Curricular Connections

A Guide for Teachers and Students to Company One Theatre's Production:

Dear Educators and Students,

We are pleased to present to you our Curricular Connections Packet for Company One Theatre's production of *The Flick* by OBIE Award wining playwright Annie Backer. We've developed these materials to facilitate your understanding and engagement with the production and we encourage you to adapt the material to suit your needs. *The Flick* is an adult play with adult language. While this curricular connections packet reflects the adult content of the play, it is intended as a launching off point for your work with students.

Enclosed you will find:
> * Introduction
> * A word form the Dramaturg, Jessie Baxter
> * A word from the Playwright, Annie Baker
> * Background information
> * Script analysis and discussion questions
> * Lesson plans

If you have any questions, please contact us at stageone@companyone.org

See you at the theatre!

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Introduction

"It's just like different and that like scares you. People always freak out when like you know when like art forms move forward."
-Sam, *The Flick*

Theatre often acts as a mirror held up to society and forces us to take a more profound look at the reflection: ourselves and the ever-changing world we live in. *The Flick* certainly encourages us to do that, both literally and figuratively; the stage is designed to look like the inside of an old movie theatre, and the audience in *The Flick* acts as the movie screen. Questions of friendship, authenticity, and humanity strike hard at the characters on stage, as well as those off the stage.

Some of the big questions *The Flick* brings up are to what lengths do we go to maintain authenticity, as individuals, and as a society? Are we the arbiters of our own validity? Or is that a stamp only given to those who fit into certain social and cultural norms? The characters in *The Flick* shed a new light on these questions in the quirkiest of ways. Sam, a 35- year old lower-middle class Red Sox fan, makes his living at The Flick, the only independent movie theatre in Worcester County still showing films with a 35 mm film projector. Avery, the newest member of the Flick's employees, is a film snob who suffers from a serious case of self-loathing. Rose, an angsty projectionist at the Flick who wears no make-up and baggy black clothes, is obsessed with herself and the way others view her. At first, Sam seems to have his act down pat: Avery's new friend, Roses semi-secret admirer. However, his reliability in each of those roles fades as the play unfolds. Avery is consumed with the legitimacy of 35 mm film as opposed to digital cinema, which is quickly taking over movie theatres across the country. At the same time, he questions his own legitimacy as a young black male struggling with identity, depression, and sexual orientation. Rose fights hard to break the stereotype society places on her, but does that make her "real" or just another attention craving phony? As we enter the world of these characters we find ourselves facing similar doubts about how we're viewed by society and how that affects our place in the world.

Several other pressing questions stem from the play, forcing us to look at the way we treat technology, ourselves, and others around us. Some of the questions we will attempt to answer and discuss further are:

- How do we define authenticity?
- What happens when we doubt ourselves to the point of depression, and sometimes even suicide? How can we escape from shame and self-loathing?
- What are the differences between 35 mm film and digital cinema and how do they affect the way we make and watch movies?

Through background information, script analysis, discussion questions and lesson plans, we will further explore the way *The Flick* examines these important issues.

From Screen to Stage
by Dramaturg Jessie Baxter

Before Annie Baker became a celebrated playwright, she was a movie-obsessed kid growing up in a small town in Western Massachusetts. While writing THE FLICK, Baker drew on the many hours she spent at her quirky local cinema, and looked to some of her favorite films for inspiration. Here are a few of the movies that she especially loved and incorporated into the play:

Sherlock Jr. (1924)

This comedic silent film is about a lowly cinema projector and janitor, played by Buster Keaton, who hopes to win the love of a beautiful girl. Annie Baker's fondness for telling stories about underdogs isn't the only influence at work here. During the film, Keaton's projectionist falls asleep during a movie and a fantastic dream sequence unfolds in which he leaves his body and gets trapped inside the movie onscreen. Each time he tries to get his bearings, the scene changes and throws him for another loop, resulting in some wonderful slapstick comedy. THE FLICK's Dreaming Man is, in part, a loving homage to this section of the film.

Jules and Jim (1962)

Arguably the best of director François Truffaut's work, *Jules and Jim* is the story of a doomed love triangle told over the course of a few decades. When the two men, who are old friends, meet the enigmatic Catherine, their friendship is forever altered. The power dynamics and tiny betrayals that play out over the course of the film examine themes of desire, projection, and manipulation – all concepts on display in THE FLICK as well. *Jules and Jim* has a youthful, joyous energy and employs a variety of cinematic techniques, making it a classic example of the French New Wave movement of the late 1950s and 1960s. Truffaut's use of short, episodic scenes gives the viewer a sense that reality is fragmented and makes even the most everyday moments as dramatic and significant as something from an epic tale.

The Purple Rose of Cairo (1985)
One of Woody Allen's lesser-known films, *The Purple Rose of Cairo* is a Depression-era story about Cecelia, a down- and-out waitress who finds solace from her miserable circumstances at the local cinema. When a handsome character from a movie steps off the screen and into real life, the two fall in love. Things grow more complicated when the real actor from the film arrives and vies for Cecelia's affections as well, forcing her to choose between fantasy and reality. The movie's ending is famously bleak, but is a powerful example of how cinema can function as an escape – something we see reflected in THE FLICK 's Avery and his ability to get lost in the movies.

Pulp Fiction (1994)
This Quentin Tarantino classic was one of Annie Baker's biggest film obsessions during her early teens. Like Avery, Baker watched it repeatedly, and had the film practically memorized. *Pulp Fiction* follows the several intersecting storylines and is jam-packed with pop culture references and allusions to other notable movies. It's considered a prime example of post-modern film and, like much of Baker's own work, is highly stylized with an unconventional structure. Tarantino explores the surrealism of everyday language and the way characters try to subvert traditional roles, two notions that Baker also explores in THE FLICK.

A Word from the Playwright, Annie Baker

"The main characters in the play are a black guy, a woman, and a Jew (although I no longer make Sam's Jewishness obvious). And that was important to me when I started writing the play. Three of the great 'Others' of American cinema, all of them victim to extreme stereotypes. And yet what are Hollywood movies without blacks, Jews, and women? I wanted these people to be quietly (maybe even unconsciously) fighting against their respective pigeonholes. And I also grew up knowing lower-middle- class Jews, hyper-educated black people, and women who wear baggy clothes and no makeup, and yet it is so rare to encounter any of those people in plays and movies. It feels like those people are forced to wander outside of and on the periphery of plays and movies."
— *excerpted from an interview with Play- wrights Horizons' Artistic Director Tim Sanford, in conversation about THE FLICK*

"The way human beings speak is so heartbreaking to me—we never sound the way we want to sound. We're always stopping ourselves in mid– sentence because we're so terrified of saying the wrong thing. Speaking is a kind of misery. And I guess I comfort myself by finding the rhythms and accidental poetry in everyone's inadequate attempts to articulate their thoughts. We're all sort of quietly suffering as we go about our days, trying and failing to communicate to other people what we want and what we believe."
— *excerpted from an interview with Playwrights Horizons' dramaturg Adam Greenfield, in conversation about Baker's play CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION*

"I thought about desire a lot while writing this play. Avery's desire for the movies, Sam's desire for Rose, Rose's desire for herself. They're all longing for something that doesn't feel like 'theirs' to have. Also, I think women in our culture are encouraged to be really auto-erotic (this goes back to Jules and Jim). Rose finds her own sexual fantasies humiliating because she knows they're part of the problem. Anyway, yeah, all the characters in the play are desperately trying to be authentic and find themselves, and their respective obsessive desires initially confuse but then ultimately (hopefully) clarify some stuff for them."
— *excerpted from an interview with Play- wrights Horizons' Artistic Director Tim Sanford, in conversation about THE FLICK*

"I love Chekhov's writing. [...] He taught me a lot about offstage action, offstage characters, and how important it is to have dialogue that does not appear to forward the plot. His characters are spontaneous and strange and do things we wouldn't expect them to do and yet they also never really change."
— *excerpted from an interview with The Wilma Theatre's dramaturg, Walter Bilderback, in conversation about Baker's version of UNCLE VANYA*

Background Information

How do we define authenticity?

The characters in *The Flick* are constantly searching for genuine connections. They strive for authenticity and acceptance in themselves, their coworkers, their jobs, and the films they project on the big screen day after day. But how do we define what it means to be authentic?

By definition, authenticity describes something real or genuine, not copied or false. Used as a technical term in psychology and existential philosophy, authenticity is the degree to which one is true to one's own personality, spirit, or character, despite external pressures; the conscious self is seen as coming to terms with being in a material world and with encountering external forces, pressures and influences which are very different from itself.

Due to the differences in experiences in their history, views of authenticity vary widely and often differ between groups and individuals. For philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, the conflict between "oppressive, spiritually destructive conformity" and an "authentic way of being" became the dominant theme of his early work. His novels often contain characters and antiheroes who base their actions on external pressures—the pressure to appear to be a certain kind of person, the pressure to adopt a particular mode of living. His work also includes characters who do not understand their own reasons for acting, or who ignore crucial facts about their own lives in order to avoid uncomfortable truths. Sartre maintained that the concepts of authenticity and individuality have to be earned but not learned.

The New York Times (by Reginald V. Gray)
Jean-Paul Sartre

Most writers on inauthenticity in the twentieth century considered the predominant cultural norms to be inauthentic, not only because they were seen as forced on people, but also because they required people to behave falsely towards their own desires, obscuring true reasons for acting. Authenticity is connected with creativity: the impetus to action must arise from the person in question, and not be externally imposed. Advertising was a textbook example of how Western culture distorted the individual for external reasons. An early example of the connection between inauthenticity and capitalism was made by Karl Marx, whose notion of "alienation" can be linked to the later discourse on the nature of inauthenticity.

A *New York* Times article by Stephanie Rosenbloom explains, "The word has been bandied about for ages, be it by politicians or Oprah Winfrey, who popularized the notion of discovering your 'authentic self' in the late 1990s after reading Sarah Ban Breathnach's *Something More*. But 'authentic' is enjoying renewed popularity in an age of online social networking and dating, in which people are cultivating digital versions of themselves. The theme is so pervasive that even one of the oldest institutions in the world has weighed in. In a June statement entitled 'Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age,' Pope Benedict XVI said that

increasing involvement in online life 'inevitably poses questions not only of how to act properly, but also about the authenticity of one's own being.' He added that 'there is the challenge to be authentic and faithful, and not give in to the illusion of constructing an artificial public profile for oneself.'"

Resources:

> Jean Paul Sartre: Existentialism
http://www.iep.utm.edu/sartre-ex/#H6
"Sartre's philosophy has a very positive message which is that we have infinite freedom and that this enables us to make authentic choices which escape from the grip of bad faith."

> Man Makes Himself by Jean Paul Sartre
http://philosophy.lander.edu/intro/articles/sartre-a.pdf

> The Authenticity of Self: Conceptualization, Personal Experience, and Practice by Phillip Vannini and Alexis Franzese
http://www.academia.edu/449955/The_Authenticity_of_Self_Conceptualization_Personal_Experience_and_Practice

> Authentic? Get Real by Stephanie Rosenbloom
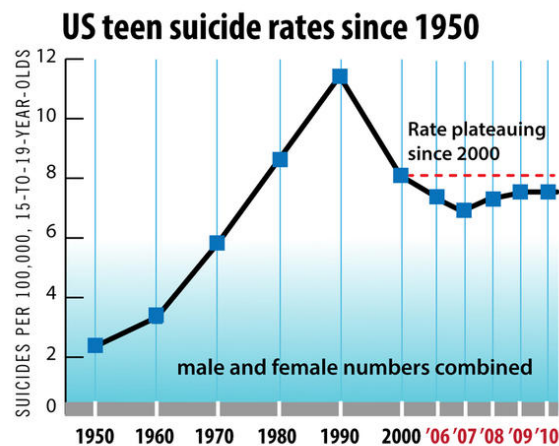http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/11/fashion/for-only-the-authentic-cultural-studies.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
"That 'authentic' has become a fad word is not surprising to scholars like Naomi S. Baron, a linguistics professor at American University in Washington and the author of 'Always On: Language in an Online and Mobile World.' She said it's common for some words to be used so often that they actually become devoid of meaning."

How does society affect mental health and teen suicide?

The demands for authenticity and acceptance in today's society can be so extreme, that they often lead to depression and even thoughts of suicide. Culturally, we're expected to make a certain amount of money, have a certain number of friends, and look a certain type of way, with the impression that it will lead to happiness. However, that is all too often not the case, and the burden of not fitting into society's norms can cause detrimental damage to our mental health. After Avery's mother left him and his father, he decided to swallow pins in the hopes that it would end his life. Suicide and attempted suicide are major, preventable public health problems. In 2010 (the most recent year for which data are available), 38,364 suicides were reported, making suicide the 10th leading cause of death for Americans according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. That year, someone in the country died by suicide every 13.7 minutes.

Suicide death rates vary considerably among different groups of people. The CDC reports suicide rates by four key demographic variables: age, sex, race/ethnicity, and geographic region/state. Research suggests that many other variables also affect suicide rates, such as socioeconomic status, employment, occupation, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Despite the fact that death rates by suicide are highest in those over the age of 45, suicide remains among the top three leading causes of death for those aged 10-24. It results in approximately 4600 lives lost each year. The top three methods used in suicides of young people include firearm (45%), suffocation (40%), and poisoning (8%).

US teen suicide rates since 1950

Rate plateauing since 2000

male and female numbers combined

SUICIDES PER 100,000, 15-TO-19-YEAR-OLDS

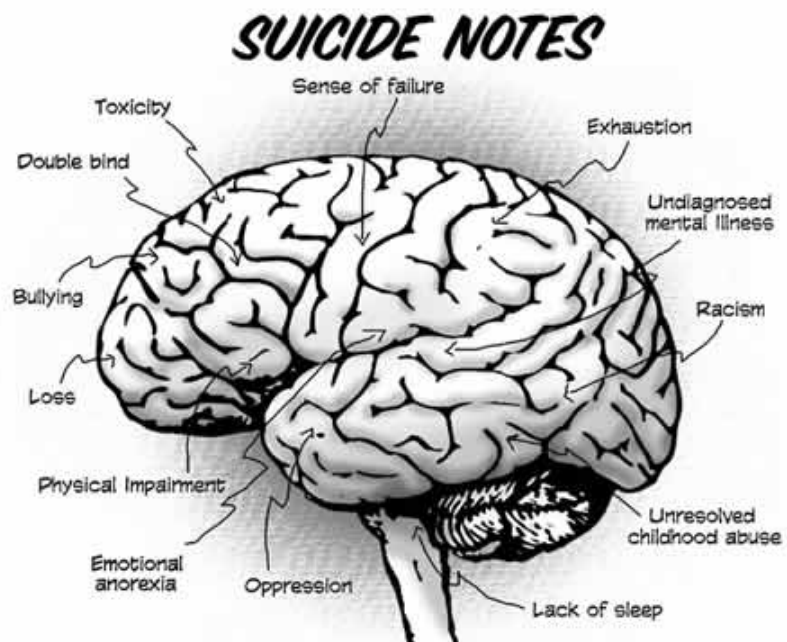1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 '06 '07 '08 '09 '10

Deaths from youth suicide are only part of the problem. More young people survive suicide attempts than actually die. According to the CDC, a nationwide survey of youth in grades 9–12 in public and private schools in the United States found that 16% of students reported seriously considering suicide, 13% reported creating a plan, and 8% reporting trying to take their own life in the 12 months preceding the survey. Each year, approximately 157,000 youth between the ages of 10 and 24 receive medical care for self-inflicted injuries at Emergency Departments across the U.S.

Suicide affects all youth, but some groups are at higher risk than others. Boys are more likely than girls to die from suicide. Of the reported suicides in the 10 to 24 age group, 81% of the deaths were males and 19% were females. Girls, however, are more likely to report attempting suicide than boys. Cultural variations in suicide rates also exist, with Native American/Alaskan Native youth having the highest rates of suicide-related fatalities. A nationwide survey of youth

in grades 9–12 in public and private schools in the U.S. found Hispanic youth were more likely to report attempting suicide than their black and white, non-Hispanic peers.

Teenage suicide is not caused by any one factor, but likely by a combination of them. Depression can play a massive role in teenage suicide. Some contributing factors include:

Eating disorders
Relationship issues
Drug Abuse
Illness
Sexual abuse/rape
Disability/deformations
Divorce of parents
Domestic violence/abuse
Trauma
Academic failure
Household financial problems
Loneliness
Bullying
Feelings of being misunderstood
Social rejection
Insecurities
Anger/guilt
Extreme mood swings
Loss of a loved one
Mental disorders

SUICIDE NOTES
Toxicity
Double bind
Bullying
Loss
Physical Impairment
Emotional anorexia
Oppression
Sense of failure
Exhaustion
Undiagnosed mental illness
Racism
Unresolved childhood abuse
Lack of sleep

Most people are uncomfortable with the topic of suicide. Too often, victims are blamed, and their families and friends are left stigmatized. As a result, people do not communicate openly about suicide. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, there are many behavioral indicators that can help parents or friends recognize the threat of suicide in a loved one. Since mental and substance-related disorders so frequently accompany suicidal behavior, many of the signs to be looked for are symptoms associated with such disorders as depression, bipolar disorder (manic depression), anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug use, disruptive behavior disorders, borderline personality disorder, and schizophrenia. Some common symptoms of these disorders include:

- Extreme personality changes
- Loss of interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Significant loss or gain in appetite
- Difficulty falling asleep or wanting to sleep all day
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Withdrawal from family and friends

- Neglect of personal appearance or hygiene
- Sadness, irritability, or indifference
- Having trouble concentrating
- Extreme anxiety or panic
- Drug or alcohol use or abuse
- Aggressive, destructive, or defiant behavior
- Poor school performance
- Hallucinations or unusual beliefs

Resources:

> National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

> American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
http://www.afsp.org/preventing-suicide

> Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention
http://www.masspreventssuicide.org/

> More Than Sad
http://www.MoreThanSad.org/

> National Institute for Mental Health
http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention/index.shtml

What is 35 mm film?

Film is one of the few things that Avery finds solace in, especially those shot and projected on 35 mm film. 35 mm film is the film gauge most commonly used for chemical still photography and motion pictures. The name of the gauge refers to width of the photographic film, which consists of strips 34.98 ± 0.03 mm (1.377 ± 0.001 inches) wide.

The 35 mm width, originally specified as 1.375 inches, was introduced in 1892 by William Dickson and Thomas Edison, using film stock supplied by George Eastman. Film 35 mm wide with four perforations per frame became accepted as the international standard gauge in 1909, and has remained by far the dominant film gauge for image origination and projection because its size allowed for a relatively good tradeoff between the cost of the film stock and the quality of the images captured.

Until a few years ago the ubiquity of 35 mm movie projectors in commercial movie theaters made it the only motion picture format, film or video that could be played in almost any cinema in the world. However since 2008, the rapid conversion of the cinema exhibition industry to digital projection has seen 35 mm film projectors removed from many projection rooms as they are replaced by digital projectors. As of the end of 2012 only about 30% of cinemas worldwide were still screening current release movies from 35 mm film.

Resources:

> Journal of The Society of Motion Picture Engineers
http://www.archive.org/stream/journalofsociety21socirich#page/284/mode/2up

> Timeline of the History of Photography
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eastman/timeline/index_2.html

> The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907 by Charles Musser
"During this year-long period cinema's industrial organization changed as well, moving from self-sufficient and closely held companies, each with its own distinctive technological system, to an industry where the technology or hardware was readily available at an affordable price. The initial potpourri of formats thinned, and 35-mm-gauge film with Edison-type perforations came to be widely used..." (Page 189)

What is Digital Cinema?

Digital Cinema refers to the use of digital technology to distribute or project motion pictures as opposed to the historical use of motion picture film. A movie can be distributed via hard drives, the Internet, dedicated satellite links or optical disks such as DVDs and Blu-ray Discs. Digital movies are projected using a digital projector instead of a conventional film projector.
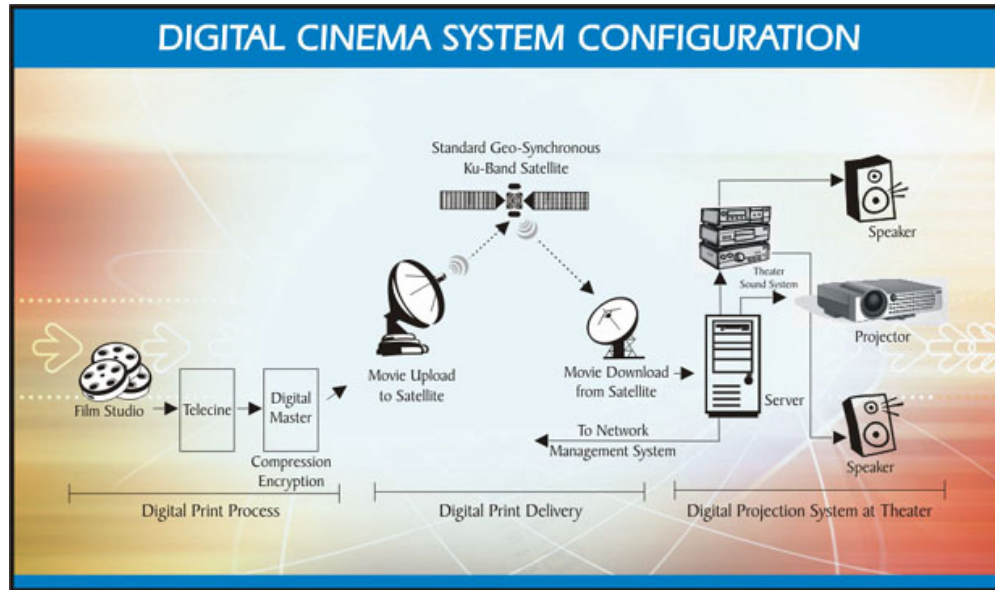
On October 23, 1998, in conjunction with Texas Instruments, DLP CINEMA projector technology was publicly demonstrated for the first time in five theaters across the United States with the release of "The Last Broadcast." It was the first feature length movie, shot, edited and distributed digitally.

On June 18, 1999, DLP CINEMA projector technology was publicly demonstrated for the second time on four screens in North America for the release of Lucasfilm's *Star Wars: Episode I: The Phantom Menace*. Theaters with digital projectors were projecting footage right from Pixar Animation's computers. On January 19, 2000, the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers in North America initiated the first standards group dedicated towards developing Digital Cinema.

By December 2000, there were 15 digital cinema screens in North America, 11 in Western Europe, 4 in Asia, and 1 in South America. Digital Cinema Initiatives (DCI) was formed in March 2002 as a joint project of many motion picture studios (Disney, Fox, MGM, Paramount, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Universal and Warner Bros. Studios) to develop a system specification for digital cinema. By mid 2006, about 400 theaters were equipped with 2K digital projectors with the number increasing every month.

According to Dramaturg Jessie Baxter, "the transition from film to digital is a financial no-brainer for studios. Compared to the $1500 it costs to print and ship a single, unwieldy 35mm reel, a small digital hard drive runs just $150 and significantly lowers distribution and storage costs. And unlike 35mm film, which can scratch and deteriorate over time, digital files look the same whether it's the first screening or the 500th. But new technology is expensive to implement, and the upfront costs to renovate hurt small movie houses most. Furthermore, digital storage formats and reclamation technologies change quickly, and many film archivists argue that celluloid, when kept in temperature-controlled conditions, is a more stable medium."

Baxter explains how "corporate mega-multiplexes like AMC, Lowes, and Regal have the funds to easily convert their equipment, but it's a different story for independent cinemas that must shoulder the expenses themselves. With installation of just one digital projector costing upwards of $75,000, it's a heavy economic burden. The National Association of Theater Owners estimates that 1 in 5 screens closes as a result. Many local theaters have resorted to Kick starter campaigns, pledge drives, and price increases to raise the money needed to upgrade."

DIGITAL CINEMA SYSTEM CONFIGURATION

Resources:

> Digital Cinema Package
http://www.dcpinfo.com/

> Digital Cinemas Initiatives
http://www.dcimovies.com/

> Digital Cinema Society
http://www.digitalcinemasociety.org/

> Film to digital: Seeing movies in a new light By Todd Leopold
http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/31/tech/innovation/digital-film-projection/

> Film is Dead? Long Live Movies By Manohla Dargis and A.O. Scott
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/09/movies/how-digital-is-changing-the-nature-of-movies.html?pagewanted=all
"The history of cinema is also a history of technological innovations and stylistic variations. New equipment and narrative techniques are introduced that can transform the ways movies look and sound and can inspire further changes. Does taking film out of the moving image change what movies are?"

Script Excerpts and Discussion Questions

On Authenticity and stereotypes
Page 71-72

ROSE: So why are you depressed? *Beat.*

AVERY: Are you serious?

ROSE: Yeah.

AVERY: Um. Because everything is horrible? And sad? *(a short pause)* And the answer to every terrible situation always seems to be like, Be Yourself, but I have no idea what that fucking means. Who's Myself? Apparently there's some like amazing awesome person deep down inside of me or something? I have no idea who that guy is. I'm always faking it. And it looks to me like everyone else is faking it too. All the black people I meet are like acting out some stereotype of what a black person is supposed to be like and all the white people I meet are acting out some stereotype of what a white person is supposed to be like and all the gay people are like walking stereotypes of gay people. Everyone's acting like they're on a sitcom or something. All the time. And I had one friend, one friend, at Clark, this guy from Bangladesh who was really into sculpture, and then he transferred to RISD at the end of freshman year.

AVERY: And my mom like...

AVERY: Actually never mind. *A long pause.*

ROSE: Do you think *I'm* a stereotype?

AVERY: Of like—

ROSE: Of like—whatever. Of like what I am.

AVERY: ...Yeah.

ROSE: You do?!

AVERY: Yeah.
Pause.

ROSE: I guess you're right. *Pause.*

ROSE: Uch. *Pause.*

ROSE: Wait. Were you being fake? Just now?

AVERY: When?

ROSE: When you were like...when you were going off about how everyone is so fake. Were you faking it then?

AVERY: I mean yes and no. It's hard to tell, I guess.

ROSE: Yeah.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do *you* define authenticity? What does it mean to be authentic in *your own* community?

2. Can you think of an example in your own community in which social norms have impacted the way people behave? The way you behave?

3. Is there a stereotype that you've often felt compelled to break? One you've wanted to fulfill? Discuss why or why not.

4. Is there a time when you have felt you were a fake? Why did you feel compelled to "fake it," rather than be true?

AVERY: Today is the one-year anniversary of the day I tried to kill myself.

After a pause:

ROSE: Really?

AVERY: Uh-huh. *Pause.*

ROSE: How did you do it?

AVERY: I swallowed a bunch of pins.

ROSE: Oh my god. *Pause.*

ROSE: That *works?*

AVERY: Well. *(short pause)* I didn't plan on doing it. *(short pause)* It was a weird day.

A long pause.

ROSE: It's weird. I've been like super super sad before but I've never wanted to commit suicide. I just like don't get it. I don't get suicide. It's like: aren't you curious what's gonna like *happen* to you? In like the future? I'm just like so curious about my future.

AVERY: Yeah. You've probably never...

He decides not to say it.

AVERY: ... You know what *I* don't get?

ROSE: What?

AVERY: Bulimia.

ROSE: Oh my god!! I know, right?!

AVERY: Barfing is so horrible.

ROSE: I know!! It's like /the—

AVERY: It's like the worst feeling in the world. It's like being in hell.

Discussion Questions

1. After reading the play, how do you think society affects Avery's mental health?

2. Imagine that you are Rose. Do you feel your response to Avery was supportive? Why or why not? Using hindsight, come up with some ideas that you could have done or said to support him more.

3. Have you, or someone you know, experienced similar feelings of self-doubt and loathing? What were the contributing factors, and how did you cope or help cope?

4. Discuss some of the ways we can prevent suicide attempts, specifically among youth?

The cut and paste version of Avery's letter from pages 97-100

"Dear Mr. Saranac,

My name is Avery Sharpe and I am an employee at the North Brookfield Flick. I recently learned of your plans to buy the Flick and turn it into the North Brookfield "Venue." I commend you on your keen business sense and your entrepreneurial. I'm still trying to figure out the right word to use. Entrepreneurial...I commend you on your etcetera, etcetera. Steve Bosco also informed me and the rest of the Flick employees that you intend to keep us on if we so desire and that you also plan on replacing our 35-millimeter Century projector with a digital projector. I understand you may have many good reasons behind this decision—fewer maintenance fees, simpler training for new projectionists, the unavoidable fact that many movies are now shot digitally, and, of course, the desire to keep working with companies like 20th Century Fox who starting in January will refuse to distribute any on their movies on 35-millimeter film.

However. I urge you to think twice about this decision. You are the only theater in Worcester County, and one of only eight theaters in the entire state of Massachusetts, that still use a film projector. This is an honor, Mr. Saranac. You are carrying a torch and I strongly encourage you not to extinguish it.

Movie aficionados like myself come to this theater because of your film projector. And as more and more movie theaters in the United States convert to digital projections I predict that the brave few that continue to use film will become highly valued. You see, Mr. Saranac, the word "film" refers to celluloid. So if you say "Wanna see the new Spielberg film?" you are by definition saying "Wanna see the new Spielberg movie" *on celluloid.* By the way, people like Steven Spielberg have spoken out about this very issue and he is on the record as saying that he will continue to shoot on 35 millimeter until they pry the camera out of his cold, dead hands. He will continue to shoot on 35-millimeter blahblahblah. Because of people like Mr. Spielberg and many others who WILL continue to shoot on film, it's important that there still be a few remaining theaters that uses film projectors. When you digitally project a movie that was shot on film, you are not actually showing that movie. You are not giving the audience what they paid for.

Film can express things that computers never will. Film is a series of photographs separated by split seconds of darkness. Film is light and shadow and it is the light and shadow that were there on the day you shot the film. Digital movies—I think the phrase digital film is an

oxymoron—are actually just millions of tiny dots. These dots, or pixels, cannot express the variation in color and texture that film can. All the dots are exactly the same size and the same distance apart. Mr. Saranac, projecting a 35 millimeter film digitally is like looking at a postcard of the Mona Lisa instead of the Mona Lisa itself. I urge you to keep our beloved Century Projector and to take a stand against the digital takeover of American movies and movie theaters.

Sincerely,

Avery Newton Sharpe."

Discussion Questions:

1. Imagine that you are Mr. Saranac. Would you have considered Avery's plea or made the switch to Digital Film? Discuss the pros and cons of using 35 mm film versus digital cinema.

2. Discuss the authenticity of 35 mm film and the impact that switching to digital cinema has on the art of "film" making.

3. Discuss the type of movie theatres in *your own* neighborhood and how changing those theatres would affect the rest of *your* community.

Lesson Plan 1: Two Truths and a Lie

Objectives:
- Exercise creative writing techniques, in both fiction and non-fiction
- Answer prompts with clear, well thought-out, ideas
- Define characteristics of authenticity
- Analyze authenticity in others' writing
- Analyze validity in your own writing

Materials:
- Pen
- Paper
- Computer

Length:
- Two – three 45 minute in-class sessions (depending on class size)

Activity:

1. Give students the following writing prompts or three prompts of your choosing:
- Think of your most embarrassing moment. Describe the event and why it was so embarrassing.
- Describe your greatest "victory" to this point in your life.
- Describe an experience in your life that has served as a turning point. How did it change your perspective?

Answers should be no longer than two pages. Two of the responses should be valid and based on actual events in the students' life. One of the responses should be fiction and not based in truth.

2. Students will get into groups of 4-5, depending on class size. Students will read each of their responses out loud to their groups. Group members will then try to decide which stories are true and which ones are false.

3. Discuss the following:
- As the writer, how did you go about choosing which stories were true and which were false?
- As the listener, how did you go about deciphering between the authentic and inauthentic stories?
- Were you accurate in your choices?
- If so, why do you think that is? What represented validity in the story?
- If not, how come? What do you think represented artifice?
- How does this change the way you view others and their stories?

Lesson Plan 2: Suicide Prevention in Your Community

Objectives:
- Use effective brainstorming techniques
- Identify reliable resources for research
- Analyze social, cultural, and economic affects on mental health and suicide
- Demonstrate an ability to think creatively and abstractly about research materials

Materials:
- Pen
- Paper
- Computer
- Poster Board
- Decorative Materials (magazine, newspaper, web images, markers, etc.)

Length:
- Two – three 45 minute in-class sessions

Activity:
1. Have students answer the following questions through independent research (internet, library, newspaper, etc.)
- How does suicide affect your community? What are the death rates by suicide in the State of Massachusetts? In the city of Boston? In your own hometown?
- How many attempted suicides occurred in the last year? In Massachusetts? In Boston? How many were between the ages 10 and 24?
- Of those attempted suicides, how many survived? How many were between the ages 10 and 24?

Answers can either be written in bullet point or essay form, no longer than two pages.

2. Students will get into groups of 4-5 and discuss their findings.

3. Based on their findings, each group will come up with a public service announcement, specifically geared towards helping youth who have survived attempted suicide. They should include the following:
- Campaign title or slogan
- A poster to be placed around the school that deals with awareness, warning signs, and resources
- A brochure that also includes statistics on teen suicide and teen suicide attempts, ways to prevent future suicide attempts, and resource materials for those who suffer from depression and suicidal thoughts.
- A 30-60 second PSA that can be broadcast to the school via school radio and/or news, morning announcements, pep rallies, etc.

Lesson Plan 3: As Simple as a Smile

Objectives:
- Exercise positive behavioral techniques to help those around you
- Analyze the impact human behavior has on mental health
- Understand the power of a smile

Materials:
- Article: "Letter from California Jumpers" by Tad Friend in *The New Yorker* http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/10/13/031013fa_fact?currentPage=all
- Your smile

Length:
- Two 45 minute in-class sessions

Activity:

1.Have students read the following excerpts from the article "Letter from California Jumpers"

On December 17, 2001, fourteen-year-old Marissa Imrie, a petite and attractive straight-A student who had planned to become a psychiatrist, left her second-period class at Santa Rosa High School, took a hundred and-fifty-dollar taxi ride to the Golden Gate, and jumped to her death. Though Marissa was always very hard on herself and had lately complained of severe headaches and insomnia, her mother, Renée Milligan, had no inkling of her plans. "She called us 'the glue girls,' we were so close," Milligan told me. "She'd never spoken about the bridge, and we'd never even visited it."

When Milligan examined her daughter's computer afterward, she discovered that Marissa had been visiting a how-to Web site about suicide that featured grisly autopsy photos. The site notes that many suicide methods are ineffective (poison is fatal only fifteen per cent of the time, drug overdose twelve per cent, and wrist cutting a mere five per cent) and therefore recommends bridges, noting that "jumps from higher than . . . 250 feet over water are almost always fatal." Milligan bought the proprietor of the site's book, "Suicide and Attempted Suicide," and read the following sentence: "The Golden Gate Bridge is to suicides what Niagara Falls is to honeymooners." She returned the book and gave the computer away.

Every year, Marissa had written her mother a Christmas letter reflecting on the year's events. On Christmas Day that year, Milligan, going through her daughter's things, found her suicide note. It was tucked into "The Chronicles of Narnia," which sat beside a copy of "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers." The note ended with a plea: "Please forgive me. Don't shut yourselves off from the world. Everyone is better off without this fat, disgusting, boring girl. Move on."

Renée Milligan could not. "When I went to my optometrist, I realized he has big pictures of the Golden Gate in his office, and I had to walk out," she said. "The image of the bridge is everywhere. San Francisco is the Golden Gate Bridge—I can't escape it." Milligan recently filed a wrongful-death lawsuit on behalf of her daughter's estate against the Golden Gate Bridge District and the bridge's board of directors, seeking to require them to put up a barrier. Her suit charges, "Through their acts and omissions Defendants have authorized, encouraged, and condoned government-assisted suicide." Three previous lawsuits against the bridge by the parents of suicides have all been dismissed, and the bridge officials' reply to Milligan's suit lays out their standard defense: "Plaintiffs' injuries, if any, were the result of Plaintiffs' own actions (contributory negligence)." Furthermore, the reply says, "plaintiffs cannot show that Ms. Imrie used the property with due care for the purposes it was designed." ...

The bridge comes into the lives of all Bay Area residents sooner or later, and it often stays. Dr. Jerome Motto, who has been part of two failed suicide barrier coalitions, is now retired and living in San Mateo. When I visited him there, we spent three hours talking about the bridge. Motto had a patient who committed suicide from the Golden Gate in 1963, but the jump that affected him most occurred in the seventies. "I went to this guy's apartment afterward with the assistant medical examiner," he told me. "The guy was in his thirties, lived alone, pretty bare apartment. He'd written a note and left it on his bureau. It said, 'I'm going to walk to the bridge. If one person smiles at me on the way, I will not jump.' "

Motto sat back in his chair. "That was it," he said. "It's so needless, the number of people who are lost."

As people who work on the bridge know, smiles and gentle words don't always prevent suicides. A barrier would. But to build one would be to acknowledge that we do not understand each other; to acknowledge that much of life is lived on the chord, on the far side of the railing. Joseph Strauss believed that the Golden Gate would demonstrate man's control over nature, and so it did. No engineer, however, has discovered a way to control the wildness within.

2. Discuss, as a class, the impact of the following statement:

"I'm going to walk to the bridge. If one person smiles at me on the way, I will not jump."

3. Have students go out and smile at someone; a true, engaging smile for a random stranger who might need it. That simple.

4. Afterwards, discuss the following:
   - Did you find it hard to smile at a random stranger?
   - Who did you smile at, and why?
   - What happened after you smiled?
   - How did you feel after the experience?
   - How might random acts of kindness, even those as a simple as a smile, help those around you? How do they specifically affect mental health and depression?

Lesson Plan 4: Movie Maker

Objectives:
- Use effective brainstorming techniques
- Demonstrate an ability to think creatively and abstractly about movie making
- Demonstrates an understanding of what goes into making movies
- Exercise persuasive writing techniques

Materials:
- Pen
- Paper
- Computer
- Research materials (internet, library, newspaper, etc.)

Length:
- Two 45 minute in-class sessions

Activity:
1. Have students look at the following four films and their genres (films that Annie Baker especially loved and incorporated into the play).
- *Sherlock Jr.* - American silent comedy
- *Jules and Jim* - French romance drama
- *The Purple Rose of Cairo* - American romance and fantasy comedy
- *Pulp Fiction* – American crime drama

2. Students will select one of the four films and create a new movie pitch. The movie will be based on their own lives, but should follow the genre and style of their chosen film.
- If you were to create a movie about your life, what kind of genre would it be, and why?
- What would be the main story line?
- How many characters would it consist of?
- What kind of budget would you need?
- What props would you need?
- What kind of music would you want underscoring the film? Any songs in particular?
- Describe the costumes, hair, and makeup.
- Where would the movie take place?
- List all of the places the movie would be shot and filmed.
- Would you play the leading character?
- Which actor would you want to play you?
- Which actors would play the other characters?
- Who would you want to direct the film, and why?

- Would you shoot in 35mm film? Why or why not?
- When would you want the film to be released and where?
- Who would you want to see the film, and why?

3. Research the production companies associated with *Sherlock Jr., Jules and Jim, The Purple Rose of Cairo,* and *Pulp Fiction*. Based on your answers to question two, write a persuasive letter to one of the production companies you researched, pitching your movie. Consider the following in your letter:
- Which production company did you choose and why?
- Who at the company would you send the letter to?
- What kind of information about the film and budget should you include?
- How would you market/pitch the film?

4. Have students share their letters out-loud in class and discuss the following:
- Which movie/genre did they choose and why?
- Which movie/genres seemed to be most popular in the class? Why do you think that is?
- Did students find the letters effective? Why or why not?
- How many students chose to film in 35mm and why?
- How many chose to use digital? Why?

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