

HOW WE CHOOSE



Lead Sponsor



Exclusive Education Partner



This project was supported through Toronto Arts Council Strategic Funding.

Additional support is provided by The Toronto Arts Council, The Andy and Beth Burgess Family Foundation, the Hal Jackman Foundation and through contributions by individual donors.

hotdocs
OUTSPOKEN. OUTSTANDING



Like us on Facebook.com/docsforschools

WWW.HOTDOCS.CA/YOUTH

HOW WE CHOOSE

Directed by Alexandria Bombach

2016 | USA | 15 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of *How We Choose* 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

In *How We Choose*, Alexandria Bombach explores the question: "How do you make the wrenching decision of whether to leave your homeland?" Helena Saboori remains positive and pursues her passions, accepting the risks of staying in Afghanistan. Omaid Sharifi wrestles with his decision to stay, but uses his art to make a positive change. Arash Seddique chooses to leave after receiving a special immigrant visa to the United States, while Rana and Wahid Qaderi make the decision to embark on a dangerous journey, leaving financial stability and their home in hopes of finding peace for their five children.

The Filmmaker

Living on the road since 2010, Alexandria Bombach is an award-winning filmmaker from Santa Fe, New Mexico. Alexandria founded her production company RED REEL in 2009 and set out to make *23 Feet*, a 30-minute documentary about people living a simple life to do what they love in the outdoors. *23 Feet* takes an in-depth look at what it means to live for your passions—the highs and the lows. The film screened at festivals in 15 countries and toured across the US in a rogue distribution outlet: her 1970 Airstream with an outdoor theatre attached to it. Alexandria directed and produced the Emmy Award-winning series *MoveShake* in 2012 that gave an honest look into the complicated lives of people who have set out to make a positive environmental or social impact. Her feature-length documentary *Frame by Frame* had its world premiere at SXSW in 2015 and has won more than 15 festival awards. The film follows the lives of four Afghan photojournalists who are facing the realities of building Afghanistan's first free press. Focusing on character-driven stories evoking empathy rather than sympathy for the human condition, Alexandria's work challenges the perceptions of cultures, issues and ideas that usually have limited or sensationalized coverage in mainstream media.

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

Educational package written and compiled by
Riisa Walden and Noelle Morris riisa.walden@gmail.com,
noellemorris00@gmail.com

VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

The following three sub-sections 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

Before watching the film, have students read the BBC's country profile on Afghanistan (<http://www.bbc.com/> Type "Afghanistan country profile" into the search function of the website). This will provide students with context on the country. They may wish to revisit the country profile tool after the film. A more concise country profile is available from National Geographic Kids (<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/> Type "Afghanistan" into the search function of the website).

Have students read through a chronology of key events in Afghanistan and clarify any terms that they do not understand (<http://www.bbc.com/> Type "Afghanistan profile Timeline" into the search function of the website).

Have students create a KWL chart for the following terms: (a) emigrate, (b) immigrate, (c) refugee and (d) asylum. Students can add to this chart as they watch the film.

Have students review the Canadian Council for Refugees document, *Talking About Refugees and Immigrants: A Glossary of Terms* (<http://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/static-files/glossary.PDF>).

Set a purpose for viewing by having a discussion about one or more of the questions or quotations from the Extension Activities section of this guide. Have students share the statement and what they think or believe about it with the class.

Viewing Activities

Have students make notes on what the filmmaker decided to capture on film. How is Afghanistan portrayed? Are there any scenes that stand out, and why?

Have students keep track of any words or terms they don't understand. After viewing the film, have students look up the definitions.

Have students jot down two to three 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

Ask students for their takeaway: describe the film in one sentence. Have students share their takeaways in pairs or small groups, and then as a class. What are the similarities and differences between the students' takeaways? You may also wish to enter all of the takeaways into a word cloud generator, such as Wordle (<http://www.wordle.net>), to see the frequency of certain words used by students in their takeaways.

Discuss with students their initial reactions to the various subjects and their choices to leave or stay in Afghanistan. Did their reactions evolve over the course of the film?

In the film, Alexandria Bombach explores the following question: How do you make the wrenching decision of whether to leave your homeland? Use this question as a prompt for a class discussion or an individual writing task.

In the film, Helena Saboori says, "I am realistic, but sometimes you have to dream." In a written entry or class discussion, have your students reflect on their dreams and consider what actions are needed to achieve their dreams. What obstacles may they face and how can they overcome these obstacles?

Based on the perceptions of the film's subjects, have students create a T-chart illustrating the pros and cons of leaving Afghanistan. As a class, discuss their charts.

Have students find additional information on one of the film's subjects: Helena Saboori, Omaid Sharifi, Arash Seddique, Rana Qaderi and Wahid Qaderi. Where are they now and what is their life like as a result of their decision to leave or stay in Afghanistan?

As a class or in small groups, have students conduct additional research on the conflict in Afghanistan and answer the five Ws. What role does the international community play in this conflict, and how has Canada responded? More specifically, how has Canada responded to the refugee crisis? Students can be given two to three minutes to present their findings.

The film presents Afghanistan in its present day, after decades of war and conflict. Have students explore a photo essay by William Podlich that presents the country in a different light (<http://www.rferl.org/media/photogallery/afghanistan-kabul-historical-photos/24892496.html>). After looking at the photographs, have students write a one-page response.

Have students conduct research on the Taliban, considering why and how they came to power, as well as what life was like before and during the Taliban's reign in Afghanistan.

Have students research another region or country where there is ongoing conflict. The selected country does not have to be part of the Middle East, but it should be a place where individuals must seriously consider the implications of remaining in their homeland. Compare their findings to the conflicts presented in the film.

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 choose one of the events from the film and write a diary entry as if they were part of the event.

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.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

Additional Resources

BBC: This resource from 2016, "Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts," provides visual and textual information on where migrants are from, where they are going, how they arrive in Europe, the dangers of their journeys, and reactions in Europe.

<http://www.bbc.com/> Type the title of the resource into the search function of the website.

Glimpses of Hope in the Shadow of War: This qualitative study, which is in its initial stages, will focus on the experiences of Afghan adolescents (aged 14 to 20 years) who are dealing with the daily consequences of living in a conflict zone.

<http://afghanyouthproject.org>

Government of Canada: This resource provides detailed information on the refugee and asylum services that are available in Canada.

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/index.asp>

Kiana Hayeri: Kiana Hayeri is a documentary photographer and TED fellow whose work focuses on youth who have been raised in conflict. "Born in War (Afghanistan)" is Hayeri's recent work, which depicts a generation that has only known war, and a subculture that no one really knows about.

<http://kianahayeri.com/born-in-war>

The New York Times: This article from May 2016, "Attacks in Kabul Keep Wall Builders Busy, Turning City Into Labyrinth," examines the blast walls that have been built in Kabul following bombings and attacks.

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

TED Talks: In this TED Talk, "Refugees Have the Right to Be Protected," António Guterres discusses why there has been such an increase in refugees around the world, as well as how the international community can work together to solve the global refugee crisis. <http://www.ted.com/> Type the title of the talk into the search function of the website.

The Atlantic: "Afghanistan's Children of War" is a photo series that focuses on the children in Afghanistan who have grown up knowing little else but conflict and war. Forty-four photos are included in the series.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/> Type the title of the photo series into the search function of the website. Also search for "In Focus Archives for Afghanistan" to see the other photo collections from the series on Afghanistan.

The Atlantic: With many citizens choosing to migrate, the article "'Stay with Me:' Afghan Government Beggars Citizens Not to Flee" reports on how the Refugees and Repatriations Ministry in Afghanistan mounted a campaign in 2015 to persuade its citizens to stay and rebuild the country.

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

The Globe and Mail: In "Three Mistakes We Keep Repeating When It Comes to Refugees" published September 4, 2015, Doug Saunders examines Canada's own mistakes over the past century when it comes to dealing with and welcoming refugees from around the world.

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

The GroundTruth Project: The GroundTruth Project's podcast series has included three episodes on Afghanistan (episodes one, two and four). The podcasts can be streamed directly from the website or downloaded via iTunes.

<http://thegroundtruthproject.org/projects/podcast/>

The Council on Foreign Relations: This independent, nonpartisan membership organization, think tank and publisher has produced *The Taliban—A CFR Info Guide Presentation*.

<http://www.cfr.org/> Click Publications, then Interactives, then The Taliban.

UNHCR: Each year, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees releases a mid-year report that examines displacement trends of people around the world. The mid-year reports include who is hosting the world's refugees, as well as information on refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, returned refugees and other groups of concern. <http://www.unhcr.org/> Type "mid-year trends" into the search function of the website.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

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

Do you know anyone who has left their homeland? Did they choose to leave, or were there other factors? How do they feel about it now?

Discuss with students their reactions to the subjects and their individual choices, as well as Afghanistan. Did their reactions evolve as they watched the film? Why?

What obstacles, pressures and challenges do the subjects face in the film? How do these challenges affect their decisions to stay in Afghanistan or to leave the country?

What are some of the long-term effects and consequences of war and conflict? How are children affected?

What human rights and freedoms should people be expected to have? How do the rights and freedoms of the people in Afghanistan differ from the rights and freedoms in your own country?

How does the film deal with issues of freedom, equality, human dignity and individual and collective rights and responsibilities?

What did you know about Afghanistan before watching the film? What did you learn about the country as a result of watching the film?

In the film, Omaid Sharifi uses his art to inspire other people and says, "I see I'm making a difference... a positive change. That's what keeps me here." What are the small ways that an individual can cause change to happen?

In the film, Helena Saboori says, "My hope, these projects that I'm doing, that is the 50 percent that keeps me here, despite the bombings, despite not knowing what will happen to me as I walk home at night." Rana Qaderi also talks about the resilience of the people she knows in Afghanistan. How do you think people can be resilient and hopeful in the face of conflict and uncertainty?

Arash Seddique received a special immigrant visa to the US and called it the "hardest week of my life." Why would he feel this way?

Why is it important to stand up for what you believe in? What are some of the consequences of standing up for your beliefs?

What challenges do immigrants and refugees face as they settle into their new countries?

Would you have the courage to leave your home and country as a refugee or immigrant?

Have other countries attempted to help stop the conflicts in Afghanistan? What have been the results?

If you lived in a conflict zone in Afghanistan, how would you want the international community to respond?

Despite their experiences, the subjects in the film have hope for their individual futures. How would you react if you were in their position?

QUOTATIONS FROM THE FILM TO EXPLORE

1. *"Right now, my family is 50/50. Fifty per cent want to go, 50 per cent want to stay."* Helena Saboori
2. *"I was scared to leave. I didn't know what I would do if I left this place."* Omaid Sharifi
3. *"I see I'm making a difference... a positive change. That's what keeps me here."* Omaid Sharifi
4. *"I feel broken that in the past 15 years, we could not get this country to a place where we could live here. We wouldn't have to move to another country."* Arash Seddique
5. *"If we make it to the shores of Turkey or Greece—great. But then what? I realize those who go are lost. Because you have to start from zero. You don't know the language. And what you did or did not study, your certification—what are you supposed to do? You have to let it go. It's like you are born again."* Helena Saboori
6. *"When we go to work in the morning, our children say, 'Father, will you come home or not?'"* Wahid Qaderi
7. *"We have visas to Turkey, up to there we are going legally. After that... we are concerned about the journey, but just for one day. If we die, we die for one day. If we live here, we die every day. We prefer that situation over this situation."* Wahid Qaderi
8. *"There were a lot of temptations that I leave. Not only because of security... because of the corruption. I'm really fed up.... I'm just one person. I can't change everything."* Omaid Sharifi
9. *"The future is not suicide attacks, it's not bombs. They don't belong to the future."* Omaid Sharifi
10. *"When my mom was leaving, she was crying, and I was trying to calm her down, but in the back of my head, I was like, 'Why do ladies cry?' She would just tell me, 'You don't understand. It is the country.' I'm like, 'What part of this country? The explosions on the road? The killings? All these rapes? All this crazy chaos? Is that what you're going to miss?' And my mom was like, 'You won't understand. It is that feeling that one day, you will feel.' But right now, I understand and I can connect.... I know what 'motherland' is."* Arash Seddique
11. *"I am alive now."* Helena Saboori

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: UNDERSTANDING THE CHOICE TO IMMIGRATE

Think about people in your life you know may have immigrated to Canada: your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, teachers, etc. Conduct an interview with one of these people to find out about their decision to immigrate.

Ask questions like:

- What are the reasons you chose to immigrate?
- Were there things you found hard to leave in your native country? If so, what?
- Why did you choose to come to Canada in particular?

Develop some of your own questions to include their interview.

Students will present their interview subject to the class in a small presentation, introducing their interview subject and the findings of their interview.

Presentations should be accompanied by visual aids that make use of effective images, as well as text to help produce a stimulating presentation.

ACTIVITY RUBRIC: UNDERSTANDING THE CHOICE TO IMMIGRATE

Knowledge/Understanding

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Response to the guiding questions	Student's responses are limited in scope, conveyed through a basic selection of text and images	Student provides adequate responses to the guiding questions, conveyed through text and a selection of images	Student provides detailed responses to the guiding questions, conveyed through text and a thoughtful selection of images	Student provides sophisticated responses to the guiding questions, conveyed through text and a sophisticated selection of images	/5

Thinking/Inquiry

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Justification for the choices made in the project	Student demonstrates a limited ability to justify choice of technology	Student demonstrates some ability to justify choice of technology	Student demonstrates a considerable ability to justify choice of technology	Student demonstrates an outstanding ability to justify choice of technology	/5

Application

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Application of knowledge learned about the refugee experience and the use of technology	Student demonstrates limited knowledge of the refugee experience and the importance of technology when developing project	Student applies some knowledge of the refugee experience and the importance of technology when developing project	Student applies satisfactory knowledge of the refugee experience and the importance of technology when developing project	Student thoroughly applies detailed knowledge of the refugee experience and the importance of technology when developing project	/5

Communication

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Creation of an effective and creative visual display	The student's visual display is limited in effectiveness and/or creativity, making a basic use of text and/or images	The student's visual display is somewhat effective and creative, making adequate use of both text and images	The student's visual display is very effective and creative, making sound use of both text and images	The student's visual display is exceptionally effective and creative, making wonderful use of both text and images	/5

Comments:

Total: _____/20

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 7 & 8 Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes. • 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. • 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 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. • create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques.
Grade 10-12 Media Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process 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.
Grade 11 Origins and Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze ways in which various social, economic and political factors influenced people's decisions to emigrate, with particular emphasis on the selected ethnic group. • analyze the roles played by conflict and denial of rights in people's decisions to emigrate, with particular reference, where applicable, to the selected ethnic group. • analyze the roles played by family, community organizations and governments in people's decisions to emigrate and in attracting them to Canada.
Grade 11 Regional Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze current as well as historical patterns of population movement and distribution in the selected region.
Grade 11 Equity, Diversity and Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore topics related to equity, diversity and/or social justice, and formulate questions to guide their research. • demonstrate an understanding of how identity is socially constructed and internalized, and of the impact of social norms and stereotypes. • demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of power relations in various social contexts. • demonstrate an understanding of the impact individual action can have on equity, social justice and environmental issues, and of how the media can create awareness of these issues. • demonstrate an understanding of how social activism can be used to support equity and social justice objectives.
Grade 11 Dynamics of Human Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • demonstrate an understanding of various social and cultural influences on relationships. • demonstrate an understanding of skills and strategies that help people to develop and sustain healthy relationships.

Grade 12 World Geography: Human Patterns and Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the influence of social, political, cultural, economic and environmental factors on human environments and activities. • explain the causes and effects of human migrations.
Grade 12 Canadian and World Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze the causes and effects of economic disparities around the world. • compare the cultural, economic and political aspirations of selected groups and the effects of their actions on local, national and global geographic issues.
Grade 12 Equity and Social Justice: From Theory to Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • evaluate the contributions of individuals and groups and/or movements identified with specific aspects of the struggle for equity and social justice.
Grade 12 World Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze how cultural identities are socially constructed, preserved, transmitted and transformed. • analyze specific cultural expressions and a range of factors that can affect them. • demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of power relations within specific cultural groups and between minority and majority cultures.
Grade 12 Human Development Throughout the Lifespan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 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. • demonstrate an understanding of how factors affect social-emotional development, with an emphasis on the process of socialization.
Grade 12 Challenge and Change in Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the causes and effects of social change. • demonstrate an understanding of how forces influence and shape social patterns and trends. • demonstrate an understanding of how various social structures and conditions support or limit global inequalities.
Grade 12 World History since the 15 th Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze the significance of various social, economic and political policies, developments and ideas in various regions of the world since 1900. • analyze interactions between various groups since 1900 and how key individuals and social, economic and political forces have affected those interactions. • analyze the development of the rights, identity and heritage of different groups around the world since 1900.
Grade 12 Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when investigating issues, events and developments of national and international political importance. • demonstrate an understanding of various political ideologies, theories and concepts, and analyze their relevance to Canadian and international politics. • analyze how social, economic and geographic factors influence contemporary politics in and relations between various countries around the world. • explain violations of human rights in Canada and abroad as well as the role of Canadian and international laws, institutions, and processes in the protection of human rights.

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>