education is the greatest tool we have toward understanding and accepting people of all cultures and traditions so that no one should ever be persecuted for being different.

Sincerely,



**Joanne Strahl Ashe**  
Founder & Executive Director  
*Journeys in Film*



## A Letter From Liam Neeson

The experience of playing Oscar Schindler in Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* deepened my perception not only of the Holocaust, but of the importance of understanding the issues of intolerance and hatred. Being in the public eye has afforded me many opportunities to become involved with various organizations dedicated to teaching tolerance.

Occasionally something comes along that captures my attention and that speaks to my innermost values as a human being. In 2002, I met Joanne Strahl Ashe, who acquainted me with a new educational concept involving film. I was so impressed with the program, *Journeys in Film—Educating for Global Understanding*, that I eagerly consented to serve as its national spokesperson.

*Journeys in Film* is a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching cross-cultural understanding and media literacy to middle school students through quality foreign film, using the disciplines of social studies, geography, math, science, language arts, and fine arts.

*Journeys* chooses films that speak to adolescent students and impart a relevant message. Through the shared experience of film viewing, an increased awareness and appreciation of different cultures can be achieved, and from this new understanding and familiarity, compassion among school-aged children for their peers in other cultures may be born. That, I believe, is a worthy objective.

Through this educational initiative, we are encouraging a new generation of documentary, independent, and world cinema lovers. As most of us can remember, we identified with certain films we saw as children. Film had a definite effect during our formative years. Most teenagers today will have similar experiences. *Journeys* can help make those experiences better and the effects more positive by providing quality films and dedicated educational material.

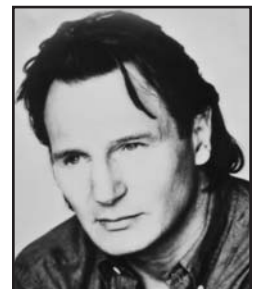
If we are committed to the dream of world peace, we must first educate our children and teach them understanding and compassion for other people, races, and cultures. I can't help but consider how wonderful it would be, if through our efforts at *Journeys*, we help change attitudes about people who are different from us.

I want to help make teaching through films an institution in our children's education. Please share my vision of a more harmonious world where understanding and dialogue are key to a healthy and peaceful present and future.

Sincerely,



National Spokesperson  
*Journeys in Film*



# National Advisory Board

The *Journeys in Film* curriculum project is the work of many hands, minds, and hearts. We are very grateful to the members of our National Advisory Board, who volunteer their efforts on our behalf.



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## Introducing *Beat the Drum*

*Beat the Drum* is a contemporary South African film about the devastation of HIV/AIDS. It follows a young boy, Musa, who is orphaned after his parents die of the disease. In order to help his grandmother, he leaves his village in KwaZulu-Natal to find his uncle. As Musa makes the journey from his remote village to the urban landscape of Johannesburg, the film follows his emotional quest for survival, understanding, and community.

In less than two hours, *Beat the Drum* illustrates many realities of HIV/AIDS in South Africa: orphans, tribal elders in denial, the exploitation of children, prostitutes working along trucking routes, and adults in every community who don't want to talk about HIV/AIDS or any issues of a sexual nature.

Based on his own experiences in South Africa, writer W. David McBrayer has managed to put a face on an AIDS orphan, one who could be the boy next door. McBrayer and the other producers worked hard to portray South Africa accurately, from the animal sacrifice and the beautiful landscape of the villages, to the street gangs, *muthi* markets, and healthcare workers of Johannesburg. They used locals for extras and insisted on South African actors. When it came to a director, they also wanted a South African, and they were so particular about their star that they almost didn't make the movie.

After the filmmakers had looked unsuccessfully all over South Africa for a young actor to play Musa, one of the writer's associates brought in an acquaintance, Junior Singo. Even though he had never acted in a film, he was cast in the leading role. This was also the first feature film for director David Hickson, who has now gained worldwide recognition. A native of South Africa,

Hickson had worked for a few years in London as an architect, but then he returned home and studied filmmaking with the hope of bringing attention to the problems of his country.

“Well, there are innumerable myths that surround HIV and AIDS in the whole of Africa,” said Hickson in a CNN interview in 2004, “and it's the result of the clash of many cultures coming together, which all have different ideas, and different theories, and different beliefs. And each culture carries its own set of myths.” One particularly destructive myth is that a person can be cured of HIV/AIDS if he has sex with a virgin; this belief has led to the abuse and rape of many young girls—and of course, ironically, has caused the further spread of the disease. Hickson expressed the hope “that a film like *Beat the Drum* will be able to get behind the myths and, through the emotions, touch people to reevaluate the myths and the things that they believe within their culture.”

Not only did the movie pick up 27 international awards, but it has also become the vehicle for educational outreach programs on AIDS awareness and prevention in several African countries. Since 2004, the organization Heart for Africa has engaged in “*Beat the Drum* Outreach.” They send teams of volunteers, largely American university students, into high schools to educate the students about HIV/AIDS and to encourage them to commit to abstinence until marriage. They begin the week showing the movie, and continue through the week with lessons based on the movie.

For example, in Swaziland in 2004, teams visited every high school in the country. An important part of the *Beat the Drum* curriculum teaches students that silence

will not help them deal with their situation. The project's goal is to teach the students positive values that will result in good decision-making. Many stories of rape and abuse were shared with team members. The students learned that they are not alone, and they were encouraged to speak out about sexual abuse so that the perpetrators did not get more opportunities to exploit others. At the end of the campaign, more than 10,000 high school students attended a rally at the national stadium, which included a speech and performance by Junior Singo.

In the 2004 CNN interview, Singo said, much like his character in the film, "I have to tell them the truth. I mean, AIDS is out there, so I just have to tell it the way it is. It hurts me inside. But we can still stop it, we can still stop it. We can work together and stop this." And that is precisely the message communicated by this evocative and uplifting film.



**COUNTRY:** South Africa, 2002

**RUNNING LENGTH:** 113 minutes

**DIRECTOR:** David Hickson

**PRODUCERS:** W. David McBrayer, Karen Shapiro, Richard Shaw

**SCREENPLAY:** W. David McBrayer

**CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Lance Gewer

**AWARDS:** *Beat the Drum* has won 27 international awards at film festivals in the United States, Canada, Africa, Switzerland, Spain, Germany, and Monaco. These have included Best Feature, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actor, Best Director, Best Cinematography, Best Music, and Best Film Editing.

# To the Teacher...

## What is *Journeys in Film*?

*Journeys in Film*, a New Mexico-based nonprofit charitable organization, is changing the way secondary school students are experiencing the world. The mission of *Journeys in Film* is to expose youth to other cultures while expanding basic skills in reading, writing, math, science, and social sciences. By bringing stories from around the world into the classroom through foreign-language feature films, we seek to inspire curiosity about the world, better preparing students for living and working in a global economy.

The *Journeys in Film* model strengthens existing school curricular frameworks by combining artful examples of a popular entertainment form with rigorous standards-based lesson plans for core academic subjects. Through the use of engaging foreign-language feature films, *Journeys in Film* impacts today's media-centric youth and creates a dynamic learning opportunity in global education. The universal messages in the films, combined with dedicated curriculum guides, enable students to transcend national, economic, ethnic, cultural, and religious distinctions that often separate people from their fellow citizens. Moreover, foreign-language films have the ability to transport students mentally to locations and remote regions that they may never otherwise have the opportunity to experience.

The selection of the foreign-language films is based on age and content appropriateness of the subject matter, as well as captivating storytelling. Prominent educators, filmmakers, and cultural and area specialists are consulted in the production of the curriculum guides, each of which is dedicated to an in-depth exploration of the culture as well as the global issues depicted in a specific film.

## Why use this program?

To participate in tomorrow's global arena, your students need to gain a deeper understanding of the world beyond their own borders. *Journeys in Film* offers innovative and engaging tools to explore other cultures, beyond the often biased images seen in print, television, and other media.

For today's media-savvy youth, film is an appropriate and effective teaching tool. *Journeys in Film* has carefully selected quality films telling the stories of young people around the world. Students travel through these characters and their stories. In the first collection of films, they drink tea with an Iranian family, play soccer in a Tibetan monastery, find themselves in a conflict between urban grandson and rural grandmother in South Korea, and watch modern ways challenge Maori traditions in New Zealand.

Through each film in this program, students gain a perspective on daily life. By identifying with the appealing (and occasionally not so appealing) protagonists, your students understand another culture far beyond the limitations of a textbook. These lessons not only bring the world into the classroom, but also allow students to explore the diversity of their own family, classroom, and community.

## Who can benefit from this curriculum?

Because of the serious content of the film *Beat the Drum*, this curriculum guide has been written expressly for students in grades 10–12. Other volumes in the *Journeys in Film* series are intended for younger students (grades 6–9) but may be adapted for older students as well.

### **How are the films selected?**

Members of *Journeys in Film* have viewed dozens of films, both individually and at film festivals, in search of quality foreign films with storylines captivating enough to engage secondary students. The films must be rated G, PG or PG-13. All films must be set within the last 15 years in order to offer a “present-day” connection for the student, as opposed to period pieces with cultural traditions that may not seem real in today’s youth culture.

### **But I’m supposed to be using the standards in my classroom....**

Of course you are—any good teacher is meeting standards. Because this is a curriculum meant for a national audience, we chose to use the McRel standards rather than the standards for any particular state. Since 1990, the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McRel) has been systematically collecting, reviewing, and analyzing state curriculum documents in all subject areas. McRel publishes a report on this work, called *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education*, and also has these standards and benchmarks available on their website at <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>. In the standards for each lesson plan, you will be able to recognize the corresponding subject-area standards for your state, even if the language is slightly different.

### **Will my students be able to read the subtitles?**

There is an ancient Iranian proverb that says, “He who wants a rose must respect the thorn.” Students are sometimes hesitant to watch a film with subtitles, but once they are hooked by the storyline of the film, reading

the subtitles may become automatic and they may not even be conscious of doing so. We have a few suggestions to ease this transition.

Begin by asking the students how many have seen a subtitled film. Explain to them that we watch a subtitled film (as we do any film, for that matter) using not only the words, but also the sounds, the music, the actors’ gestures, the locations, and more. The whole film helps to tell the story; dialogue is just one of the many ways the story is told. Suggest that students don’t need to worry about following every single word. They should just skim the words for a general meaning and watch the film as a whole.

You can also help your students by using the following tips from our pilot teachers:

- Whenever possible, use a large screen format, for better viewing of subtitles. If there is an LCD projector available at your school, by all means use it.
- Auditorium-style seating to simulate the theater-going experience is ideal, but not necessary.
- As your school schedule permits, running the film in its entirety is preferable to breaking it into one-period chunks, unless the needs of your specific student group require viewing the film in smaller sequences. Offer a break to coincide with recess to stretch and possibly have a refreshment or go outside. See our ideas below under **Suggestions for Implementation**.
- Bring in one or more older students to read subtitles aloud if your student group requires assistance in reading comprehension. This model also offers an opportunity for mentoring. Be sure to give the older

students the opportunity to view the film in advance and become familiar with the subtitles.

- For TESL students, use subtitles with all films, including the English-language films like *Whale Rider*, to offer the students an opportunity to follow along. Set the mode to English subtitles rather than hearing-impaired, unless there is a student with this disability in the class.
- A DVD is preferable to a VCR for later lessons that call for showing particular scenes. Be sure that if you buy a used DVD over the Internet, it is formatted for North American DVD viewing.

### Suggestions for Implementation

As a general rule, we believe that the teacher can best decide what methods of film viewing and lesson implementation are appropriate for each specific class. However, we recommend an interdisciplinary approach in order to make the greatest impact on the student; this curriculum guide makes this easy to facilitate. (It's much easier to bring other teachers on board if you can hand them a fully articulated, standards-based lesson plan to work with.) This also allows a group of teachers to share their efforts and class time for a truly comprehensive, immersive experience, instead of one or two teachers giving up one or two weeks of class time in this current climate of reaching benchmarks and quotas. *Journeys in Film* encourages you to share this curriculum with your colleagues to create a team approach to engage your entire school community. Your school's gym teacher might be a foreign film aficionado who could create culturally relevant athletic activities to join the fun.

Consider devoting an entire day or even several days to one film and its respective curriculum. Cancel all classes, prepare students by having already implemented the pre-film lesson plan(s), view the film together as one entire student body or in large groups, and design a round-robin rotational method for the remaining lesson plans that are deemed as “core” or essential by your school community. This full-impact, immersive method has resulted in very thoughtful dialogue among students, staff, and faculty members.

#### Please note:

You do not have to follow these lesson plans in order, nor do you have to complete all of them. However, please notice that some lesson plans have been designed for use *before* viewing the film, as a means for engaging the students about the country and culture, and offering a context from which to connect with the film. The other lesson plans have been designed for use *after* viewing the film.

#### Here are some of our favorite suggestions from our pilot teachers:

- Create an after-school foreign film club, either as a means to use this program if it doesn't fit into the regular class schedule or as an opportunity for interested students to further explore film from other countries.
- Create a quarterly “film night” or ongoing “film festival,” schedule the viewing in the evening or during the weekend, and invite parents to participate. This model will acquaint parents with the innovative programs

being used in your school and encourage dialogue between parents and children. Serve popcorn!

- Designate a hallway or display case for *Journeys in Film*. Enlist the assistance of parents, business leaders, and community members who may have some connection to the culture represented in the highlighted film in decorating the space.
- Invite parents, business leaders and community members from the culture of a given film to visit with students, share their stories, share traditional foods, etc.
- On a larger scale, your school can plan an annual “Global Village Day” as the kickoff or finale to the *Journeys in Film* program series.

### **Where can I get the films used in this program?**

All of the films chosen for *Journeys in Film* curricula can be purchased by you or your school by visiting our website [www.journeysinfilm.org](http://www.journeysinfilm.org)

Most national chain rental and retail outlets carry all *Journeys* films in their foreign film section. You can also check the Internet for other purchase options.

### **What else can I use to promote cross-cultural understanding in my classroom?**

There is an almost limitless supply of cross-cultural materials available to teachers from organizations and the Internet. The one we have found that fits very well with the *Journeys in Film* approach is a free resource from the Peace Corps’s Coverdell World Wise Schools. *Building Bridges: A Peace Corps Classroom Guide to Cross-Cultural Understanding* is designed for grades 6–12. Its 13 lively, interactive lessons were created for the classroom from Peace Corps training materials to help American students learn about culture, stereotyping, and the resolution of cross-cultural misunderstanding. If you wish, you can use this as a supplement or in place of the general cross-cultural understanding lessons from *Journeys in Film*. You can obtain this book free by calling the Peace Corps at 1-800-424-8580, ext.1450, or by downloading it from

<http://peacecorps.gov/wws/publications/bridges/index.cfm>.

### **So, welcome to *Journeys in Film*!**

And above all, no matter which specific implementation methods you use as you begin your own *Journeys in Film*, have fun with your students and colleagues while you’re doing it!

# Additional Suggestions for Assessment

Modern assessment methods have moved beyond the objective test given at the end of a chapter or unit; instead, teachers look for ways to measure students' deeper understanding of ideas. We have included assessment techniques in each lesson in this unit. Here are some additional possibilities for you to consider as you plan your unit on this film. Be sure to brief students on what kinds of assessment you will do before you begin the unit.

1. Have students keep a journal throughout the unit. Based on the standards that you are working with in each lesson, create a series of open-ended questions for students to choose from. Depending on the ability of your class, determine and make clear the number of questions that they must answer, when each journal entry must be completed, and the length of each journal entry. Create a rubric on which to judge the journal as a whole and be sure to share the rubric with the students before they begin.
2. Have students create a class newspaper based on the film. Review the various parts of a newspaper with them (news report, news analysis, editorial, letters to the editor, obituaries, advice columns, sports, fashion, even comics and crosswords). Appoint student editors and then allow students time to brainstorm how to produce a newspaper based on the film. (For example, a report about workers moving from the country to Johannesburg by a news reporter, an advertisement for a traditional healer, a food column about South African food, a letter to an advice column written by Nobe's wife.) If you have desktop publishing software, students can design the newspaper on a computer, or they can do paste-ups on large sheets of heavy paper.
3. Conduct face-to-face interviews with individual students or student pairs. This can be done during study halls or lunch, as well as during class time. Make sure students

know that the burden of the interview is on them to convey how well they understand the film and the lessons you have used to introduce and follow the film. Help them understand that they should prepare for the interview by reviewing what they have learned. Give them a rubric ahead of time to show how you will judge them on familiarity with the film, learning accomplished during the lessons, poise during the interview, respect for others' opinions (if conducting a joint interview), etc. You can use the standards in this unit as a starting place for your questions. And be sure you don't ask the same questions of each student or group.

4. Have students create a portfolio of work that they have done in this unit. Have them arrange the work from the elements that they think are the best (in front) to those they think are the least effective. Then have them write a response to these or similar questions:

**Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ is your best work?**

**What problems did you have to face as you started this assignment?**

**How did you overcome those problems?**

**Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ is your least effective work?**

**What goals do you have for yourself as a learner for the rest of the year?**

5. Play a game like *Jeopardy!* Have students come up with their own questions, perhaps splitting the class into two groups. Have each group split into 5 or 6 smaller teams and assign them a topic. Have them devise six *Jeopardy!*-style answers, each with the appropriate question. Then trade the questions and play the game with each large group. You can give a simple reward, like allowing the winning team to leave the room first at the end of the period.