

DISCOVERY FILM FESTIVAL

Scotland's International Film Festival for Young Audiences



Teacher's Resource: Simple Simon

Level 3+

Curriculum for Excellence links: RME, Health & Wellbeing, English Language,
Expressive Arts: Art & Design

Created by Nicola Ralph and Sarah Derrick, Head of Education at DCA

Discovery Film Festival: Sat 22 October - Sun 6 November 2011
discoveryfilmfestival.org.uk

DCA

Dundee Contemporary Arts


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Introduction

Discovery Learning Resources give you exciting classroom activities to enhance Curriculum for Excellence delivery. This resource provides you with a film synopsis, things to help prepare your class for seeing the film, follow up activities and useful references. We hope that you and your pupils have fun and enjoy learning with this resource.

They are created by classroom teachers and education professionals. Each resources aims to:

- support and extend working with film in the classroom
- help prepare teachers for a class visit to a Discovery Film Festival film and to extend the impact of that visit
- develop confidence in Moving Image Education approaches and working with 21st Century Literacy/moving image texts

Each resource is free and available to download from discoveryfilmfestival.org.uk/resources or via the Discovery Film Festival area on GLOW, which can be found within the Dundee 21st Century Literacy Group.



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Teacher's note on content:

This film offers funny and unique learning opportunities across the following key CfE Experiences & Outcomes. The suggested classroom activities combine discussion with:

*I understand that people can feel alone and can be misunderstood and left out by others. I am learning how to give appropriate support. **HWB 3-08a***

*I recognise that each individual has a unique blend of abilities and needs. I contribute to making my school community one which values individuals equally and is a welcoming place for all. **HWB 3-10a***

*I can demonstrate my developing understanding of moral values through participating in events and projects which make a positive difference to others. **RME 3-02b***

*I am developing respect for others and my understanding of their beliefs and values. **RME 3-07a***

*I can apply my developing understanding of morality to consider a range of moral dilemmas in order to find ways which could promote a more just and compassionate society. **RME 4-05b***

*I can apply philosophical enquiry to explore questions or ethical issues. **RME 4-09e***

*I can respond to the work of artists and designers by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others' work. **EXA 3-07a***

*I can use and combine the visual elements and concepts to convey ideas, thoughts and feelings in expressive and design work. **EXA 3-03a***

*While working through a design process in response to a design brief, I can develop and communicate imaginative design solutions. **EXA 3-06a***

We hope you enjoy it as much as we did.

Nicola Ralph and Sarah Derrick



Synopsis

Simple Simon (I rymden finns inga känslor/In Space There Are No Feelings)

Director: Andres Öhman

Sweden 2010 / 1h25m

“I’m Simon. I have Asperger’s syndrome. I like space, circles and my brother.”

When Sam’s girlfriend breaks up with him he becomes depressed.

To cheer him up, and get things back to normal, his socially awkward, younger brother Simon decides to set out on a quest to find Sam a new, perfect girlfriend.

Struggling with Aspergers Syndrome, the quest is more difficult than Simon first expected.

This film is a humorous and thought-provoking presentation of how a teenager with Aspergers Syndrome, and his family, deal with major changes in his life’s pattern.

Main themes

- Difference / specific needs
- Impact of life changes
- Family relationships / friendships / teen relationships
- How we make friends
- How we treat people with different conditions or disabilities
- Impact of humour in storytelling



Before your visit to the cinema

Activity 1: Class discussion and prior knowledge check – Introducing Aspergers Syndrome

Visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=R96nLMYBYU0 and watch the film trailer.

What is Aspergers Syndrome?

Aspergers Syndrome is part of what is known as the ‘autism spectrum’, which is the phrase used to refer to the wide range of this disability.

People who have autism have a special kind of disability that affects the way they communicate and relate to people around them. They may also have special or particular ways of doing things. In this film Simon, the main character, has to eat his evening meals at precisely the same time every evening. You may know somebody with a different kind of disability, e.g. someone who is deaf or blind, uses a wheelchair or who has learning difficulties. Autism is a disability too, but can be quite difficult to understand. Children and adults with autism look just like anyone else without the disability (although they may behave differently).

Aspergers Syndrome is a form of autism named after the Austrian doctor who first described it. It is at the higher end of the autism spectrum. This means the individuals are of average or higher than average intelligence. People towards the other end of the autism spectrum (sometimes called classic autism) have learning difficulties and sometimes do not learn to talk. There may be a person in your class or school who has Aspergers Syndrome. They may have some of the talents or difficulties experienced by Simon. However, it is very important to understand that all people with Aspergers Syndrome are different, just as you are different from your friends. They will not be exactly the same as Simon in the film.

Characteristics of Aspergers Syndrome

People with Aspergers Syndrome may want things to stay the same all the time. For example, they may find it difficult to cope with changes to their school timetable or a different teacher. In the film, when Simon’s brother Sam leaves home to live with his girlfriend, Simon moves in with him as he is unable to communicate with his parent. Sam and Simon have found different ways of communicating with each other which Simon finds easier. Having Aspergers Syndrome can make it difficult for people to understand what other people are feeling or thinking. You may need to tell them what you are feeling. It can also be hard for the person to explain what they are feeling or thinking themselves.



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Activity 2: Exploring how we communicate our feelings

In pairs or small groups each pupil can demonstrate an emotion or feeling via a facial expression and / or Pictionary-like drawing game but with no sound or speaking.

Discuss how they got on in understanding each others' communications and how it felt when someone didn't understand or got the wrong idea.

Has anyone been in a situation where they've not been able to explain how they are feeling or where others have not understood you?

What solutions might there be for clearer communication?

Watch the first 15 seconds of the trailer again and discuss;

Why do you think that the trailer starts in space?

What is happening with Simon and the dustbin?

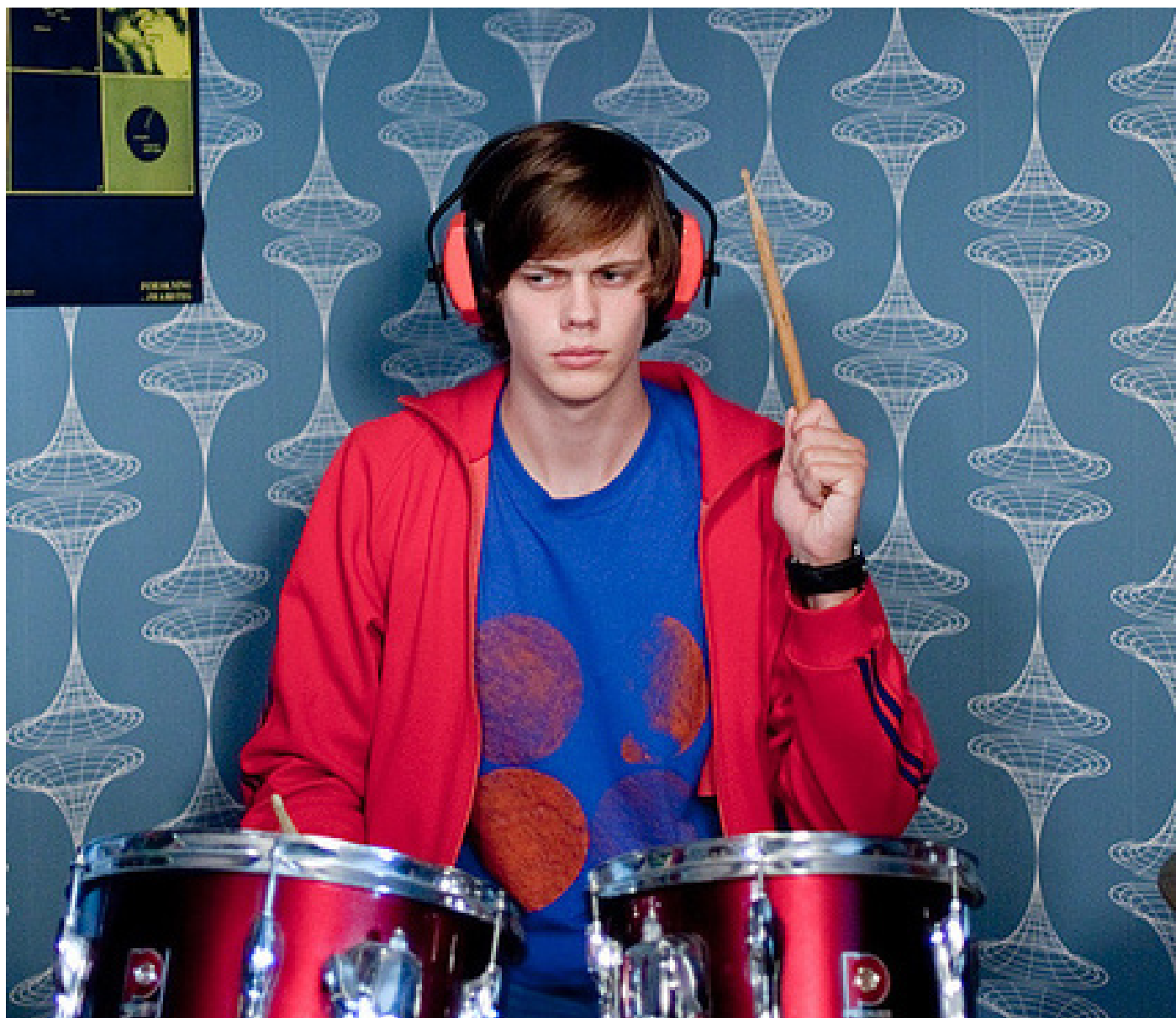
Why did the scriptwriter choose to have this 'space travel' theme?

(NB. The translation of the Swedish film title is *In Space There Are No Feelings*)

This film is made in Sweden. Why are they talking in English in this scene?

Where might they have heard this kind of language / style of talking before?

What might this tell us about Simon?



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Activity 3: Exploring design in our personal environment

In this film the main character, Simon, needs order, routine and does not like change. He relies heavily on a timetable and has a fascination with prime numbers which he uses to design his 13 question survey.

How do you order your day?

Can you write out your routine and design it into a timetable?

What kind of environment do you create for yourself in your own room?

What kinds of things do you have control over? And which do you not?

Can you summarise how you have designed it or how you would like to design it for yourself?

How is it / would it be arranged? Which colours you have chosen/would you have?

What makes you feel comfortable and safe? – can you list the things BEFORE and then AFTER viewing the film compare this list with Simon's key concerns and issues.



After viewing the film

Activity 1: Class discussion - the titles of the film

Why might this film be titled *Simple Simon*? (remind pupils of the rhyme and use of the name)

Which do you think is the better title: *Simple Simon* or *In Space There Are No Feelings*?

How does the title fit with the main character of Simon?

Why do you think films are given different titles in different countries?

What would you call the film?

Activity 2: Class Discussion - design and setting

Why do you think the production designer used different types of wallpaper in the rooms we see?

What might this tell us about the characters?

What kind of wallpaper would you have if you were to appear as a character in the film?

Activity 3: Class discussion - in which kind of ways Simon is affected by Aspergers Syndrome in his daily life?

What problems did he face and how did others react to them?

How, if at all, was he supported in his anxiety, his inability to manage time and in his different view of the world?

How might we best support someone with autism in your school? Small groups of pupils to come up with three or four ideas or issues to address and report back to the rest of the class.

Aim to draw out points such as being reliable, making things structured and organised, giving clear instructions and helping individuals not to feel anxious. Highlight support such as sign language/visual aids can help those who are non-verbal.



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Activity 4: Creative Writing - 'Ten top tips for making friends'

Suggest that pupils imagine that they are working for a teen magazine.

Their task is to work on 'ten top tips for making friends' for one of the key pages and to develop a written article in small groups, then to review their article considering how easy or how difficult it would be for a person with autism to understand these.

They should then discuss what kind of design solutions they could add to their article to help communicate the top tips better. Would a do's and don't list help?

Extension activity: Design a page layout for the magazine article or a poster pull-out for 'ten top tips for making friends'.

Activity 5: Extension for Expressive Art & Design - design your own wallpaper

Taking inspiration from the film settings, on screen designs and your own interests, design personal wallpaper that can communicate something about yourself.

Think about the visual elements of colour, texture, line, tone and shapes.

Use a variety of techniques such as collage, stencil, block prints, hand drawing, computer copy and paste functions etc.

If the designs or collages can be displayed anonymously – is it possible to tell which belongs to whom?

How well does each design communicate something about each pupil's character?



Evaluating this resource

We hope that you found this resource useful and appropriate. We welcome film reviews, letters from pupils, documentation of classwork and your feedback; email them to discovery@dca.org.uk or post them to **Discovery Film Festival, DCA, 152 Nethergate, DD1 4DY**

Would you make a good Discovery Film Festival Case Study?

We are seeking a number of simple Case Studies in how teachers have used or are using Discovery films in the classroom across Curriculum for Excellence and across the Levels.

Any case studies that we develop would be intended for presentation on GLOW, the Creativity Portal and on Discovery Film Festival and participating venues's website. We have a simple template to be completed and are keen to have classwork and documentation included.

If you would like to be a Discovery Case Study please email sarah.derrick@dca.org.uk