

THE STARFISH THROWERS



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THE STARFISH THROWERS

Directed by Jesse Roesler

2014 | U.S.A | 83 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of THE STARFISH THROWERS by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their class, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some weblinks that provide starting points for further research or discussion.

The Film

Worlds apart, a five-star chef, a retired school teacher and a young girl discover how their small efforts to feed the poor ignite a movement in the fight against hunger. Award-winning Indian chef Narayanan Krishnan, fighting against the caste system, quits his job to begin a life of cooking and hand-delivering fresh meals to hundreds of people in his hometown. Katie Stagliano's planting of a single cabbage seedling blossoms into Katie's Krops, a non-profit dedicated to ending hunger. Retired middle school teacher Mr. Law battles personal health issues as he hand-delivers more than a thousand sandwiches nightly to the hungry. This inspiring and heart-warming documentary tells the tale of these remarkable individuals and the unexpected challenges they face. Despite being constantly reminded that hunger is far too big for one person to solve, they persevere and prove the doubters wrong. **Heather Haynes**

Source: <http://www.hotdocs.ca>

The Filmmaker

Director, producer and cinematographer Jesse Roesler is an Emmy award-winning filmmaker whose work has been screened internationally in venues such as the South By Southwest Film Festival and on Current TV. Jesse's approach to filmmaking is best described as Cinematic Authenticity. By fusing narrative cinematic technique with the authenticity found in documentary-style filmmaking, his work blurs the lines between fiction and non-fiction by capturing the truth in a conceptually thoughtful manner.

Source: <http://www.thestarfishthrowers.com/>

Educational package written and compiled by Dimitra Tsanos (dimitra.tsanos@tdsb.on.ca)

VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

The following three subsections are intended to provide you with a range of pre-viewing, viewing and post-viewing activities. They are followed by a set of questions based upon the film's larger thematic domains, some follow-up questions and quotations, sample curricular outcomes, and a page of weblinks for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Show students the trailer for the film found on the film's website (<http://www.thestarfishthrowers.com/>). Have students work in small groups to try and identify themes or ideas conveyed by the trailer. As a larger group, discuss with students how effective/affective the trailer is as a media piece.

Print several of the questions or quotations from the Extension Activities section of this guide on individual sheets of paper. Have students work in small groups or with partners to discuss if they agree with the ideas.

Set a purpose for viewing by having a discussion about one or more of the questions or quotations from the Extension Activities section of this guide. Have them share the statement and what they think or believe about it with the class.

Have students read the story of *The Starfish Thrower* online (<http://eventsforchange.wordpress.com/2011/06/05/the-starfish-story-one-step-towards-changing-the-world/>). Have them identify themes as a class.

Have students define humanitarian. They can use a word organizer, by dividing a box in four. In each of the four boxes, have them write in one corner the following: Definition, Non-examples, Examples and Use in a sentence. Ask the class their opinion about volunteering in their community and school. Take it up as a class.

Have a class discussion about world hunger. Discuss main concepts and causes of the problem using the *Hunger Notes'* 2013 World Hunger and Poverty Facts and Statistics fact sheet (<http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/world%20hunger%20facts%202002.htm>) and the *World Food Program's* Hunger Statistics (<http://www.wfp.org/hunger/stats>).

Viewing Activities

Have students complete the PBS viewing guide on documentaries (<http://www.pbs.org/pov/docs/Copies%20of%20Viewing%20Guide.pdf>). Students can revisit their completed documents as a Post-Viewing Activity.

Have students jot down five ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raised in their minds.

Have students use a graphic organizer to compare the goals and accomplishments of Katie, Allan and Narayanan.

Post-Viewing Activities

Show the students their quotations from the Pre-Viewing Activity and see if their opinions were changed, altered or enhanced by the film.

Assign some of the questions and quotations from the Extension Activities section of this guide for homework to be taken up the next day in class. Check for completion.

Have students complete an exit note (a single small sheet of paper with one phrase or idea written on it) that demonstrates one thing they have learned, felt or decided as a result of watching the film.

Discuss with students their initial reactions to the various scenes and situations addressed in the film.

Have a class discussion about the Margaret Mead quote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Have students write a short paragraph response on their thoughts and feelings about the quote.

Have a class discussion about food and nutrition in schools. Discuss the importance of school gardens, school meals and education in providing healthy food choices and options for children in school. *The Food and Agriculture Organization*

of the United Nations includes School Food as one of their focus themes, and includes some relevant information on the topic (<http://www.fao.org/school-food/en/>).

Have students plan and implement a school urban garden on your school grounds. *Evergreen* has many guides found under Food Gardening and Local Food Resources on growing, maintaining and using organic food from an urban garden (http://www.evergreen.ca/en/resources/community-greening/community-guidebooks-and-fact-sheets/#urban_ag).

Have students individually write a report on a grant proposal for a new charity on an issue of their choice. The assignment and rubric, titled Throwing Your Own Starfish, can be found on the following pages.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film

Akshaya Trust: The organization founded by Nayayanan Krishnan helps the helpless, homeless, sick, elderly, mentally ill and destitute in Madurai, India.

<http://www.akshayatrust.org/>

Canadian Hunger Foundation: The non-profit organization helps poor rural communities in over 15 countries worldwide.

<http://www.chf.ca/>

CNN Heroes: The award is given to everyday people who are changing the world. The 2010 archive includes information about Narayanan Krishnan who was a top 10 hero.

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cnn.heroes/archive10/naryanan.krishnan.html>

Food Banks Canada: A national charitable organization representing and supporting the food bank community across Canada.

<http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/>

Food Share: A non-profit community organization whose focus is on hunger and food issues. Their garden program provides spaces for students to plant, harvest, prepare, cook, eat and sell produce.

<http://www.foodshare.net/about-us>

Katie's Krops: The organization was founded by Katie Stagliano when she was in third grade. Her organization started and maintains vegetable gardens and donates the food to help feed people in need.

<http://www.katieskrops.com/>

Minneapolis Recreation Development, Inc.: The organization was founded by Allan Law and helps the homeless in Minneapolis with food and support.

<http://www.363days.org/>

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food: Included on the government website is information on community gardening in urban centres and how to start, operate and promote your own.

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/urbanagbib/communitygardening.htm>

Second Harvest: The Toronto based organization feeds the hungry by picking up and preparing excess fresh food and delivering it to social service agencies.

<http://secondharvest.ca/>

Various Links for Lesson Plan Ideas, Media Awareness, Critical Literacy and Documentary Films

Center for Media Literacy: A US website which provides several resources for making, understanding and criticizing media.

<http://www.medialit.org>

Hot Docs' Looking at Documentaries: A teaching guide that sets out questions designed to help teachers include the study of documentary film in their curriculum. Free PDF download.

http://www.hotdocs.ca/youth/docs_for_schools_monthly/resource_materials

Media Awareness: A Canadian nonprofit media education and internet literacy resource library.

<http://www.media-awareness.ca>

The National Film Board of Canada: On this site is an area with teaching resources and short documentary films that can be used as teaching aids.

<http://www.nfb.ca>

Using Docs in the Classroom: A teacher librarian's personal website where there are excellent resources for teaching with documentary films.

http://www.frankwbaker.com/using_docs_in_the_classroom.htm

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Additional Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

How do the three stories about these individuals make you feel? Why do you think the filmmaker chose them? What qualities do they have in common?

How do the people in this film identify with their community? What are the common bonds among the people in this film? What challenges do they face?

How do the three individuals help bring their communities together with their goals? What communities already existed that helped them achieve their goals?

What insights does this documentary offer about the ideals of good citizenship in each community depicted in this film?

Why aren't more people involved with these kinds of good deeds? What are some limitations or concerns someone might have about initiating this kind of endeavor?

When someone is volunteering, does it make them selfish if it makes them feel good? Or is it selfless?

Are you surprised that people would react negatively towards Katie's project? How do you think she should respond?

How do these three individuals have time to undertake the activities for their cause and have time for everyday routines? Is it possible to have a balance? Does the film inspire you to accomplish more with your time?

How is family support important in helping individuals like this succeed?

Do you think the work would continue through someone else in each of these people's communities if something were to happen to them? Could someone follow in their footsteps?

After watching this film, do you feel that one person can make a difference?

QUOTATIONS FROM THE FILM TO EXPLORE

1. *"You never know what can grow from just one thing."* Katie Stagliano
2. *"A lot of people have strong dreams when you're younger. I know when you get older, sometimes your dream just kind of dies out. I'm going to continue for as long as I can."* Katie Stagliano
3. *"I know that by myself, I can't end hunger, but it doesn't matter how small your actions are, even if you don't realize it at the time. You're making a difference."* Katie Stagliano
4. *"What is my part in making this planet a better place to live in?"* Narayanan Krishnan
5. *"You never know the scope of your impact. If you inspire someone and they inspire someone else, you could be inspiring hundreds of people with just one small action."* Katie Stagliano
6. *"I'm not in a position to rescue them. They are not just dogs. They are not just animals. I feed them, I care for them, I love them, but I cannot accept a situation where these people are being left as destitute on the road. So this facility will be the solution for all these problems."* Narayanan Krishnan
7. *"You don't know until you walk in someone else's shoes what they're going through. Whatever happened to them doesn't matter. Katie never says, 'Why are you hungry?' If you're hungry, you're going to be fed. Nobody walks out of a Katie's Krops Dinner without a giant smile on their face and without stopping and hugging her and thanking her. And it gives them hope; you know, tomorrow's going to be a better day."* Katie's mom
8. *"I have to get back on the streets. This program is my life, it's not a job. I wish I was out right now."*
Allan Law, frustrated while staying in the hospital
9. *"She's growing more than just vegetables. She grows the relationships. She grows hope for people, in a world where some days it doesn't feel like there's a lot of hope. She restores the joy for life."* Katie's dad
10. *"Who knows how many lives what she's doing has touched across the world? We'll never know and I think that's kind of magical that you will never know where the ripple ends. It's not about the numbers. If you've touched one life and then that one life touches another, that's what it's about."* Katie's mom
11. *"There are hundreds and hundreds of problems. Get yourself occupied with just one issue. Maybe you cannot solve the situation but you can participate to the best of your ability."* Narayanan Krishnan
12. *"People know if you really care. It's not just words and I'll forget about you tomorrow. The key to everything is that people know that you care."* Allan Law

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: THROWING YOUR OWN STARFISH

In its most general form, humanitarianism is an ethic of kindness, benevolence and sympathy extended universally and impartially to all human beings. Humanitarianism has been an evolving concept historically but universality is a common element in its evolution.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org>

You have a chance to throw your own starfish and choose a cause you would like to support. In your grant proposal for a new charity, you need to include the following:

What cause would you choose? Explain the background of the issue.

Why did you choose this cause and who or what has influenced your decision?

What "ripple effect" do you think will happen? What difference will you make?

Which country would you want to help first? Why?

What are your goals and how will you accomplish them?

Your report should be 2-3 pages double spaced, 12-point font.

ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC: THROWING YOUR OWN STARFISH

Name: _____ Group: _____

Knowledge/Understanding

Concepts	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5
Understands the background and history of the issue	Communicates with a limited degree of understanding of the background and history of the issue	Communicates with a moderate degree of understanding of the background and history of the issue	Communicates with a considerable degree of understanding of the background and history of the issue	Communicates with a high degree of understanding of the background and history of the issue

/5

Thinking/Inquiry

Research	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5
Use of planning skills (e.g., gathering information, organizing an inquiry, asking questions, setting goals)	Uses planning skills with limited effectiveness	Uses planning skills with some effectiveness	Uses planning skills with considerable effectiveness	Uses planning skills with a high degree of effectiveness

/5

Application

Report	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5
Expression and organization of ideas and information (e.g., clear, logical organization) in written form	Communicates issues through the use of writing skills with limited clarity and effectiveness	Communicates issues through the use of writing skills with moderate clarity and effectiveness	Communicates issues through the use of writing skills with considerable clarity and effectiveness	Communicates issues through the use of writing skills with a high degree of clarity and effectiveness

/5

Communication

Connections	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5
Making connections within and between various contexts (e.g., past, present and future; environmental; social; cultural; spatial; personal)	Makes connections within and between various contexts with limited effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with some effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with considerable effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with a high degree of effectiveness

/5

Comments:

Total: _____/20 = _____/10

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 7 and 8 Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience. draft and revise their writing, using a variety of informational, literary and graphic forms, and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience. identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning.
Grade 9 and 10 Family Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Security: demonstrate an understanding of issues related to food security.
Grade 9-12 English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing and Organizing Content: generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience. Understanding Media Forms, Conventions and Techniques: identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning. Understanding Media Texts: demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts.
Grade 10 Civics and Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civic Contributions: analyze a variety of civic contributions and ways in which people can contribute to the common good. Inclusion and Participation: assess ways in which people express their perspectives on issues of civic importance and how various perspectives, beliefs and values are recognized and represented in communities in Canada. Personal Action on Civic Issues: analyze a civic issue of personal interest and develop a plan of action to address it.
Grade 11 Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Relevance to Everyday Life and Society: demonstrate an understanding of the relevance of philosophical questions, theories and skills to their everyday life and to the community and broader society.
Grade 12 Equity and Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approaches and Perspectives: demonstrate an understanding of a range of perspectives on and approaches to equity and social justice issues, and of factors that affect inequity and social injustice. Leadership: evaluate the contributions of individuals, groups and/or movements identified with specific aspects of the struggle for equity and social justice. Promoting Equity and Social Justice: demonstrate an understanding of how personal values, knowledge and actions can contribute to equity and social justice, and assess strategies that people use to address equity and social justice concerns. Social Action and Personal Engagement: design, implement and evaluate an initiative to address an equity or social justice issue.
Grade 12 Family Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Security: demonstrate an understanding of various factors involved in achieving and maintaining food security.
Grade 12 Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyze the causes and effects of economic disparities around the world. evaluate the effectiveness of short-term and long-term solutions to geographic problems and issues at the local, national and global level. analyze various proposed solutions to typical problems of large urban areas.
Grade 12 Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making Connections to Ethics: demonstrate an understanding of connections between ethics and other areas of philosophy, other subject areas and various aspects of society, including everyday life.
Grade 12 Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicate knowledge, opinions and interpretations of events, issues and trends relating to politics and citizenship, using a variety of forms of communication.

The Overall Expectations listed above are from *The Ontario Curriculum*. Complete course descriptions, including all Overall and Specific Expectations, can be found at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html>