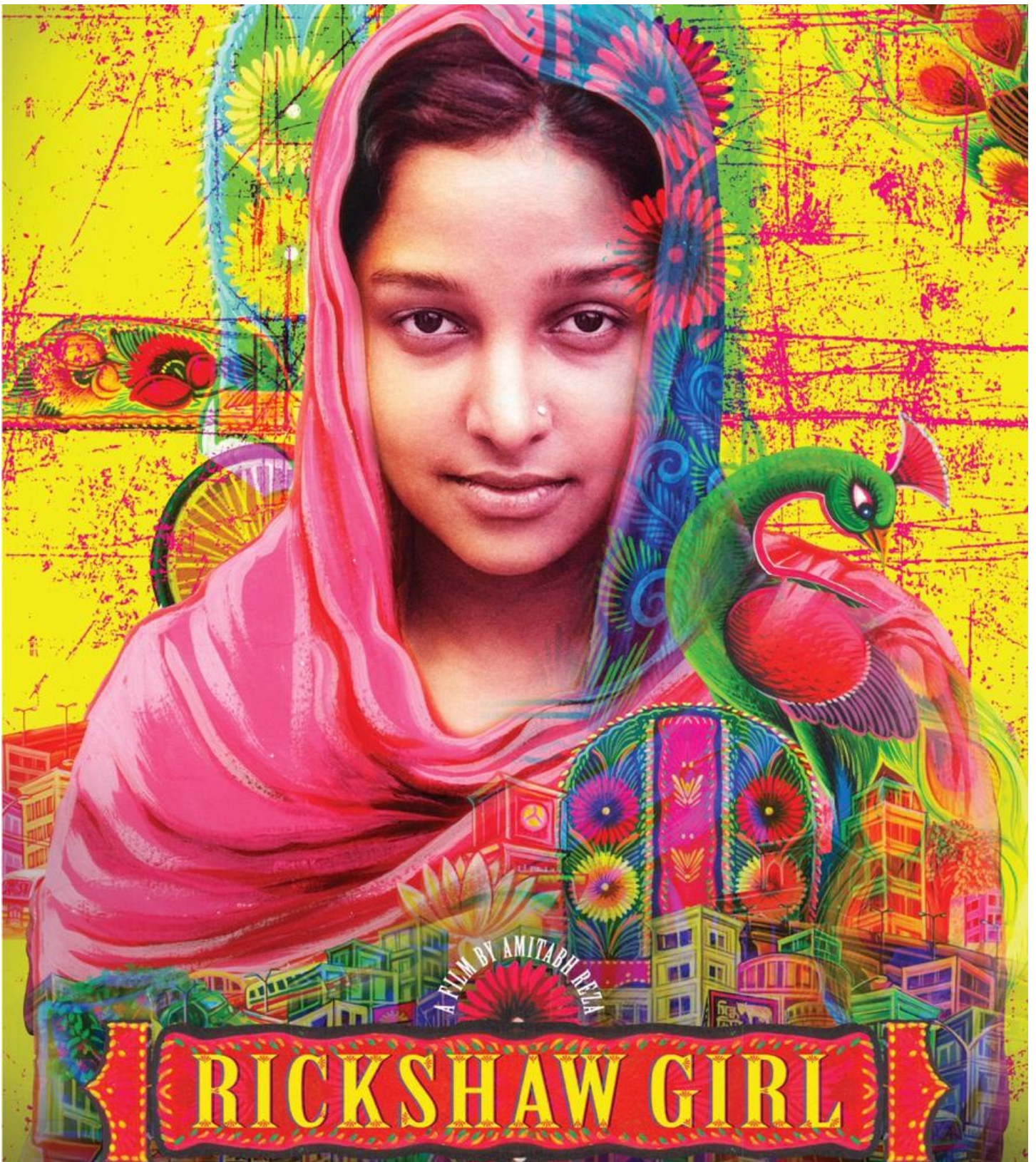




**MVFF
EDUCATION**



CURRICULUM GUIDE
GRADES: 6-12

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Dear educators,

Thank you for attending the 44th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival’s virtual screening of *Rickshaw Girl*. 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.

We know that this year is likely one of the most challenging of your professional career, and we hope that this film and study guide can support the incredible work you’re already doing. 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 one of the suggested essay prompts for a short writing piece. Additionally, individual handouts for before, during, and after viewing are provided as stand-alone activities to be used individually or in sequence. We have also included a handout that provides some context for the film festival experience, which may help to introduce your in-class screening.

Thank you so much for your tireless work!

Sincerely,

The CFI Education Team



CFI EDUCATION

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? How come?
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. After she helps out on the film set, should Naima have shared a portion of her tip with Bulbul, as he insists?
10. Do you think it was a good idea for Naima to go to Dhaka? Why?
11. Who was most helpful to Naima in this film? Who was the least helpful?
12. What expectations, pressures, or challenges does Naima face because of her gender? How are gender roles in Bangladesh, as portrayed in the film, different or similar to gender roles in the United States?
13. What do you think the Bangladeshi government could do to support children like Naima?

INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. Does going to Dhaka improve Naima's life?
2. In what ways does *Rickshaw Girl* show a universal teenage experience? How does it show a culturally specific teenage experience?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mitali Perkins

Official website of Mitali Perkins, author of the novel on which the film is based

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

Efforts in Youth Development of Bangladesh

A youth-based nonprofit committed to improving access to education for Bangladeshi children

<https://eydborganization.wixsite.com/eydb>

How did the Folk Art of Alpona come to Bengal?

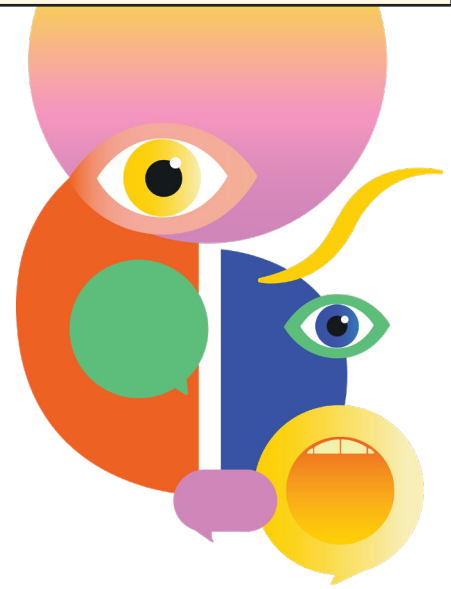
A short history on the history of alpona art in the Bengal region

<https://www.getbengal.com/details/how-did-the-folk-art-of-alpona-come-to-bengal>

Making Rangoli

A lesson plan for creating Rangoli alpona art

<https://education.asianart.org/resources/making-rangoli-a-celebration-of-color/>



STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6

Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

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

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

ABOUT CFI

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 CFI Education programs.

Follow the Mill Valley Film Festival on social media

 @millvalleyfilmfest  @MillValleyFilmFestival

 @mvfilmfest  californiainstitute #MVFF44



ABOUT THE FILM

In this Bangladeshi drama, feisty young painter Naima (a riveting Novera Rahman) sets out on a quest to save her ailing father. Her artistic gift has blossomed with his encouragement but hasn't yet proven financially rewarding. Naima's mother dashes such childish dreams, which sends the frustrated teen off to the big city, determined to earn money for the family's survival. And she does, by disguising herself as a boy to get a job as a rickshaw driver. Still, Naima's creative drive has her sneaking every opportunity to paint, and as her vivid artwork comes to life in beautifully animated form, there is hope that her emergence as an artist will be her true salvation. Based on the acclaimed and beloved young adult novel by Mitali Perkins, *Rickshaw Girl* is a magical ride.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

One of Bangladesh's most acclaimed directors, Amitabh Reza Chowdhury has been directing film, television and commercials in Dhaka and beyond for over 15 years. His first film was the highly acclaimed feature *Anyabaji*. He has won numerous Bangladeshi Critics Awards, including Best Director for his work *Ekta Phon Kora Jabe Please* and *E Somoye*, and Best Screenplay for *Sei Bhuboney in Meril Prothom Alo*.

Chowdhury works and lives in his hometown of Dhaka and is founder and president of his own film and production company, Half Stop Down. Leading a team of talented professionals, Chowdhury is perhaps the most prolific of Bangladeshi filmmakers, having directed over 400 television commercials.

A graduate of Pune University in Pune, India, Chowdhury has also studied film and the American film industry as a guest of the United States government's International Visitor Leadership Program.



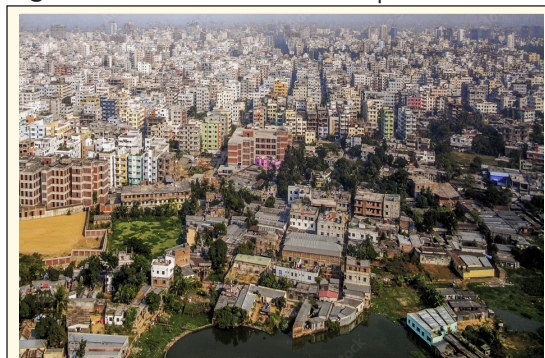
THE WORLD OF THE FILM

Rickshaw Girl takes place in Bangladesh, a South Asian country that is home to more than 163 million people, making it the eighth-most populous country in the world. Bangladesh is a Muslim-majority country, with the Bengali people comprising the majority ethnic group in the nation.



The flag of Bangladesh

Much of the film is set in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. Dhaka is a densely populated city of 8.9 million people (for comparison, New York City is home to 8.4 million people). Bangladesh is considered a lower-middle-income country, but at least 15% of the population still lives in poverty.¹ Despite significant economic development over the last several decades, Dhaka is home to thousands of homeless children who often must work jobs such as selling goods in the streets in order to provide for themselves or their families.



Bird's eye view of Dhaka, the nation's capital

Bangladesh, and the Bengali region generally, also has a long history of art, with evidence of sculpture in the area dating back to the 3rd Century BCE. Art is also integral to many of the cultural celebrations in the country, which include the Bengali new year, religious holidays, and various other festivities.

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh/overview>

KEY VOCABULARY

As-salamu alaykum: Arabic for "peace be upon you," this is a standard greeting used in Islamic countries and by Muslims around the world.

alpana: a style of painting found in the Bengal region, which includes Bangladesh and parts of India. Alpana painting features intricate patterns and geometric designs and are often painted for festivals and celebratory events.

rickshaw: a human-powered, two-wheeled passenger vehicle commonly found in cities throughout Asia and other parts of the world

taka: the currency of Bangladesh. In 2021, 100 taka is equivalent to ~\$1.12 in US Dollars.

DURING VIEWING: NOTE-CATCHER

Directions:

As you watch the film, pay attention to the various challenges that Naima faces. In each box in the left-hand column, describe a challenge or obstacle that occurs. In the corresponding box in the right-hand column, describe how Naima responds to that challenge.

CHALLENGE	NAIMA'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. Look back at the events of the film. What was the single biggest challenge that Naima faced?

2. What character traits did Naima have that made her able to overcome these various challenges? What external factors (such as help from other people) were most important?

3. Based on your observations, what do you think is the film's overall theme or message? Justify your interpretation by citing specific moments from the film as evidence.

4. Think of another film you've seen or a story you've read that features a teenage protagonist, but takes place in your own country. In what ways does *Rickshaw Girl* show a teenage experience unique to life in Bangladesh? In what ways does it show a universal teenage experience?



ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

©Tommy Lau

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.

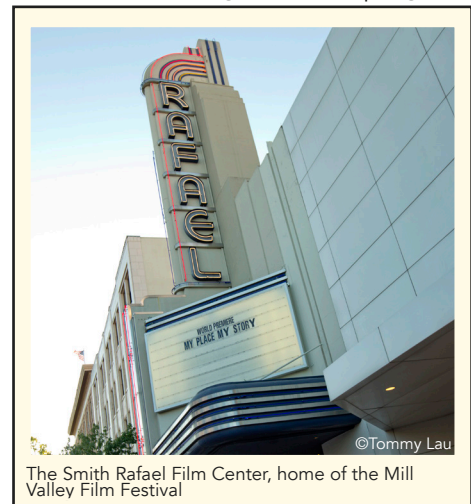
History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

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.



©Tommy Lau

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

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/>.