

JUST ADD POPCORN

A trio of movies dealing with loss and bereavement

Death is a part of life and loss and bereavement affect us all, but they are uncomfortable subjects that we generally prefer to ignore. Young people can find it particularly hard to understand and articulate their feelings about such issues and because of the developmental changes they are going through, their reactions to death can be frighteningly intense. As teachers, we can help remove the stigma associated with bereavement and grief by talking openly about the topic with our pupils. Doing so can help those who've lost someone close to them feel supported and those who haven't to empathise, feel less awkward and voice their own fears – but starting the conversation can be difficult. One way is to share and discuss a film in which loss and bereavement are central themes.

The education charity FILMCLUB has an entire section in its catalogue devoted to loss. The films, which are available free to members via the website, range from dramas like 'Genova' and 'A Single Man' to Dutch thriller 'The Vanishing', and more light hearted but still poignant works such as 'About Schmidt' and 'All About My Mother', with many more in between. Sharing one or more of these in the relaxed atmosphere of a school film club will give young people the opportunity to consider and explore the impact of loss. "It gives off a powerful message and I would recommend anybody who has a soul to watch it because it really is a film that makes you think," writes a 16 year-old FILMCLUB member in her review of 'A Single Man'. "A truly inspirational film which makes you happy to have that one person in the world that will be there for you until the very end – your best friend," says another, 13 year-old member after watching 'Beaches'.

FILMCLUB Recommends...



A SINGLE MAN (2009, 12)

Stunning-looking film, directed by Tom Ford, about a man who struggles to get through life after the death of his partner.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. How does the film persuade the audience to empathise with George's loss? Which moments do you think are particularly effective at doing this?
2. George is prevented from expressing his grief publicly; how do you think this affects the way he copes with bereavement? Is this something that still affects people today?
3. What role does memory play in the film? How does it aid our understanding of George and the way his grief changes over time?

REVIEW STARTER

A sense of melancholy and loss permeates the atmosphere of this deeply moving film...



ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER (1999, 15)

Salma Hayek stars in this biopic of the groundbreaking Mexican-born artist Frida Kahlo.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. How does Manuela begin to overcome her grief? What offers her solace?
2. The performances, plot, and vibrant visual style of this film have been compared with melodrama and soap opera. Is this approach effective for exploring themes of loss?
3. A number of characters in the film experience loss; how and why do you think they react differently?

REVIEW STARTER

At times both tragic and humorous, All About my Mother is ultimately an uplifting exploration of grief and recovery...



THE DESCENDANTS (2012, 12)

Oscar-nominated drama about identifying and protecting family values.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. What affect does the discovery of Elizabeth's affair have on Matt and the way he feels about her death? How does his attitude change over the course of the film?
2. The King family have time to prepare and say goodbye to Elizabeth before her death. Do you think this affects the way they cope with their bereavement?
3. Alex and Scottie react to their mother's condition in different ways – do you think the way their grief is portrayed is realistic?

REVIEW STARTER

Family relationships are tested by unique circumstances in this subtle and amusing drama...



TAKE IT FURTHER

Why not start a free film club in your school or college now? Members can also review films for the website, find out the latest industry news, watch exclusive reports from premieres and awards ceremonies, interact with filmmakers through live webcasts and win great prizes in a host of competitions. To find out more or register for a free, online start-up session visit filmclub.org, email schools@filmclub.org or call 0207 288 4520.