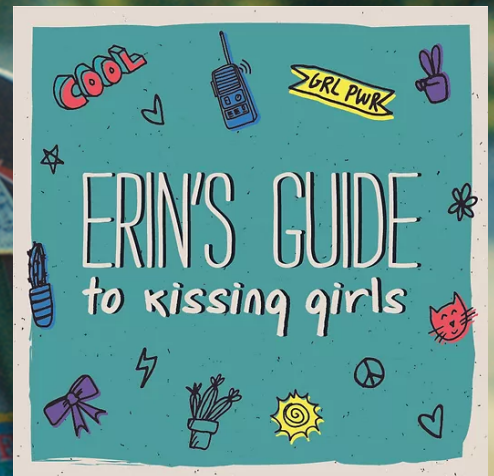


MVFF

EDUCATION GROW EXPLORE CONNECT DISCOVER

October 6-16



CURRICULUM GUIDE
GRADES: 6-12

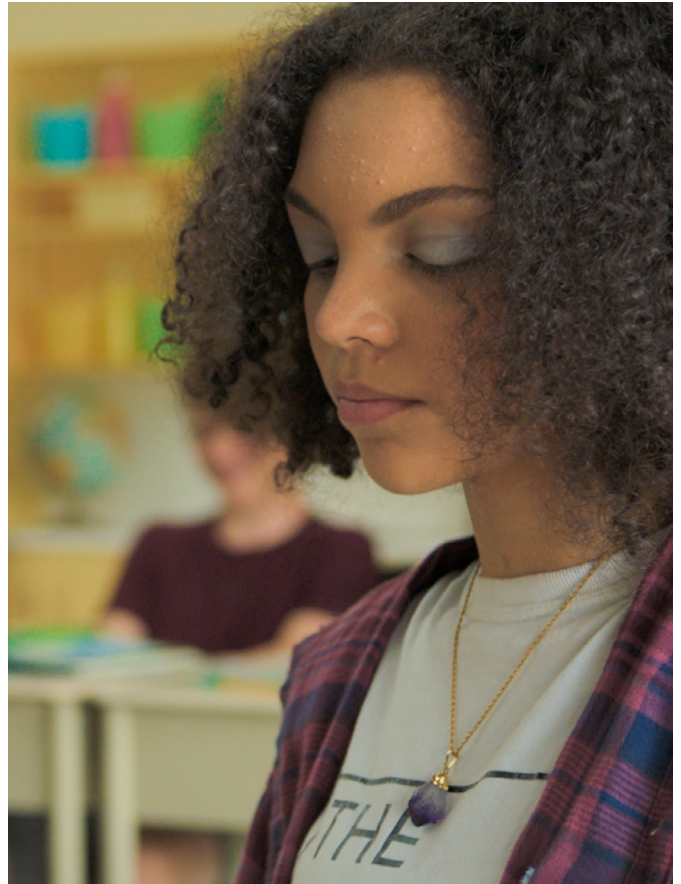
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Dear educators,

Thank you for attending the 45th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of *Erin's Guide to Kissing Girls*. We are excited to return in our 2022 fall season with a combination of both in-person screenings for local schools and online screenings for those of you joining us from afar.

This year, our film selections for school screenings continue to focus on increasingly relevant issues of global empathy and active citizenship, and we believe this film will be a powerful and engaging text to use in your classroom. These curricular materials are designed to get students to engage deeply with film by the common-core aligned skills of developing an evidence-based interpretation of a text.

The discussion questions on the following page offer a variety of options for fostering small-group or whole-class dialogue. If your students are already familiar with a process of writing evidence-based interpretive essays, consider using the suggested essay prompts for a short writing piece. Additionally, individual handouts for before and after viewing are provided as stand-alone activities to be used individually or in sequence, with a particular emphasis on social-emotional learning. We have also included a handout that provides some context for the film festival experience, which may help to introduce your screening experience.

Thank you so much for your tireless work!

Sincerely,

The CAFILM Education Team

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the main events that occur in this film? What has changed between the start and the end?
2. Does this film feel real? Why or why not?
3. What are the primary emotions you felt during this film? What are some secondary emotions?
4. Consider the editing and the tempo of this film. Did things move quickly or slowly? Why?
5. What do you see in this film that reminds you of other stories from your life or other stories you know?
6. What are some background details you noticed in this film? How do these details provide information about the time or place in which this film was made?
7. Consider other films you've seen. What makes this film unique or important? What are some connections between this film and other films?
8. If you were to give this film another title, what would you title it?
9. What do you think Erin's home life and relationship with her family is like? Why do you think the filmmakers chose not to reveal much about her family?
10. What aspects of middle school did this film depict accurately or capture authentically? What aspects of middle school did the film misrepresent or fail to show?
11. What aspects of Erin's experiences in the film are universal and relatable for all young teens regardless of sexual orientation? What about her experiences are unique to an out queer teen?

INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. In what ways is *Erin's Guide to Kissing Girls* an example of a coming-of-age story? Describe the moments in the story that contribute the most to the central character's growth throughout the film.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Erin's Guide to Kissing Girls (2018)

<https://youtu.be/QWRKLeM4c6Q>

An earlier short film written and directed by director Julianna Notten.

Julianna Notten: Official Website

<https://www.juliannanotten.com/>

Official website of the film's writer and director, with biographical information and links to other projects.

Erin's Guide to Kissing Girls Short Film Kickstarter

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1063894123/erins-guide-to-kissing-girls>

This archived website for the original short film's crowdfunding campaign offers some insight into the independent filmmaking process and creative decisions of the film.

STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.B

Apply grades 9-10 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., "Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning").

ABOUT CAFILM

The nonprofit California Film Institute celebrates and promotes film as art and education through year-round programming at the independent Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, presentation of the acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival, as well as cultivation of the next generation of filmmakers and audiences through CAFILM Education programs.

The California Film Institute and Mill Valley Film Festival are located in Marin County, California, on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary homelands of the Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples. This includes the Southern Pomo and Graton Rancheria Tribes. These tribes were removed or displaced from their lands. We recognize this history and the harm to present-day Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples and to their ancestors. The California Film Institute commits to moving forward from a place of authenticity and working with present-day tribes to elevate their stories, history, and present-day legacy through film.

Follow the Mill Valley Film Festival on social media

 @millvalleyfilmfest  @MillValleyFilmFestival
 @mvfilmfest  californiacinstitute #MVFF45

Name: _____



ABOUT THE FILM

Erin, a spunky 13 year-old and the only out person in her grade, panics when she finds out her best and only friend, the brilliant Liz, will be attending a private high school next year, leaving her to fend for herself. In an attempt to increase her popularity as middle school draws to a close, she hatches a plan to join her grade's inner circle, while working up the nerve to ask the mysterious new girl and former child star, Sydni, to the Sadie Hawkins dance. Everything is going just according to plan, until Erin realizes she is losing Liz in the process.

Erin's Guide To Kissing Girls is a story of friendship, first loves, and understanding what's important to you when everything is changing.

ABOUT THE WRITER/DIRECTOR JULIANNA NOTTEN

Julianna Notten (She/They) is a Toronto-based, award-winning, queer filmmaker and co-founder of Switch Hitter Films. Currently she is developing both her first television series, *Well That's Just Super*, with the support of the competitive CBC development fund, as well as debuting her first feature film, *Erin's Guide To Kissing Girls*, in partnership with Telefilm's Talent to Watch program. The short of the same name has played in over 40 film festivals around the world, most notably Frameline42 which later picked it up for distribution.

Julianna is a graduate of the Toronto Metropolitan University (formally Ryerson) Film program, where they received the Norman Jewison award and Natalie MacDonald Memorial award in their final year. Their thesis film, *Earth To Avery* premiered at the TIFF Kids International Film Festival in 2016. She has made it her mission to create stories with queer and female protagonists who break boundaries and challenge stereotypes.



“When I was the age of these characters I didn’t know I was queer because I just didn’t see it anywhere and even in 2021 when we’re filming this, I can’t really think of a lot of films that are out there that feature queer protagonists of these characters’ ages. I think it’s really important to tell these stories so queer youth can see themselves represented in media. In a lot of ways this is a love letter to my younger self and all the queer kids like me out there.”

-Julianna Notten



BEFORE VIEWING: JOURNAL REFLECTION

Directions:

The film you are about to watch follows a young teenager who faces a variety of challenges related to social relationships. Respond to the following prompt in a short journal-style response.

What rules, expectations, and boundaries exist for friendships, social circles/cliques, and/or romance in middle school? What does a "healthy relationship" look like at this age?



DURING VIEWING: NOTE-CATCHER

Directions:

As you watch the film, pay attention to the various social pressures that Erin faces. These could be things that people do to her, or pressures she imposes on herself (i.e., to act or look a certain a way). In each box in the left-hand column, describe one of these pressures as it occurs in the film. In the corresponding box in the right-hand column, describe how Erin responds to that challenge.

SOCIAL PRESSURE	ERIN'S RESPONSE

AFTER VIEWING: RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Directions:

Respond to each question, referring to specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your interpretation.

1. Throughout the film, who does a better job of being a supportive friend: Erin or Liz? Give at least two examples from the film that support your answer.

2. What were two reasons that Erin developed a crush on Sydni? Are these reasons good foundations for a lasting friendship? Why or why not?

3. Identify two incidents of bullying in the film. How did victims and other students respond? Were there other things the characters should have done to respond to the bullies at the school?

4. Think of another film you've seen or a story you've read that features a teenage protagonist. In what ways does *Erin's Guide to Kissing Girls* show a teenage experience unique to a queer teen? In what ways does it show an experience universal to teens of all sexual orientations?



AFTER VIEWING: FOUR C'S

Directions:

Respond to each prompt in complete sentences, citing specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your response.

CONNECTIONS

What connections do you draw between the film and your own life or other learnings?

CHALLENGE

What ideas, positions, or assumptions do you want to challenge or debate in the film?

CONCEPTS

What key concepts or ideas do you think are important and worth holding on to from the film?

CHANGES

What changes in attitudes, thinking, or action are suggested by the film, either for you or others?

Adapted from Harvard Project Zero's Think Routine Toolbox:

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/resources/the-4-cs>

ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

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What is a film festival?

A film festival is an event in which multiple movies are presented over the course of one or several days. Depending on the size of the festival, all of the screenings may take place in a single theater or may involve multiple venues throughout a city. Festivals also include special events like panel discussions with filmmakers and actors. Typically, filmmakers submit their works to a festival, where a team of curators selects the best entries for inclusion in the festival. For independent and international filmmakers, festivals are often an important way to raise awareness of a film, generate an audience, and/or attract a studio to purchase the rights to distribute a film in a wider release. Acceptance into a major festival can add significant prestige to a film, with some festival awards (such as the Cannes Film Festival's Palme d'Or) considered among the highest honors a film can receive.

There are many film festivals through-

out the world, with some focusing on particular themes, such as highlighting LGBTQ films/filmmakers, specific cultural groups, or particular genres. While some of the more famous festivals may be in distant locations, there are hundreds of small festivals spread through every corner of the world and, increasingly, festivals are using streaming access to make it easier for the public to view their curated programs.

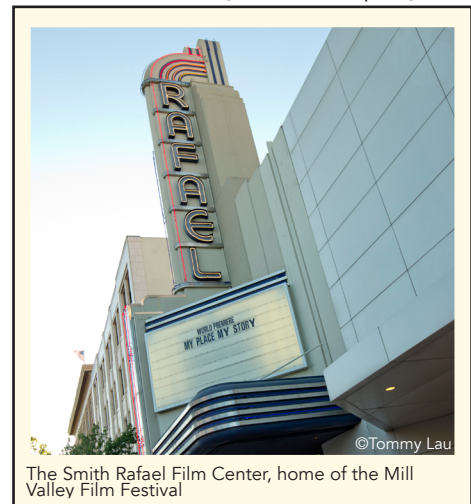
History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

Since founding the Mill Valley Film Festival in 1977, Executive Director Mark Fishkin has shepherded this once small, three-day showcase into an eleven-day, internationally acclaimed cinema event presenting a wide variety of new films from around the world in an engaged, community setting.

The festival has an impressive track record of launching new films and new filmmakers, and has earned a reputation as a filmmakers' festival

by celebrating the best in American independent and foreign films, alongside high-profile and prestigious award contenders. The relaxed and non-competitive atmosphere surrounding MVFF, gives filmmakers and audiences alike the opportunity to share their work and experiences in a collaborative and convivial setting.

Each year the festival welcomes more than 200 filmmakers, representing more than 50 countries. Screening sections include world cinema, US cinema, documentaries, family films, and shorts programs. Annual festival initiatives include Active Cinema, a forum for films that aim to engage audiences and transform ideas into action; Mind the Gap, a platform for inclusion and equity; and ¡Viva el Cine!, a showcase of Latin American and Spanish-language films.. Festival guests also enjoy an exciting selection of Tributes, Spotlights and Galas throughout the program.



The Smith Rafael Film Center, home of the Mill Valley Film Festival

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Questions to Consider:

1. What is the purpose of a film festival? What are the benefits for filmmakers? For the audience? For the community?
2. How might the films at a festival differ from the films available to watch at your local movie theater?
3. What qualities do you think festival curators might look for in a film? If you are watching a festival film with a class/school group, what aspects of the film do you think made it appealing to the curators?

Get Involved!

Many film festivals, including the Mill Valley Film Festival, have student film categories. If you are a filmmaker, explore FilmFreeway (www.filmfreeway.com) for a database of worldwide film festivals where you can submit your film. The call for entries for MVFF opens in late February and closes in June. Youth filmmakers do not have to pay an entry fee. MVFF also offers many opportunities for volunteering. Find out more at <https://www.cafilm.org/volunteer/>.