The Film

In 1946, 23-year-old Holocaust survivor Joseph Feingold exchanged a carton of cigarettes for a violin at a flea market in Germany. Seventy years later, Joe makes a simple decision about his violin that changes not only his life, but also the life of another young musician. Together, the two of them discover the illuminating power of a single musical instrument. Kathleen McInnis

Source: https://www.hotdocs.ca

The Filmmaker

Kahane Cooperman is a documentary filmmaker and television producer. Currently, she is the executive producer and showrunner of the Untitled Clutter Project with Radical Media for SundanceTV. Prior, she was the executive producer and showrunner of The New Yorker Presents, a series with Jigsaw Productions for Amazon Prime. Before The New Yorker Presents, she was co-executive producer of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart. For her work at the show, she received 11 Primetime Emmy awards and two Peabody awards. Kahane began her documentary career at Maysles Films in NYC. She has directed and produced several documentaries prior to Joe’s Violin including Cool Water, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and Making Dazed about Richard Linklater’s Dazed and Confused, which was broadcast on AMC and acquired by the Criterion Collection. Kahane also produced the feature doc Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam, directed by Nick Broomfield. Kahane has an MFA in Film from Columbia University.

Source: http://www.joesviolin.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

Watch the trailer for Joe's Violin, which can be found on the main page of the film's website (http://www.joesviolin.com). Based on the trailer, have the class make a list of all the themes they predict may emerge in the film. Discuss how effective/affective the trailer is as a media text. What emotions does it elicit in the viewer? What aspects of the trailer make you want to watch the film?

The events of the Holocaust form the backdrop of Joseph's story in the film. Assign students to small groups and have each group research and present on a topic related to the Holocaust. You may wish to use the following resource from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, entitled "The Holocaust: A Learning Site for Students," to introduce students to the subject and guide their research (http://www.ushmm.org/ Type the title of the resource into the search function of the website).

Have students write a journal entry about the role of music in their lives. Ask them to reflect on the following questions: Is music important to you? Has it helped you through any challenging moments in your life? Does listening to music and/or playing music evoke specific feelings or memories?

Viewing Activities

Have students make notes about the two main characters in the film, Joseph and Brianna. Have them record important information, observations and descriptions about each individual. What do Joseph and Brianna have in common and what makes them unique?

As they watch, have students paraphrase one quotation from the film that they feel is especially interesting or inspiring. After the film, students can share the quotation they documented and why this quotation stood out for them.

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.

Post-Viewing Activities

Discuss students' initial reactions to the film and featured individuals. Did their feelings evolve over the course of the film? What moments or scenes from the film stood out for them?

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

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.

Ask students to re-visit their predictions based on the film's trailer from the Pre-Viewing Activity and discuss whether their initial impressions were changed, altered or enhanced by the film.

Ask students to revisit their initial research about the Holocaust from the Pre-Viewing Activity. Have students discuss the ways in which Joseph and his family were affected by the Holocaust. Ask them to consider whether their perception of these historical events has changed after hearing Joseph's personal history.
The principal of Brianna's school, the Bronx Global Learning Institute for Girls, refers to the students she serves as “survivors.” These students are all from the Bronx, the poorest congressional district of the United States. The term “survivor” can also be used to describe Joseph, who is a Holocaust survivor. Guide students through a word association activity by writing the word “survivor” in the centre of the board and asking students to contribute other words or ideas that they associate with this term. Have students relate their ideas about survival to both Joseph and Brianna’s personal stories, as told in the film.

Have students listen to a recorded version of “Solveig’s Song” on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/ Type “Solveig’s Song by Edvard Grieg” into the search function of the website). This is the song that is personally significant for Joseph, and the piece of music that Brianna performs for him in the film. While students listen, ask them to participate in a free-writing exercise based on the associations, emotions and images that the song calls to mind. Rules for free writing: write for the length of the song; do not stop writing; do not rush but also do not go too slowly; do not cross anything out or fix your writing; ignore grammar and spelling rules and just allow your ideas to flow freely; if you do not know what to write, write “I don't know what to write” until another idea comes to mind.

Brianna states that playing Joseph’s violin is a privilege because, "I get to have history in my hands.” Ask students to think about an object that they have observed, held or used that was imbued with historical significance. Have them write a journal entry about the history of this object and how they felt in its presence.

In small groups, have students create a timeline that traces the history of the violin in the film. Ask them to extend the timeline into the past and future, imagining who may have played the violin before Joseph and who will inherit the violin after Brianna. Ask each group to present their ideas to the class.

For both Joseph and Brianna, playing music is therapeutic. It offers them a way of reliving joyful memories, escaping their pain and trauma, and transforming their reality. In small groups, have students research and discuss the connection between music and healing. Have them record their main ideas in a mind map. At the end of the activity, have each group briefly share their mind map with the class.
WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film

http://www.joesviolin.com
Twitter: @JoesViolin
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/JoesViolin

Additional Resources

*Bronx Global Learning Institute for Girls Charter School*: This is the official website of the charter school that Brianna attends. Students can learn more about the school's mission and values.
http://bgligschool.org

*The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation*: This is the organization that matches the donated musical instruments with schools in need. Students can browse the organization's website to learn more about their initiatives to bring music into schools.
https://www.mhopus.org

*WQXR*: This is the website of the New York public radio station, WQXR, which held the instrument drive that began the story of *Joe's Violin*. Students can type "instrument drive" into the search function of the website to learn more about the number of instruments that were donated and to view an interactive map of where the instruments were distributed within the city.
http://www.wqxr.org

*MusiCounts*: This is a Canadian charity that promotes music education. Students can browse the site and watch their promotional videos to learn about the importance of music education and how MusiCounts is helping to make music accessible in Canada.
https://www.musicounts.ca

*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*: This website contains a wealth of information about the Holocaust, including resources for educators and a learning site for students.
http://www.ushmm.org

*UCL Centre for Holocaust Education*: This is a valuable resource for teaching and learning about the Holocaust. It contains lesson plans and classroom materials that students can use to understand the context of Joseph's story.
https://www.holocausteducation.org.uk

*The New Yorker*: The September 2016 article “A Holocaust Survivor’s Violin Finds a New Home” by Andrea DenHoed provides an inside look at the making of *Joe’s Violin*, as well as information about the subjects since the film was made.
http://www.newyorker.com/ Type the name of the article into the search function of the website.

*Coalition for Music Education*: This organization advocates for quality music education and raises awareness about the role of music in Canadian culture. Students can read the page entitled, "Why learn music?" to learn about the benefits of music education.
https://www.musicmakesus.ca

*Deadline Hollywood*: An interview with Kahane Cooperman entitled “Joe's Violin Director Kahane Cooperman on Crying for Two Years in Making of Emotional Documentary Short” offers insight into the filmmaker's process and the making of the film.
http://deadline.com/ Type the name of the article into the search function of the website

*PBS Joe's Violin*: This PBS website for the film contains a section for educators and organizers, including a lesson-plan page with questions and activities based on the film.
http://www.pbs.org/pov/joesviolin
Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

Joseph's daughter asks him why he chose to buy a violin as opposed to something more practical like a coat or food that he may have needed after the war had ended. Why do you think he chose the violin? What does his choice tell us about Joseph's values?

Over the course of Joe's Violin, we see Joseph and Brianna's friendship evolve. What do you think are the benefits of an intergenerational friendship such as this? Do you think there are any challenges or barriers to intergenerational friendships?

Joseph's mother sends him a letter with the following verse from Edvard Grieg's "Solveig's Song": "The winter may pass/ And the spring disappear/ But I know for certain/ You will come back again/ And as I promised/ You will find me waiting then." What do you think was the significance of these words for Joseph? How do you imagine he felt when reading this letter?

Brianna comes from a borough of New York City called the Bronx. What do you know about this community? Conduct research to find out the geographic location, history and demographics of the neighbourhood, as well as any other information you may find relevant or interesting.

Why do you think Joseph chose to donate his violin instead of keeping it or passing it on to someone in his family?

Joseph's personal story and his family history are depicted in the film through narration, images and text. Why do you think the filmmaker, Kahane Cooperman, chose to tell Joseph's story using this combination of subjective and objective perspectives?

What three words or phrases would you use to describe Brianna? What makes her unique and why do you think she was chosen to receive Joseph's violin?

The film is dedicated to the memory of Regina Kaufman Feingold, Joseph's wife, who passed away in 2015. Based on the film, how would you describe Joseph's relationship with Regina? How do you think her death has affected Joseph?

Brianna tells Joseph that she admires how he "never gave up" and continued to have hope despite all his hardships. What do you think enabled Joseph to persevere and maintain a sense of hopefulness?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

The students at the Bronx Global Learning Institute for Girls learn to play the violin from a very young age, and instruction in violin is mandatory at the school. In your opinion, should music be a compulsory part of education? What is your experience with music education over the course of your schooling?
1. “How long can you live with memories?”
   Joseph Feingold

2. “What drove you to use your cigarettes for a violin instead of a winter coat or food?” Ame Gilbert, Joe’s daughter

3. “My mother had a good voice and, very often, I accompanied her on the violin. Music meant so much to us.” Joseph Feingold

4. “When I first heard about Joseph’s violin donation, it did put this sense of responsibility of, ‘We have to find a home where this violin can continue having its voice.’” Tricia Steel, program director at The Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation

5. “One of the things that led me to know that this school was the perfect fit for Joseph’s violin is that the principal referred to the girls that she serves at the school as survivors. They come from all different backgrounds but each one of them has her story.” Tricia Steel, program director at The Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation

6. “I had a huge obsession when I was younger with Tinkerbell, and I kinda still do. She’s like an independent, hard-working fairy and she was chosen for something special, and I was chosen for something special too.” Brianna Perez

7. “When she’s playing the violin, she transforms herself totally. It’s like she’s going inside of the music.” Mercedes Polanco, Brianna’s mother

8. “Everyone has those days where it’s dark for them, but most people find their light, and my light is playing the violin.” Brianna Perez

9. “It’s such a joy to teach you every single day at school. You display a passion for music that is very rare. We know, Brianna, that you will cherish this violin and enjoy playing on it just as Joseph did.” Kokoe Tanaka-Suwan, Brianna’s music teacher

10. “They allowed us to write a letter once a month, so I sent the letter to my mother and I received a reply. My mother wrote out the lyrics of ‘Solveig’s Song,’ which was very appropriate to a mother who’s missing her son.” Joseph Feingold

11. “That violin has so many secrets that nobody knows.” Brianna Perez

12. “I cannot forget my brother telling us, only once in our life, about the day that they took my mother and youngest brother. That’s the only time he told me with details that I don’t care to repeat.” Joseph Feingold

13. “My brother and I went to the flea market. We came across a violin, so I got the violin for a carton of cigarettes. I walked the streets and I played the violin. It reminded me of my younger years before the war. That was when I finally lived as normally as I could.” Joseph Feingold

14. “It’s a privilege because I get to have history in my hands. To me, this is like an adventure, and I always wanted an adventure.” Brianna Perez
Joe's violin was only one of the more than 3,000 instruments that were donated to the WQXR instrument drive. Suppose that every donated instrument has its own inspiring story to tell. Imagine that you have just uncovered the fascinating origin story of one of the instruments from the collection. Like Joe's Violin director Kahane Cooperman, you will track the history of this instrument, as well as its transition into the hands of a student in the public-school system. Think about the past life of the instrument as well as its potential future.

Consider the following:

• What kind of instrument is it? What is it made of? Where did it originate?
• Who owned it before? What is their story?
• Why was it donated and who donated it?
• Which student from which school will receive the instrument? What is their story?

You may present the story of your instrument in the form of a newspaper article, an interview transcript or a short story.
### ACTIVITY RUBRIC: IMAGINING THE HISTORY OF AN INSTRUMENT

#### Knowledge/Understanding

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<tr>
<td>3.0 3.4</td>
<td>Student demonstrates a moderate understanding of the chosen textual form and uses few effective writing strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.5 3.9</td>
<td>Student demonstrates a considerable understanding of the chosen textual form and uses several effective writing strategies</td>
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<td>4.0 5.0</td>
<td>Student demonstrates a high level of understanding of the textual form and uses a variety of effective writing strategies</td>
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#### Thinking and Inquiry

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<td>Student demonstrates a limited ability to think creatively and present ideas in an organized way</td>
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<td>Student demonstrates a moderate ability to think creatively and present ideas in an organized way</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.5 3.9</td>
<td>Student demonstrates a considerable ability to think creatively and present ideas in an organized way</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.0 5.0</td>
<td>Student demonstrates an excellent ability to think creatively and present original, well-organized ideas</td>
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#### Application

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<td>3.0 3.4</td>
<td>Student makes connections within and between various contexts with some effectiveness</td>
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<td>3.5 3.9</td>
<td>Student makes connections within and between various contexts with considerable effectiveness</td>
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<tr>
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#### Communication

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<td>The text is poorly structured and contains numerous grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors</td>
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<td>3.0 3.4</td>
<td>The text is loosely structured and contains some grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.5 3.9</td>
<td>The text has a coherent structure and is largely free of grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.0 5.0</td>
<td>The text is well-structured and free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors</td>
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Comments: Total: ______________/20
# EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

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<th>COURSE</th>
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| **Grade 7 & 8 Languages**       | • 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**          | • generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience.  
• draft and revise their writing, using a variety of literary, informational 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.  
• demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. |
| **Grade 10–12 Media Arts**      | • 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 the sociocultural and historical contexts of media arts.  
• demonstrate an understanding of responsible practices associated with producing, presenting and experiencing media art works. |
| **Grade 9–12 Music**            | • identify and describe ways in which music reflects the society in which it was created and how it has affected communities or cultures.  
• listen to selections that represent a variety of musical styles and genres, and identify and reflect on their personal responses to them.  
• explain how the study of music has contributed to their personal growth (including the development of their values), their ability to express themselves, their awareness of social and environmental issues, and their understanding of others. |
| **Grade 11 Dynamics of Human Relationships** | • demonstrate an understanding of the components of personal well-being, how to achieve and maintain it and its importance throughout the life course.  
• demonstrate an understanding of how self-concept influences an individual’s interactions with others.  
• identify the roles people have in various relationships.  
• describe strategies for sustaining various types of relationships as they evolve over time. |
| **Grade 11 Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology** | • explore topics related to anthropology, psychology and sociology, and formulate questions appropriate to each discipline to guide their research.  
• use an anthropological perspective to explain how diverse factors influence and shape human behaviour and culture. |
| **Grade 11 World History Since 1900: Global and Regional Interactions** | • use the historical inquiry process and the concepts of historical thinking when investigating aspects of world history.  
• analyze key causes and consequences of various global and regional conflicts as well as the effectiveness of efforts to maintain peace between 1919 and 1945.  
• analyze some significant developments related to human/citizenship rights and cultural identities. |
Grade 11 & 12 Equity Studies

- 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.

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](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html)