



## Learning Kit

### **Plague by Boo Junfeng**

At the height of the AIDS scare in the 1980s, health worker Iris Verghese arrives at a HDB flat, introducing herself to a family as the younger son's counsellor. The son is afraid and ashamed of his condition, and the family would like to be discreet.

The questions below are to help you extend your understanding of the film and the underlying issues. The questions are divided into three sections:

#### **Community**

The questions in this section explore social realities that each film investigates. The questions invite you to think in general/ take action about social issues or situations that affect you, the community you belong to or the broad society that we are part of.

#### **Self**

The questions in this section will challenge you to use the films as a point of critical self-reflection. They will provide opportunities for you to introspect and assess what you have taken away personally from watching the short film.

#### **Understanding Moving Images**

The questions in this section focus on the *how* of the short films. The film medium, as with other audio-visual mediums possess a vocabulary of their own. While most of us would be more familiar with the written medium, we should also be well-versed in reading images and sound. That would expand our vocabulary of communication. We want to invite you to analyse how the films affect you and other readers.

## **Community**

1. Have you ever experienced discrimination towards yourself or someone close to you? Have you met anyone who has been affected by social stigma?
2. At a point in time, we may have ignored something we thought was unjust or wrong, rather than trying to intervene to make things better. Think of one example of this from your own life.
3. In the story, who do you think is to blame for Jamie's fate? Himself? Society at large? Discuss.

## **Take Action**

4. Research - Find out more about Action for Aids, which the film is dedicated to (search for them online, read articles or watch videos about the organisation). What are some other similar organisations in Singapore?
5. Participate - Volunteer with the organisation.
6. Interview - Craft a survey on the film's issues (social stigma, underserved communities, volunteerism etc) and interview others in your neighbourhood about their experience of these issues.
7. Improve - What are some problems or issues depicted in the film? How else can we help people who face such situations?

## **Self**

1. How did the film make you feel?
2. What aspect of the film did you most engage with? What will you remember?
3. What does it make you think about?
4. Would you watch it again? Why/why not?
5. How would a second viewing be different? What would you focus on?
6. How would different people view this film differently (dependent on gender, age, ethnic background, worldview, etc)?

## Understanding Moving Images (Digital Literacy)

Carrying out a Grid Analysis on a short film is one of the best ways to engage your class and make them think more deeply about the structure and themes of the narrative they have just watched. The Grid Analysis technique was developed by the British Film Institute. There are no right or wrong answers, we want to encourage participation, discussion and creative thinking among students.

<p><b>Similarities</b></p> <p><i>What does the film remind you of? This can be in terms of genre, tone, character, story world, storyline, plot, themes, narrative techniques, particular events or outcomes, or some other tiny detail that the student finds interesting. Similarities may refer to the complete narrative or a specific element from the text.</i></p>	<p><b>Surprises</b></p> <p><i>These are the main surprises (reversals/revelations) in the film, in the order that they come: What happens that you were not expecting?</i></p> <p><i>Ask the class to note down in order anything that surprises them as they watch the text (or surprised them the first time they watched the text).</i></p>
<p><b>Puzzles</b></p> <p><i>Unlike surprises, this refers to any questions that remain unanswered by the end of the narrative. These may be things that remain genuinely unanswered, such as what happened to a secondary character, or what they did with the money, but it may also refer to elements of the narrative, e.g. character motivation, backstory or theme that students did not understand. Sometimes a pupil may suggest one of these puzzles during the 'Surprises' part of the analysis in which case note it down under 'Puzzles' and explain the difference.</i></p>	<p><b>Patterns</b></p> <p><i>This refers to patterns (or sometimes juxtapositions) of recurring actions, situations, shots or camera movements, compositions, narrative devices, design elements, colour or sound in different locations, the use of lighting, where music is used (which may be themed to the plot, setting or individual character), types of settings, character portrayal, use of specific words, etc, etc. You will quickly discover that the patterns often intensify and reveal the themes of the text, thereby helping to answer some of the questions raised in the 'Puzzles' quadrant.</i></p>

Adapted from <https://languagesonscreen.org.uk/resources/starter-activities/grid-analysis-group-activity>



**Here are some activities that you may consider to do with your students**

*These activities do not require any specialist knowledge of the language of film or the use of editing software.*

1. Writing about characters and back-stories, or follow up letters
2. Writing - Producing a newspaper or TV report of the incident
3. Debating issues raised in the film or connected to the subject matter of the film
4. Adaptation or Summary - Adapting or summarising the film narrative as a story, comic or graphic novella
5. Creative writing - Creating sequels or similar stories featuring different characters
6. Drama - Acting out scenes from the film in the language you are studying

Please let us know if you wish to collaborate on any learning packages or screening opportunities. You may contact 15 Shorts should you have further thoughts.