

Mary Pickford Film Center
DOCTOBER DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL, 2016
Film Discussion Guide

WHAT TOMORROW BRINGS (2015)
A documentary film by Beth Murphy

RAZIA (Zia) JAN	Head Mistress, School Founder
NAZIMA	Teacher
PASHTANA	7th grader, arranged marriage
SAHIB	Mayor
RIHALA	18 year old, Mayor's daughter

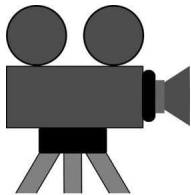
This film was shot between 2009-2015. It documents an innovative school for girls in a remote area of Kabul Province, Afghanistan, that sustains fragile success within a region that has been ravaged for over 30 years by civil war.

In 2015, the Taliban closed 213 schools, denying educational opportunities to over 50,000 girls. In response to school closures, Zabuli Education Center was built in the village of Deh'Subz, Afghanistan as the first primary school to serve only girls. Today it serves over 500 girls aged 4-22.

Zabuli Education Center provides groundbreaking instruction to disadvantaged girls in a region with one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. Learn more about the school at:

<https://raziasrayofhope.org/zabuli-education-center.html>

<http://ehsanbayatafghanwireless.com/the-girls-zabuli-education-center-in-dehsubz-afghanistan/>



DOCUMENTARY STYLE:

Bill Nichols, film educator, has written many texts on documentary styles and his analysis is distilled in the article cited here. He categorizes documentaries into 6 styles.

<https://www.videomaker.com/article/c06/18423-six-primary-styles-of-documentary-production>

*Beth Murphy is the founder/director/producer of Principle Pictures whose mission is "to shed light on the human drama at the heart of the world's most pressing social and political issues. Since 1999, our passion for storytelling, adventure and social justice has taken us to nearly every corner of the globe, following stories that excite our curiosity and move our conscience....We take pride in crafting emotional, character-driven narratives brought to life by cinematic imagery and artful editing." Using Nichols' categories, the style of this documentary could be categorized as **OBSERVATIONAL** (scenes are carefully edited and arranged so that they speak for themselves without obvious intrusion by the*

filmmaker). But this *Observational Style* is blended with didactic elements of the **Expository Style**, and, to evoke our strong emotions, the **Poetic Style** (the message is delivered artfully through visual and sound images rather sole reliance on rhetoric) is also employed. <http://principlepictures.com>



USING THIS GUIDE:

The following questions were created to help the viewers draw key themes and ideas from the details of the film that reinforce CCSS for Middle School Social Studies.

HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, ECONOMICS, CIVICS of Afghanistan

1. What do you know about Afghanistan, its people, culture and history?

Even though Afghanistan has some of the richest mineral resources on Earth, it is one of the world's least developed countries with 36% percent of its people living below the poverty level, 13% literacy rates, and nearly 40% unemployment. The country's GDP is only 0.03% of the entire world's economy; and 26% of the Afghani economy is in agricultural products. One of the elders confesses that Afghani village education is "30 years behind." **As you watched the film, what evidence did you see to support these statistics? What factors might have caused these situations? What other questions do you have about Afghanistan? Check out this link: <https://raziasrayofhope.org/about-afghanistan.html>**

2. Afghanistan has been in the cross-hairs of wars for centuries. Most recently, modern weaponry from Great Britain, Russia, Western Forces (US and its allies), in addition to internal factions—such as the Taliban—have left deep scars on the landscape and the spirits of the people. How does ZIA describe the Afghanistan of her pre-war youth compared to the Afghanistan of today? What does she hope Afghanistan will be like in the future as a result of offering educational opportunities to girls? How would the education of girls produce high-impact change?

3. Early in the film, one of the students reads a poem she has authored. What do you learn about the country's legacy, as well as its hopes, from this student's poem?

*I want my ruined and dusty land to be ride of its enemies.
I want to use education and art to rebuild my country and to create peace and unity.
Young people choose peace waiting for the oppression to end.*

*When will we be free from cruelty and war?
When will we be free to rebuild our home land;
To find happiness in the fresh air and blossoming flowers
When everything that has died will live again?*

4. Compare and contrast your life with those of your Afghani counterparts. Consider the factors that might have caused their daily life to be similar or dissimilar to yours. What hardships and shortages do the families face? How do they overcome these hardships? What are their continuing fears?

Health, hygiene, sanitation
Homes and home life

Climate / weather
Natural resources

Religious observance
Government
Food
Clothing
Marriage

Roles and responsibilities
Jobs
Division of labor
Information media

5. How is your school experience similar or dissimilar to theirs? What significance can you draw from the differences and similarities? (Keep in mind that Zabuli Education Center is unique in Afghanistan; it does not represent the schooling model for public schools)

attendance	school attire
safety	rules, regulations
discipline	curriculum and instruction
integrity	play
assessments	class placements, class size
roles and responsibilities	heating, plumbing and other utilities
relationships with peers and adults	opening school assembly
attitude towards school	

6. Several times in the film, we encounter values that may be different from our own. How do these incidents in the film describe the values of the Afghani people? (How are your cultural values expressed through your actions?)

- a. A car speeds in front of the school and Zia asks the driver to slow down for the safety of the children. After children exit the car, the driver guns the engine and speeds away.
- b. Pashtani complains of her arranged marriage, her family's income, her mother's lack of education, the possibility that the cousin to whom she is betrothed might not accomplish anything and they will end up like her mother without a future. Her teacher, Nazima, is concerned that the marriage may force Pashtani to stop her education but cautions her to pray to God and to respect her mother for the courage that she shows.
- c. Pashtani, more than anything, wants to stay in school rather than marry. She becomes depressed and despondent and so poisons herself. She expected to receive attention and sympathy. Instead, adults are mad at her and tell her that she brings shame to herself, her family and her school.
- d. It's reported that 42 school children were recently poisoned, so Hawa, Principal of the Education Center, drinks water from the playground hose prior to the arrival of the students. She gives two reasons for doing so: 1) the safety of the children, 2) the reputation of the school.
- e. The Kindergarten teacher sternly checks the fingernails, teeth and clothing of her young students, asks them if they are telling the truth and warns them to come to school clean and neat.
- f. An elder tells us that Islamic law prohibits a woman from taking a leadership position. Women are weak and cowardly, he says; they hang their heads and do not look men in the eyes. When Zia speaks to the Elder, some of the men look away.

- g. Zia uses a flower as an analogy to teach the older students that they must not continue to be a flower for men to protect or destroy.
- h. Rihala is told by her father that, in order to reduce the dowry costs of his second marriage to his 16 year-old wife, Rihala must marry this wife's 70 year-old father. Rihala protests and is badly beaten by her father, uncles, brothers. She finally negotiates her release by agreeing to wear the Burkha.
- i. When Rihala misses 6 months of school, Nazima reminds Rihala's father that "the reality is that no one will blame the child [for not going to school], they will blame the family....people will think there is something wrong going on at home."
- j. Nazima tells us that her marriage was a "love marriage." Although they both are happy in the marriage, she has had a difficult time conceiving a baby and this has upset her in-laws. Nazima tells us that if she cannot become pregnant, she gives her husband permission to take another wife.

7. Zia tells us that after the wars destroyed the culture and the country, it was hard for the people to trust again and make a better life for its people. **Discuss what steps she took as a school leader to rebuild trust and ensure a successful school and a positive legacy for her country. What actions does she take to overcome the taboo against women having power through leadership?**

8. Zia tells us that the 35 village elders who look after the safety of the school are Mujahadeen—fighters who opposed the Soviets and the Taliban—and they have, at most, a 6th grade education. **Why is their educational level important to Zia and the school's success?** In the same scene, the village elders ask Zia to let the village boys share the school with the girls. Zia tells them that she will think about it, but reminds them that the school is full and that there aren't enough qualified teachers. **Why might it be difficult to find qualified teachers?**

9. **"Hope" and "security" are recurring themes. Explain these concepts as expressed in the words of the people, and explain the obstacles that bash away at them.**

Pashtaini's Mother: "I registered you [for school] with the blood of my heart."

Pashtani: "My biggest hope is to finish school. That's how my life will turn the corner and I'll be on my way. The best way I can help my mother with her problems is to graduate as soon as possible. But I'm worried there are people around me who will try to stop me...I'll go crazy if I can't graduate....All my hope is in this school."

Student's Poem:

I am sad because there are no rights; sad because of all the years of misery.

I am sad because my life is unstable. I am sad, and I can smell the sorrow.

I am sad because there is no compassion; sad because I've become weak.

I want to be educated until I am powerful; I am sad, but I have dignity.

Zia: *When we started the school, we had great hope but things have only gotten worse."*

10. Rihala is 18 years old and is the only student to remember life under the rule of the Taliban. Do you recall what she said about how religion and government exercised authority over the people? Connect this to Zia's concerns about security of the school.

"We have bitter memories of the Taliban. They came here to extort money. They kidnapped anyone over 15 and beat them. They pulled out my uncle's fingernails to get money from him."

11. Why do you think that Rihala was finally able to go back to school and not have to marry her step-mother's father? How does Rihala take each terrible event (e.g. Taliban, the forced marriage) and recast it positively into her future? She confesses that "The injustice at home is a lesson for me. I want to be a lawyer." Do you have hope for Rihala's future? Explain.

12. What will tomorrow bring? One of the elders says that this period in Afghani history is "golden" because literacy rates have increased. "Today our daughters can read in English. It's a proud moment." But Zia and the school's staff are worried about the future. **Why are they worried? What personal capacities and skills are they instilling in their students so that tomorrow will bring better things for themselves as well as for their country?**

POST FILM IMPACT: The production of the documentary helped to provide additional support so that the Foundation could build the first College for Women in Afghanistan!

FURTHER EXPLORATION

1. THE BOOK: *Razia's Ray of Hope: One Girl's Dream of an Education* written by Elizabeth Suneby (2013, Kids Can Press), is a fictionalized book about Zabuli Education Center and is written for students in grades 3-6. It retells the story of the school and explains some of the reasons why 69 million children around the world are not in school. Lesson plans and discussion guide are also available. Find out more at....

<https://raziasrayofhope.org/the-book.html>

2. Razia Jan was named Hero of the Year 2012 by CNN. Find out more at:
<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cnn.heroes/2012.heroes/razia.jan.html>

3. Zia mentioned "Malala" to the older girls and described how teenaged Malala stood up to the Taliban about her rights to study, play, laugh. The Taliban gunman subsequently shot her in the head but Malala Yousafzai survived her injuries and, in 2014, won the Nobel Peace Prize. Read more about Malala's story to understand how her courage has impacted oppressed women and girls around the world. Compare Malala's story to others who have protested injustice.
https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2014/yousafzai-bio.html

4. 69 Million children around the world are not in school. Read more about this issue at UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of Children. **What are YOUR RIGHTS? How can you help others secure theirs?** <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

5. Learn more about women and girls in Afghanistan.
<https://raziasrayofhope.org/women-and-girls-in-afghanistan.html>

6. The education levels of boys and girls in Islamic countries vary greatly. Study this variation at the following websites. Using your knowledge of history, hypothesize why these wide variations might have occurred.

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/6046/education-levels-nine-predominantly-islamic-countries.aspx>

<http://theconversation.com/gender-equity-in-schools-in-muslim-countries-it-can-be-done-32271>

7. While the teachers were on their bus ride to and from school, they listened to news reports from “Radio Freedom.” Learn more about this radio broadcasting company. Research how broadcasting media have often been appropriated during war time as weapons of propaganda, intimidation or fear. Also consider how media and their “experts” shape the way we see the rest of the world.

RECOMMENDED READING- FOR MIDDLE and HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- *Camel Bells* by Janne Carlsson. *Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2002. Grades 4–7.* In the late 1970s, Hajdar leaves his village in the countryside of Afghanistan for the excitement of the capital city Kabul, but he and his family are swept up in the turmoil when the Soviet Union invades his country.
- *Mud City* by Deborah Ellis. *Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2004. Grades 4–7* In the third book in the Breadwinner Trilogy, orphan Afghan refugee Shauzia leaves the rough Pakistan border camp and joins other homeless children on the streets of the city of Peshawar.
- *The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis. *Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2001. Grades 5–8.* Because the Taliban rulers of Kabul, Afghanistan, impose strict limitations on women's freedom and behavior, 11-year-old Parvana must disguise herself as a boy so that her family can survive after her father's arrest.
- *Haveli* by Suzanne Fisher Staples. *New York: Knopf, 1993. Grade 6 and up.* Having relented to the ways of her people in Pakistan and married the rich older man to whom she was pledged against her will, Shabanu is now the victim of his family's blood feud and the malice of his other wives. Sequel to *Shabanu, Daughter of the Wind*.
- *Under the Persimmon Tree* by Suzanne Fisher Staples. *New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005. Grade 6 and up.* During the 2001 Afghan War, the lives of Najmal, a young refugee from Kunduz, Afghanistan, and Nusrat, an American-Muslim teacher who is awaiting her husband's return from Mazar-i-Sharif, intersect at a school in Peshawar, Pakistan.
- *Parvana's Journey* by Deborah Ellis. *Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2003. Grades 7–10.* Thirteen-year-old Parvana and other Afghan children search the countryside for missing parents. Sequel to *The Breadwinner*.
- *Come Back to Afghanistan: A California Teenager's Story* by Said Hyder Akbar & Susan Burton. *New York: Bloomsbury. 2005. Grade 8 and up.* Akbar's refreshingly unsentimental reminiscences of visiting his father's homeland as a teen make for an intriguing portrait of Afghanistan at a time of significant transition.

- *My Forbidden Face: Growing Up Under the Taliban* by Latifa. *New York: Hyperion, 2001. Grades 9–12.* Before the Taliban takeover, Latifa's life revolved around school, friends, parties, and movies. Suddenly, she was confined to her apartment, unable to venture out uncovered by the hated burka.
- *Refugees* by Catherine Stine. *New York: Delacorte, 2005. Grades 9–12.* Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Dawn, a 16-year-old runaway from San Francisco, connects by phone and e-mail with Johar, a gentle, 15-year-old Afghan who assists Dawn's foster mother, a doctor, at a RedCross refugee camp in Peshawar.

RECOMMENDED READING for ADULTS

Visit <https://raziasrayofhope.org/teachers-welcome.html>