



Supa Modo

VIEWING GUIDE

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teaching the film

Supa Modo is a dramatic film about a terminally-ill girl in Kenya whose entire village rallies to realize her dream of being a superhero. A class screening of this film may complement a curriculum in Social Studies and World Cultures. Taught in conjunction with this guide, the film will encourage students to think about the importance of living life to its fullest, and what it means to be a superhero.

Grades 4 - 6

Support materials are intended to facilitate group discussion, individual and collaborative creative exercises, subject-based learning and access to resources for further investigation of material. Educators are encouraged to adapt and abridge the content as necessary to meet their unique learning objectives.

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All SFFILM Education materials are developed in alignment with California educational standards for media literacy. SFFILM Education welcomes feedback and questions on all printed study materials.

More info at sffilm.org/education





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about the film

Directed by Likarion Wainaina

(Kenya 2018) Swahili, Kikuyu, and English with

English subtitles, 74 min

A moving first-time feature from filmmaker Likarion Wainaina and co-producer Tom Tykwer shares the inspiring and powerful story about the strength of a young girl's imagination and the warmth of her community in making her dreams come true. Nine-year-old Jo loves Jackie Chan and action movies, and dreams of becoming a superhero herself, despite her terminal diagnosis.

When her family decides to move her out of the hospital and back home in her final few months, Jo's sister fights her mother's better judgment to keep Jo inside and resting. Together with the entire village, Jo embraces her superpowers and turns her dreams into a reality. A moving and sweet drama about the power of community and imagination in an unusual means to say farewell to those we love.

This study guide is intended to flexibly support educators in preparing for and following up on a class screening of **Supa Modo**.

subject areas

Social Studies

African Studies

World Cultures

Social-Emotional Studies

connect online

Websites about Kenya:

National Geographic Kids
bit.ly/2QRR4fU

Science Facts about Kenya
bit.ly/2q5kV8g

Books about Kenya:

For You Are a Kenyan Child by Kelly Cunnane, Illustrated by Ana Juan. Simon & Schuster, 2006.

Jambo Means Hello: A Swahili Alphabet Book by Muriel Feelings, Illustrated by Tom Feelings. Picture Puffin Books, 1992.

A Kid's Guide to Kenya by Jack L. Roberts. Curious Kids Press, 2017.

Project Resources:

Make-A-Wish Foundation
sf.wish.org

Movie-Making in the Classroom
bit.ly/2HU4ay

Creating Superheroes Lesson Plans (5)
bit.ly/20KlajG

Creating Superheros Lesson Plan (6-8)
bit.ly/1fVAyHG

discussion questions

pre-viewing topics and discussion

The film takes place in a village in Kenya. To contextualize the film, show students where Kenya is on a map, and teach them some facts about the country.

The main character in the film, Jo, has a terminal illness. "Terminal" means that she will not get better and will probably die of her illness.

- Do you know anyone who has gotten sick with a serious or terminal illness?
- If you were terminally ill, how would you want to spend the time you had left?

Jo loves superheroes and thinks a lot about being one.

- Who is your favorite superhero? What qualities does he/she have?
- If you could have one superpower, what would it be? Why?

character and story

1. Jo's mother brings her home from the hospital, but doesn't tell her why. Jo had lots of friends at the hospital and was happy there.

- Why does her mother bring Jo home, and why doesn't she tell her the reason?
- Do you agree with her decision to do this? Why or why not?

2. Jo's mother wants to keep her safe inside the house, but her sister Mwix thinks that Jo is being stifled, so she starts pretending that Jo has super powers.



If you could have one superpower, what would it be? Why?

- Why does Mwix want to make Jo believe she is a true superhero?
 - How does she do this?
 - Does it work? Does Jo believe in her own superpowers? How do you know this?
 - Why is Jo's mother against the idea of making Jo think she is a superhero?
 - What does she fear will happen?
3. By the end of the film, the whole village has come together for Jo.
- How are the people in the community affected by Jo's illness and how do they show their support?
 - How does the making of a movie help Jo's mother accept the loss of her daughter?

activity: create a superhero

In groups, have students create a superhero of their choice. They should decide on the superhero's characteristics:

- powers
- weaknesses
- costume
- secret identities
- nemesis or rivals

Students should make a drawing of their superhero on a poster. Present the superhero to the class!

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discussion questions

context

1. On the surface, life in Jo's village in Kenya looks very different from life in the United States.

- What are some differences and similarities between Jo's life and yours?
- Do you think there were more differences or commonalities? Why?

2. Jo's mother and sister loved Jo and wanted the best for her, but they both pretended or avoided telling her things they thought would hurt her.

- Do you think it is ever OK to make things up to keep someone happy? Under what circumstances?
- Do you think people should always be told the truth, even when it will hurt them or make them sad? Why or why not?

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Do you think people should always be told the truth, even it will hurt them or make them sad?

3. Jo's village helped her realize her wish by banding together to make a film about a superhero. In real life, there is an organization called the Make-a-Wish Foundation that grants wishes to children like Jo.

- If you were faced with a life-threatening or terminal illness, what would your wish be?
- How did it benefit the whole village to help Jo's wish come true?

style and message

1. In the opening scene Jo and her friends are watching a movie, and the film culminates with the whole village making a movie.

- What do you think the filmmaker's attitude is about the importance of film and cinema?
- What message is he trying to convey?

2. The production of the film-within-a-film does not always go smoothly, with people wandering away, making animal noises, goofing off, etc.

- Why do you think the filmmaker chose to make these scenes comical?
- Does the end result look like a professional, polished, Hollywood film?
- Does that matter? Why or why not?
- Is the film-within-a-film a success? How or how not?

activity: make a wish

As a class, watch some of the videos of wishes that have been granted by the Make-A-Wish foundation:

sf.wish.org

In small groups, generate ideas of ways to raise money to help more kids' wishes come true.

Groups present their ideas to the class, and vote on which idea they would most want to try.

3. During the making of the film-within-a-film, Jo appears to stop a truck with her bare hands, thus saving all the children inside.

- Do you think she really was able to stop the truck with her "superpowers"?
- Why did the filmmaker leave us to wonder how the truck really stopped?

4. This is a film about a young girl with a terminal illness, which sounds very sad. Yet, the tone of the film is one of hope, optimism, and even humor.

- Why did the filmmaker choose a light tone for a serious topic?
- Do you think it was a good choice? Why or why not?



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california media literacy standards

English-Language Arts Content Standards

- Grade 4: Standard 1.10 Evaluate the role of media in focusing attention on events and in forming opinions on issues.
- Grade 5: Standard 1.8 Analyze media as sources for information, entertainment, persuasion, interpretation of events, and transmission of culture.

For more information about media literacy standards in your state, visit:

- MediaLiteracy.com: resources for advancing media education, United States Standards for media literacy education. <http://www.medialiteracy.com/standards.htm>
- Frank W Baker's guide to State Standards Which Include Elements of Media Literacy. http://frankwbaker.com/state_lit.htm

common core standards

Grade 4:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

Grade 5:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).

Grade 6:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3 Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.



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media literacy resources: screening with meaning

We live in a world where technology mediates a large portion of human interaction and the exchange of information. Every projected image, every word published on a page or a website, and every sound from a speaker reaches its audience through the medium, through the language of the device. The ability to parse the vast array of media messages is an essential skill for young people, particularly in a mainstream commercial culture that targets youth as a vulnerable, impressionable segment of the American marketplace. Most students already have a keen understanding of the languages different media use and the techniques they employ to inspire particular emotions or reactions, but they often lack the skill or awareness to fully deconstruct the messages they continuously receive. Analysis of a media message—or any piece of mass media content—can best

be accomplished by first identifying its principal characteristics:

- (1) Medium: the physical means by which it is contained and/or delivered
- (2) Author: the person(s) responsible for its creation and dissemination
- (3) Content: the information, emotions, values or ideas it conveys
- (4) Audience: the target audience to whom it is delivered
- (5) Purpose: the objectives of its authors and the effects of its dissemination.

Students who can readily identify these five core characteristics will be equipped to understand the incentives at work behind media messages, as well as their potential consequences. Media literacy education empowers students to become responsible consumers, active citizens and critical thinkers.

common core standards

MEDIUM

All Media Is Constructed.

- What is the message, how is it delivered and in what format?
- What technologies are used to present the message?
- What visual and auditory elements comprise the media content?
- What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?

CONTENT

Media Is A Language For Information.

- What is the subject of the media message?
- What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content?
- What tools does the author employ to engage the viewer and evoke a response?
- To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?

PURPOSE

All Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason.

- Why was the message constructed?
- Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How?
- To what extent does the message achieve its purpose?
- What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?

AUTHOR

All Media Is Constructed by Someone.

- Who is delivering the message?
- Who originally constructed the message?
- What expectations do you have of the content, given its author(s)?

AUDIENCE

All Media Messages Reach an Audience.

- Who receives the message?
- For whom is the message intended?
- What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- How might others perceive this message differently? Why?