

WIZARD MODE



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WIZARD MODE

Directed by Nathan Drillot & Jeff Petry

2016 | Canada | 98 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of *Wizard Mode* 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

Mastering classic pinball arcade games requires focus, agility and dedication. Robert Gagno has all these traits. It might explain why he surged from a complete unknown to one of the world's best players in five years. The achievement is even more impressive considering he was diagnosed with autism at age three. His success on the pinball circuit made him part of a community that provided acceptance and encouragement. With his parents' support and determination, Robert has exceeded every expectation placed upon him. As he approaches adulthood, his next challenge is to become more self-sufficient and gain his independence. From high-stakes tournaments across the continent to his day-to-day search for employment, we follow Robert's persistent progression to overcome obstacles and manage the highs of success and lows of falling short. In *Wizard Mode*, flashing lights and triple combos highlight an outstanding individual who continues to beat the odds and set records.

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

The Filmmaker

Jeff Petry (director/producer) was born and raised in rural Manitoba. After completing a pilot's licence he travelled to cooking school in Austria, then on to Vancouver to work as a photographer until co-founding SALAZAR Film, a commercial and documentary production company based in Vancouver, B.C. He has co-directed, written and produced under the name SALAZAR since 2010.

Nathan Drillot (director/producer) was born in the Appalachian Mountains of Tennessee in a house without electricity. He spent his childhood in a constant state of flux moving every few years. Storytelling was an intricate part of his family's identity and helped to create a sense of continuity in another wise turbulent life. Forsaking traditional postsecondary education he instead focused on lived experience. In 2010 he started SALAZAR with Jeff Petry and Jesse Savath. Since then he's travelled the world experiencing filmmaking as an integrated part of life.

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

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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 official website (<http://www.wizardmodefilm.com>). Have students work in small groups to try to 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.

After watching the trailer, have students complete a KWL chart (What do you know about the topic? What do you want to know? What did you learn?) In the K column, have them write notes on what they think they already know about people with autism. In the W column, students should write questions they would like answered. Have them complete the L column after watching the documentary.

Have each student define what they think the term "special needs" means. Using these preconceived ideas, have a class discussion about where their ideas, bias and understanding comes from. Come to a class consensus about what the term actually means. Consider sharing your experience as an educator, and encourage students to share personal connections to the topic.

Print several of the questions or quotations from the Extensions 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.

Have students define some or all of the following terms: (a) autism, (b) Asperger's Syndrome, (c) ABA, (d) IBI, (e) IEP and (f) POND Network.

Have students spend some time in the library conducting research on the signs and symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder, or sign out a book to read about a character with autism (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Are You Seeing Me?*, *Screaming Quietly*, *The Rosie Project*, *Marcelo in the Real World* or *Don't Tell, Don't Tell, Don't Tell*).

Instruct students to explore their school board website to learn more about the supports available to students who have special needs.

Have students imagine they are Robert attending a pinball tournament alone for the first time, and write a journal entry describing both the event and the emotional experience writing in the first person narrative.

Do a follow-up of the KWL chart Pre-Viewing Activity. Students will work with an elbow partner to review the questions posed in column two of the KWL chart and complete column three.

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 three to five ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raises in their minds. As an Extension and/or Post-Viewing Activity, students can enter their questions into an online response or polling system and can vote on the questions or issues they would like to explore in further detail. Encourage students to use multiple levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

The film had more than one main idea: Robert's journey to success, families living with autism, goal setting for the future, facing challenges and overcoming adversity, and managing personal stress and anxiety. Have students choose one main idea that they can identify with and write a supported opinion paragraph using proof from their own life.

Look up the "eight different types of hugs," like Robert did. Could you identify all eight types before reading the information? How does your understanding of socially acceptable behaviour influence the way you interact with

your peers? How does your understanding of socially acceptable behaviour influence the way you interact with the non-family member adults in your life?

Robert believes that, "Whatever you have a passion for in life, you have the right to shoot for it." Provide an example from your personal experience when you set a goal and achieved it. Identify the people in your life that helped you set the goal. Take the opportunity to record their response when you thank them in person.

Post-Viewing Activities

Discuss with students their initial reactions to the film and the featured individuals. How can they relate their own experiences to those featured in the film? Did their feelings evolve over the course of the film?

Have students participate in a Socratic discussion on the film. Guidelines for Socratic discussions can be found here: <http://www.authenticeducation.org/documents/WhatSeminar04.pdf>

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

Have students complete an exit note. The exit note should contain one idea that demonstrates what they learned from the film, as well as one question that they still have about the topic.

As a class, view the CNN video "We're Even More Extraordinary Together." To find the video, type the title into Google. Next, brainstorm ways that schools and families can promote healthy relationships.

"It's easy to think about ASD as a diagnosis, however, we are not talking about a diagnosis. We are talking about a person with ASD. We are talking about a person with individual needs. We are talking about a person with loving family members," states Autism Ontario. With this quote in mind, read the CBC News article "Tribunal to Hear Case of Service Dog Not Allowed in Classroom" about an Ontario boy and his attachment dog (<http://www.cbc.ca/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website). Create an opportunity in your class for students to debate this case.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film

<http://www.wizardmodefilm.com>

Twitter (film): <https://twitter.com/wizardmodefilm>

Twitter (Robert): <https://twitter.com/RobertGagno>

Facebook (film): <https://www.facebook.com/wizardmodefilm>

Additional Resources

Autism Awareness: The Autism Awareness website connects a community of over 250,000 people living with autism. This site is helpful to users by providing personal stories, videos and even a Dad support group.

<https://autismawareness.com>

Autism Ontario: The Autism Ontario website provides information and resources for families with an ASD diagnosis. The site has multiple links and programs to provide support.

<https://www.autismontario.com>

CBC News: When Robert won the Professional & Amateur Pinball Association (PAPA) World Championships, the article "Robert Gagno Wins World Pinball Championship" was published online.

<http://www.cbc.ca/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

Council of Canadians with Disabilities: The Council of Canadians with Disabilities assists people to understand the Federal Disability Act, and connects them to additional resources.

<http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/fda>

CTV News: Canadian news and headlines from around the world.

<http://www.ctvnews.ca/> Type "Robert Gagno" into the search space to view his *Canada AM* interview.

Daily Beast: A smart, speedy take on the news from around the world.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/> Type "Pinball Wizard with Autism Tells All" into the search function.

ESPN: Up-to-the-minute sports news coverage, scores, highlights and commentary. The article "How Robert Gagno Became One of the Best Pinball Players in the World" provides some background information on Robert's history, and includes profiles of other players and information about Pinburgh.

<http://www.espn.com/> Type "Robert Gagno" into the search function of the website.

Global News: Breaking and current Canadian news events. <http://globalnews.ca/> Type "Canadians with Disabilities Act" into the search function of the website to read current news articles focusing on employment.

Government of Canada: The Government of Canada website includes information regarding Rights for People with Disabilities.

<https://www.canada.ca/en.html/> Type "disability rights" into the search function of the website to read an August 4, 2016, article on the topic.

International Flipper Pinball Association: Visit the International Flipper Pinball Association website for more information about this tournament.

<https://www.ifpabinball.com/> Click on Robert Gagno's name in the list on the right to find his profile and rankings.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

What are the different issues and themes that surface in this film?

What challenges do the film's subjects face on a daily basis?
What challenges do families with autistic children living in our community face in general?

If you could commit as much time as Robert to a game of your choice, what game would it be and why?

Do you have a list of experiences you would like to accomplish in your lifetime similar to Robert (live independently, drive a car, start a family)? List your top 10.

What do you feel are the most important things in your life?
What makes something important to you?

What can be done at the local, national and international levels to support people living in our communities with physical and/or mental disabilities?

Robert's mother Kathy admitted, "Sometimes I forget that he's a 26-year-old young adult." How would your parents support you if you never aged past today?

Think back to the Pinburg 2014 loss that Robert suffered. Compare a personal experience when you had to deal with defeat, and write a paragraph about how you responded to the situation.

Describe a time in the recent past where you felt socially uncomfortable and how you dealt with it. As a class, discuss how you learn about socially acceptable behaviours. How are these behaviours different in a school setting than in a private setting?

Robert suggested that it's important to prove people wrong by performing above expectations. Describe a time in your life as a high-school student where you felt you needed to prove someone wrong.

Robert's parents provide significant moral support as he continues his journey as a competitor. Describe how your parents have displayed moral support to help you to achieve your goals. Write a letter to thank them for their assistance.

QUOTATIONS FROM THE FILM TO EXPLORE

1. *"I think you have to have a natural passion for something, if you want to get good at something. You have to feel that passion inside of you. To me, I call that 'being in the zone.'"* Robert Gagno
2. *"Defeated... Sad... Depression... are all types of emotions that would naturally release bad chemicals into your blood stream. And that can really affect your playing at a high level."* Robert Gagno
3. *"Having things go wild, and unpredictable, is not an easy thing to deal with. There's a lot of stress involved there.... No game lasts forever, but he doesn't like losing, and he likes to be a winner, and I think we all want that in life. To win."* Maurizio Gagno
4. *"Wizard Mode is the ultimate, in a pinball game, it's your final destination."* Maurizio Gagno
5. *"I feel like I live on the road, away from home a lot of the year."* Robert Gagno
6. *"When you feel pressure, and stress with it, the best thing to do is ride the storm out."* Robert Gagno
7. *"Attitudes are what people remember best, and I think that people will respect you for who you are if you just behave good and have a good attitude."* Robert Gagno
8. *"Sometimes I forget that he's a 26-year-old young adult because he's got that child-like innocence to him still."* Kathy Gagno
9. *"One day down the road, I'm not going to be around to keep an eye on you, so you'll have to do it yourself."* Kathy Gagno
10. *"He could make certain sounds, but putting words together, he just couldn't do. It'd be all jumbled up.... If you put yourself in his shoes, trying to have a conversation with somebody else, and they don't know what he talking about, so he gets more frustrated, and repeats himself."* Maurizio Gagno
11. *"Whatever you have a passion for in life, you have the right to shoot for it, even if people don't believe in you."* Robert Gagno
12. *"I'm worried girls might not be interested in me for being on the spectrum...They think that ppl who have autism can't be affectionate. That they don't have the proper wiring to be in a romantic relationship. So it makes me feel pressured inside, too."* Robert Gagno
13. *"I want people to know I can be just like any other good person."* Robert Gagno
14. *"I have to learn to not let stress win, is what it is."* Robert Gagno

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: JOURNAL WRITING IN CHARACTER

You will write a series of journal entries in character, choosing one person from the film: Robert, Maurizio (the dad) or Kathy (the mom). The first two entries should be about the character's life before the start of pinball competitions. Discuss life at home/school/work, and the challenges of being/living with someone on the autism spectrum.

Describe their emotions about their interactions with their family and the time they spend together. Also discuss how they feel about the pressure related to competing on an international level.

In the next two entries, write about their time at the competition. Choose two experiences from the film to use in your entries.

The final two entries should discuss the experience upon returning home after becoming a world champion. One entry could be about the new opportunities available, and the possible stresses associated with these opportunities. The second entry could be getting home, going back to work/school and life in the city. Include feelings about the differences between the different lifestyles. Write the series of diary or journal entries as if they were written over a period of a year.

All entries need to work together as a whole; they should sound like the writings of a single person and show consistency from one entry to the next.

ACTIVITY RUBRIC: JOURNAL WRITING IN CHARACTER

Knowledge/Understanding

Concepts	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Understands the concept, opinions and ideas of the character	Does not communicate or understand the concept, opinions and ideas of the character	Communicates with a limited degree of understanding of the concept, opinions and ideas of the character	Communicates with a moderate degree of understanding of the concept, opinions and ideas of the character	Communicates with a considerable degree of understanding of the concept, opinions and ideas of the character	/5

Thinking/Inquiry

Research	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Use of planning skills (e.g., gathering information, organizing an inquiry, asking questions)	Does not use any planning skills	Uses planning skills with limited effectiveness	Uses planning skills with some effectiveness	Uses planning skills with considerable effectiveness	/5

Application

Report	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Expression and organization of ideas and information (e.g., clear, logical organization) in written form	Does not communicate issues through the use of writing skills	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	/5

Communication

Debate	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Making connections within and between various contexts (e.g., past, present and future; personal)	Connections were not apparent	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	/5
					/5

Comments:

Total: ____ /25

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 7 & 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. • use editing, proofreading and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression and present their work effectively. • identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning.
Grade 9–12 English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience. • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning.
Grade 10–12 Media Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process by using it to monitor the creative process, and by examining, interpreting, assessing and reflecting on media art works. • demonstrate an understanding of how media art works reflect personal and cultural identity, and affect personal, cultural and community values and their awareness of those values. • demonstrate an understanding of responsible practices associated with producing, presenting and experiencing media art works.
Grade 9 & 10 Business Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the concepts of ethics and social responsibility as they apply to business (specifically regarding accessibility issues for people with disabilities). • assess ethical dilemmas in the workplace such as discriminatory hiring practices or whistleblowing.
Grade 9 & 10 Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use role play to explore, develop and represent themes, ideas, characters, feelings and beliefs in producing drama works. • interpret short drama works and identify and explain their personal response to the works. • identify and apply the skills and attitudes needed to perform various tasks and responsibilities in producing drama works.
Grade 11 Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore topics related to anthropology, psychology and sociology, and formulate questions appropriate to each discipline to guide their research. • use a psychological perspective to explain how diverse factors influence and shape human mental processes and behaviour. • use a sociological perspective to explain how diverse factors influence and shape individual and group social behaviour.
Grade 9 & 10 Exploring Family Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore a variety of topics related to individual and family needs and resources to identify topics for research and inquiry. • explain the connection between adolescents' developmental needs and their individual behaviour. • describe various types of relationships in which adolescents are involved. • identify resources and strategies that can be used to help develop healthy relationships and resolve conflict in a variety of human interactions. • identify family resources (e.g., time, knowledge, money, skills, talents) and describe how they can be used to meet the needs of the family unit and its individual members.

Grade 11 & 12 Equity Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore topics related to equity and social justice, and formulate questions to guide their research. • 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. • analyze, in historical and contemporary contexts, the dynamics of power relations and privilege as well as various factors that contribute to power or marginalization. • assess the impact of media and popular culture on equity and social justice issues. • analyze a range of historical and contemporary equity and social justice issues and the impact of economic and environmental factors on these issues.
Grade 11 Dynamics of Human Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the components of personal well-being, how to achieve and maintain it, and its importance throughout the life course. • explain how self-concept and self-esteem influence personal well-being. • demonstrate an understanding of how self-concept influences an individual's interactions with others.
Grade 12 Human Development Throughout the Lifespan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore topics related to human development, and formulate questions to guide their research. • demonstrate an understanding of threats to healthy development throughout the lifespan and of a variety of protective factors that can increase an individual's resilience and reduce the impact of these threats. • demonstrate an understanding of physical development, including brain physiology and development, throughout the lifespan. • demonstrate an understanding of social-emotional development throughout the lifespan and of ways of influencing such development. • demonstrate an understanding of various influences on personality development and identity formation throughout the lifespan.
Grade 12 Analyzing Current Economic Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the economic inquiry process and the concepts of economic thinking when investigating current Canadian and international economic issues. • analyze how economic and political ideas and various sociocultural factors affect economic decision making. • demonstrate an understanding of supply and demand models, including how to apply these models, and of factors that affect supply and demand.

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>