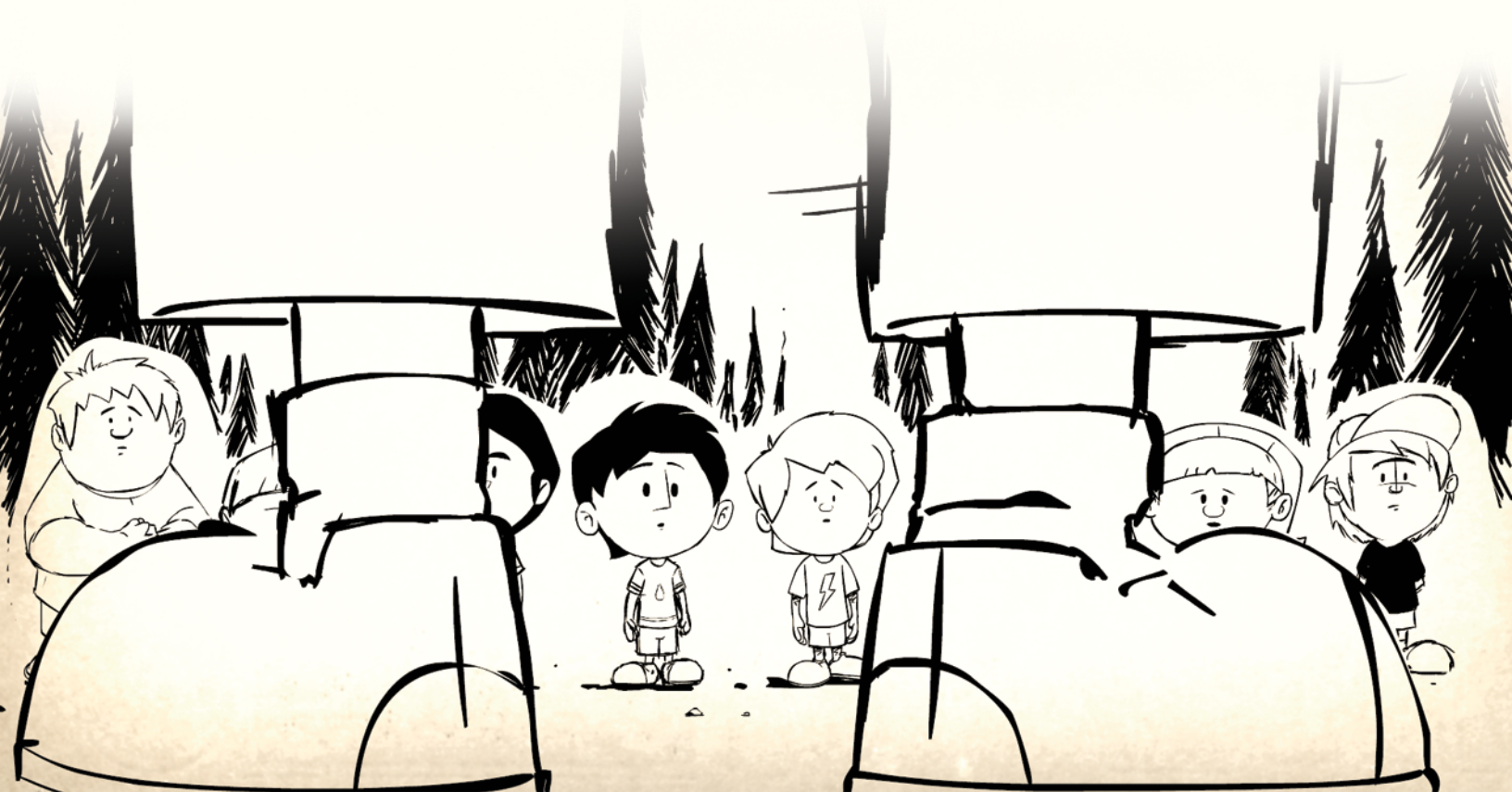


*EDUCATOR'S GUIDE*

# ***THE BASKETBALL GAME***



A NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA PRODUCTION



## ABOUT THE FILM

In 1983, nine-year-old Hart attends Jewish summer camp for the first time, while in a nearby Alberta town a social studies teacher makes headlines for teaching anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. In the aftermath of this story, the teacher's former students are invited to Hart's camp for a picnic and a basketball game. Hart and his campmates are both curious and afraid of what awaits them on the basketball court.

Told from Hart's perspective, *The Basketball Game* fuses animation, documentary and personal memoir to create a poignant, humorous tale of hope and tolerance in the face of fear and stereotypes.

## RECOMMENDED AGE

This film is suitable for learners aged 12 and up. *The Basketball Game* is a personal story about a young boy's experience with anti-Semitism and overcoming stereotypes. Mature themes and imagery are explored.

## RECOMMENDED SUBJECT AREAS

This film can be integrated into curriculum in the following subject areas at the primary and secondary levels:

- English/Language Arts
- History
- Canadian Studies
- Social Sciences and Humanities
- World Issues
- World Religions

## PREVIEWING THE FILM

It is always important to preview a film before watching it with your students. While previewing *The Basketball Game*, make a list of discussion questions that may be pertinent to your students and encourage reflection. Keep track of words, terms, concepts and scenes that may need context. This film contains animated images that may be considered offensive (swastikas, references to the Ku Klux Klan). We recommend informing your students that this content is part of the film before you screen it with them.

It's also important to keep in mind that this film represents the director's point of view. While all events referenced in the film are accurate and serve as an important lesson/teaching point, the story is told through the narrator's personal experiences and memories of that time.

## PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY

John Grierson defined documentary as the "creative treatment of actuality." What does that mean to your students?

Oftentimes when we remember certain events, we gloss over or exaggerate the specifics of the memory in question. This could be a very effective concept to explore with students before watching the film. Ask them to recall and describe one of their memories. Can they illustrate it? Perhaps they can create a short storyboard of the event complete with images and dialogue.

Why did they choose to illustrate it the way they did? Who was included in the image? How might someone else involved in the memory remember it differently? Why does this memory stand out? Does the student believe he or she has reflected this memory accurately? Is this a "creative treatment of actuality"?



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN ALBERTA

The majority of Alberta's 15,400 Jews live in urban centres, specifically Edmonton and Calgary. This wasn't always the case. Alberta's first Jewish settlers arrived in the 1880s, coinciding with the extension of the Canadian Pacific Railway into Western Canada. Nearly 150 Russian Jews were partially responsible for laying 160 kilometres of track from Calgary to Medicine Hat, a very significant development not only for Western Canada, but for the whole country.

It was around the same time that Sir Alexander Galt, Canada's high commissioner in London, convinced John A. Macdonald that Russian Jewish refugees could help develop and colonize Western Canada as farmers. (Many Eastern European Jews were leaving their countries after a series of vicious attacks, or pogroms. For more information on the pogroms of the 19th century, visit [ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005183](http://ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005183).)

By 1910, living conditions had improved following the arrival of the Canadian Northern Railway, and Jewish families came to join the male settlers. Many opened businesses along the railway and were supported with loans and financial support for creating community resources and centres for the Jewish community (places to buy kosher food, religious centres, etc). The hope of building communities was soon devastated by the Great Depression. By the end of World War II, Jewish communities in rural Alberta were virtually non-existent.

The Jewish population moved to urban centres and entered fields that offered opportunities for growth. The population continued to grow, and more and more resources were created—synagogues, Jewish day schools, newspapers, community centres, etc. While anti-Semitism did exist in Alberta, it was not as pronounced as in other areas of the country. For example, in Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, enrolment quotas were placed on the number of Jewish applicants allowed to attend universities and colleges. In Alberta, Jewish people found a secure and prosperous home, and many rose to leadership roles in the community.

## THE CASE OF JAMES KEEGSTRA

James Keegstra was a social studies teacher at a small high school in Eckville, Alberta. He also served as the town's mayor for five years. In 1984, he was charged with unlawfully promoting hatred against an identifiable group, in violation of the Canadian Criminal Code. Keegstra was accused of teaching his students anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial.

He was convicted after a 70-day trial, but the decision was overturned three years later after Keegstra's lawyer appealed that the hate law was unconstitutional and infringed on his freedom of expression.

The court case continued back and forth with appeals and convictions for 15 years. In 1996, a landmark decision was made. The Supreme Court upheld the conviction, noting that the Canadian Criminal Code's Hate Speech law did infringe on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but that infringement was justified.

For more information on this case, visit [stopracism.ca/content/james-keegstra](http://stopracism.ca/content/james-keegstra).



## EXPLORING IMAGES AND LANGUAGE FROM THE FILM: A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Mensch:** A Yiddish word (from German, *mensch*) meaning a person of integrity and honour. In the film we see young Hart reading a comic book called *Supermensch*. Why might the director have included this image in the film?

**Challah:** A special braided bread eaten on the Sabbath (a weekly time or day of worship) and holidays.

**Candles:** Lighting candles shortly before sunset indicates the beginning of the Sabbath (or Shabbat).

**Kippah** (or Yarmulke): Kippah is the Hebrew word for skullcap—a small round cap, usually made of cloth, traditionally worn by men during times of prayer and worship.

**Swastika:** (From Sanskrit, *svastika*). An equilateral cross with arms bent at right angles. This symbol dates back to the Indus Valley Civilization of Ancient India. The counter-clockwise version of the symbol was adopted by the Nazi party of Germany in 1920 and was subsequently made the state flag of Germany. Since that time, this symbol has become strongly associated with anti-Semitism and white supremacy. Its use is banned in Germany.

**Nazi:** A member of the German fascist party controlling Germany from 1933 to 1945 under Adolf Hitler; one who espouses the beliefs and policies of the German Nazis; fascist. See also [merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nazi](http://merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nazi).

**Skinhead:** Someone belonging to a youth gang whose members have close-shaven hair, are sometimes violent and often espouse white-supremacist beliefs.

**KKK:** (Abbreviation: Ku Klux Klan). An American post-Civil War society advocating white supremacy historically through violence and terrorism.

**Pogrom:** An attack or mob targeting a minority group through violence and destruction of property. Often this word refers to the pogroms of the 19th and 20th century against Jews, particularly in Eastern Europe.



## MEDIA LITERACY QUESTIONS

What is this film about?

Why was this film created?

How would you describe the tone of the film?

Why do you believe the director chose to tell this story through animation? How might this film have been different if it was a documentary?

Examine the role of colour in the film. Why are some images in black and white and others not? Does this help advance the story? Why or why not?

Are there stereotypes in the film? Explain. If yes, why are they included?

How do you think the visitors to the camp are portrayed? Is this a fair representation?

How might this film have been different if it were told from the perspective of the visitors to the camp? Or of the camp director?

This film contains a lot of music and sound effects. Are they effective? Why or why not?

At what point do the basketball players seem to find common ground?

Why do you believe the camp director decides to have the kids play basketball as part of the social mixer?

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- 1 Create a digital story with a user-friendly program such as Windows Movie Maker or Apple's iMovie. Have students pick a significant personal memory from their childhood, then upload their photographs and video into the software. Participants can add music, text and voice-overs. This activity will help students discover how to share a personal story effectively.
- 2 Rewrite *The Basketball Game* in another form (for example, as a journal entry, newspaper article or picture book) and from the perspective of one of the visitors to camp.
- 3 Organize a social mixer. Include a sporting event or any social activity that you think might help encourage two groups to get to know one another better. Invite another class or group to participate. Was it effective? Why or why not?
- 4 Have students create their own autobiography. What memories will be included? What will it be called? Who will be featured in it? What life lessons will be included? Have students choose the medium best-suited to retelling their story (screenplay, comic book, novel, etc.).

**RELATED FILMS FROM THE NFB**

TITLE	PRODUCTION YEAR	RUNNING TIME	TITLE CODE
20 YEARS LATER ...	1977	56:15	106C01 77153
THE APPRENTICESHIP OF MORDECAI RICHLER	1986	57:28	106C01 86034
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL BY A.M. KLEIN	1965	10:14	105B01 65083
BAGHDAD TWIST	2007	29:56	169C01 07411
BAMBINGER	1984	23:50	106C01 84611
BEHIND THE SWASTIKA: NAZI ATROCITIES	1945	5:00	106B01 45011
THE BOYS OF BUCHENWALD	2002	47:15	non-nfb
CELEBRATING TOGETHER	1985	33:25	111C01 85043
DARK LULLABIES (SHORT VERSION)	1987	57:13	106C01 87505
GLOVE STORY	2005	10:59	149C01 05053
HOLOCAUST DENIAL VS. FREEDOM OF SPEECH	1994	11:54	117C91 92180
I WAS A CHILD OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS - DVD/J'ÉTAIS UNE ENFANT DE SURVIVANTS DE L'HOLOCAUSTE - DVD	2011	76:45	153C99 11079
THE JEWS OF WINNIPEG	1973	27:20	106C01 73155
MEMORANDUM	1965	58:17	106B01 65113
MORTIMER GRIFFIN AND SHALINSKY	1985	23:43	106C01 85609
THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK	1973	28:05	106C01 73113
THE PROPHET – A PASSOVER CELEBRATION	1995	10:38	117C01 85164
RAYMOND KLIBANSKY: FROM PHILOSOPHY TO LIFE	2002	50:58	149C01 02028
SISTER KAY	2000	44:56	119C91 00139
A SLEEPING TREE DREAMS OF ITS ROOTS	1992	81:13	106C01 91128
A SPECIAL LETTER	1984	5:15	105C01 84023
THE VOYAGE OF THE ST. LOUIS	1995	51:37	117C01 94115



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