



FilmEd Classroom
**Films to Engage Students in
Meaningful Conversation**

FILM GUIDE

THE MAGIC OF CHESS

GRADES K-2

Jenny Schweitzer Bell | United States

LIVE ACTION | NONFICTION | DOCUMENTARY SHORT FILM | 4:44 MINUTES | 2019

Subtheme: Identity, Inclusion, Perseverance

PART IV

BEHIND THE SCENES

LEARN ABOUT THE FILMMAKER & FILMMAKING PROCESS

To make this film, Jenny Schweitzer Bell had to make a lot of decisions. The questions below will help students think about some of the different choices a filmmaker has to consider.

MAKING A FILM

Pose the questions below before showing the film once again.

- What are the different kinds of images you see in the film?
- What are the different kinds of sounds you hear in the film?
- Why do you think Jenny Schweitzer Bell might have chosen to make this film about kids and not adults? Or how would it have been different if it were about adults?

THE FILMMAKERS' CHOICES

Explain that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

- Why do you think Jenny Schweitzer Bell might have wanted to make this film?
- Why do you think Jenny Schweitzer Bell might have chosen to make a **documentary** film to tell this story, instead of making a **fictional** film?
- Everything we heard from the kids in the film was a response to a question that the filmmaker asked. If you were making this film, what questions would you like to ask?

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS: JENNY SCHWEITZER BELL

Jenny Schweitzer Bell is the director of the film THE MAGIC OF CHESS, for which she interviewed 23 chess players. She lives in New York City where she works as a filmmaker. She primarily creates nonfiction and documentary short films, like THE MAGIC OF CHESS. She has also created a 10-part series of short documentaries about NYC subway musicians. She first learned to be a photographer at the Rhode Island School of Design, and then learned about filmmaking at New York University.

Q&A WITH THE FILMMAKER

Let students know that while the filmmaker might have had a message or idea in mind, we are all welcome to interpret the film in our own way.

How did you become interested in filmmaking?

I was interested in art from a very young age. During my early childhood you would find me experimenting with drawing and painting during all of my free time. When I went off to high school I began making photographic images. At that time, you had to develop your film and your prints photochemically, in a darkroom. It wasn't as immediate as it is today, with digital cameras and computers. Because the process of creating imagery was more demanding of time and cost, photographers had to be more deliberate when making photographs. I think this taught me a lot about composition (or how you position the subjects of your frame) and lighting. As I got older, I became interested in writing short stories. Shortly after, I decided to become a filmmaker, as filmmaking would allow me to integrate image making and storytelling.

What was your experience like making THE MAGIC OF CHESS?

I worked as a one-woman-band, meaning to say, I direct, shoot, produce. I had one assistant. I knew that I would need to capture an enormous amount of material to make the film work, including interviews and the b-roll imagery. The tournament (in the film) is scheduled over three days and you're working between the timing of the chess rounds. I had to be on point to capture all of the elements going into the edit. Since this was a scheduled, on-location event, I knew there would be no going back for shots. I had to know exactly what imagery was needed going into the shoot and then frantically capture it all in three days.

Why was it important for you to tell the story in MAGIC OF CHESS?

My objective was primarily to showcase how deep passion and hard focus in an activity can truly enhance one's life. I have a nine-year-old daughter who is a competitive chess player. Taking part in the world of competitive chess has been a favorite activity for the past number of years. A misconception about chess is that it's a boring game for nerds. However, that couldn't be further from the truth. Chess is truly an exciting game to compete in and one where you can see great improvement with practice. It is also a wonderful opportunity to meet other kids from all over the country.

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