

SPEED SISTERS



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SPEED SISTERS

Directed by Amber Fares

2015 | Palestine/USA/Canada/Qatar/UK/Denmark | 80 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of *Speed Sisters* by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their class, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some weblinks that provide starting points for further research or discussion.

The Film

Despite restrictions on movement, a motor-racing scene has emerged in the West Bank. The races offer a release from the pressures and uncertainties of life under military occupation. The spirited competition between cities brings spectators out in the thousands, lining rooftops and leaning over barricades to snap photos of their favourite drivers and to catch their final times on the scoreboard. Brought together by a common desire to live life on their own terms, five determined women have joined the ranks of dozens of male drivers—competing against each other for the title, for bragging rights for their hometown and to prove that women can compete head-on with the guys. The Speed Sisters are the first all-women race car driving team in the Middle East. They're bold. They're fearless. And they're tearing up tracks all over Palestine. Both intimate and action-filled, *Speed Sisters* captures the drive to defy all odds, leaving in its trail shattered stereotypes about gender and the Arab world.

Source: <http://www.speedsisters.tv>

The Filmmaker

Amber Fares is a Canadian-born filmmaker with Lebanese roots residing in Ramallah, Palestine. In the aftermath of 9/11, Amber left her career in marketing to deepen her understanding of life in the Middle East. In response to her experience, Amber co-founded SocDoc Studios to produce story-driven films that explore social issues. Her directorial debut short, *Ghetto Town* (2009), has been shown at film festivals around the world. *Speed Sisters* is her first feature-length documentary.

Source: <http://www.speedsisters.tv>

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VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

The following three subsections are intended to provide you with a range of Pre-Viewing, Viewing and Post-Viewing activities. They are followed by a set of questions based upon the film's larger thematic domains, some follow-up questions and quotations, sample curricular outcomes and a page of weblinks for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Show students the trailer for *Speed Sisters* found on the film's website (<http://www.speedsisters.tv>). Have students work in pairs or small groups to try to identify themes or ideas conveyed by the trailer. As a larger group, discuss with students how effective/affective the trailer is as a media piece.

Print several of the questions or quotations from the Extensions Activities section of this guide on individual sheets of paper. Have students work in small groups or with partners to discuss if they agree with the ideas.

Discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with students. You may wish to supplement the discussion with additional background information:

- "Israel and Palestine, An Animated Introduction" by Jewish Voice for Peace (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y58njT2oXfE>)
- *The New York Times*' "Room for Debate" series on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/topics/israeli-palestinian-conflict>)
- *972 Magazine*'s series on the first 10 years of Israel's Separation Barrier (<http://972mag.com/special/the-wall-2/>)
- Data visualizations by Visualizing Palestine (<http://visualizingpalestine.org/#visuals>)
- The Middle East Research and Information Project's primer on the conflict (<http://www.merip.org/primer-palestine-israel-arab-israeli-conflict-new>)

Set a purpose for viewing by having a discussion about one or more of the questions or quotations from the Extension Activities section of this guide. Have them share the statement and what they think or believe about it with the class.

Viewing Activities

Have students complete the PBS viewing guide on documentaries (<http://www.pbs.org/pov/docs/Copies%20of%20Viewing%20Guide.pdf>). Students can revisit their completed documents as a Post-Viewing Activity.

There are five Speed Sisters profiled in the film: Marah Zahalka, Noor Daoud, Mona Ennab, Betty Saadeh and Maysoon Jayyusi. Take notes for one of these individuals.

In the introduction, a woman is in a race car and men are pushing the car to get it started. Many of the spectators are also male. Pause the film and discuss students' initial reactions as a class.

Have students make notes on the different types of footage and techniques that are used throughout the documentary, paying special attention to the visual effects, illustrations and music. Students should consider the purpose and effectiveness of these techniques.

Have students jot down two to three ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raises in their minds. As an Extension and/or Post-Viewing Activity, students can enter their questions into an online response or polling system and can vote on the questions or issues they would like to explore in further detail. Encourage students to use multiple levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Post-Viewing Activities

Show the students their quotations from the Pre-Viewing Activity and see if their opinions were changed, altered or enhanced by the film.

Discuss with students their initial reactions to the various characters and situations addressed in the film. Did their reactions change by the end of the film? Why?

Have students choose one of the events from the film and write a diary entry as if they were part of the event.

Have students participate in a Socratic discussion on the film. Guidelines for Socratic discussions can be found here: <http://www.authenticeducation.org/documents/WhatSeminar04.pdf>

Have students find additional information on one of the Speed Sisters. Where are they now and where are they allowed to compete?

As a class or in small groups, have students conduct additional research on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and answer the five Ws. What role does the international community play in this conflict, and how has Canada responded? Students can be given two to three minutes to present their findings.

First, ask students about the purposes of separation barriers. Students should also consider the motives a government might have for erecting such a barrier; encourage students to consider the financial, social and/or political motives. Next, have students research another region or country that has been affected by a separation barrier.

In the film, Maysoon says to Betty, "You should be the one who's upset the most by Marah not racing because you need a girl to compete with." Betty responds, "I don't compete with the girls. I'm competing with the guys so I don't care about the girls.... I don't feel that we are a team." As a class, discuss this conversation and its implications on the Speed Sisters' dynamics.

Anthony Bourdain visited Palestine and had the opportunity to drive with Betty and Mona. As a class, watch the following clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzXr_UpXjfM&t=24. In the clip, Betty says, "A car doesn't know if you're a woman or a man." Using this as a prompt, have students write a two-paragraph response.

After the race in Bethlehem where Betty wins despite an open trunk, Marah struggles with returning to racing. Marah's mother, Aarab, says, "Marah's life without racing is going to be just an ordinary life." In a written entry or class discussion, have your students reflect on their own dreams and consider what actions are needed to achieve their dreams. What obstacles may they face and how can they overcome these obstacles?

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film

<http://www.speedsisters.tv>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/speedsistersthefilm>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/speedsisterfilm>

Additional Resources

Al Jazeera: This article looks at the positive public reception of street racing and the "Speed Sisters" in Palestine.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/10/palestine-fast-furious-females-20131031313452469.html>

BBC: Maps that trace the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/v3_israel_palestinians/maps/html/settlements_checkpoints.stm

Facebook: Noor Daoud's Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/NoorDaoud.CarRacer>

Gearhead Girls Racing: Gearhead Girls Racing is an online community dedicated to women in motorsports around the world.

<https://www.gearheadgirls racing.com/home/>

Google Cultural Institute: An interactive online exhibit featuring images and videos of the Speed Sisters.

<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/exhibit/speed-sisters%C2%A0/gRWm5kRX?hl=en-GB>

Tanya Habjouqa: Photographer Tanya Habjouqa's series "Ladies Who Rally" focuses on the Speed Sisters.

http://habjouqa.photoshelter.com/gallery/Ladies-Who-Rally/G0000jRWEEB0r_LM/

TEDxTeen: Marah Zahalka talks about following her drive.

<http://tedxteen.com/talks/tedxteen-2014/215-marah-zahalka-follow-your-drive>

The Global Education Project: This list includes links to a number of Middle East peace and policy organizations.

<http://www.theglobaleducationproject.org/mideast/resources/peace.html>

The National: In this article, the Speed Sisters discuss why they race.

<http://www.thenational.ae/lifestyle/palestines-female-racers-when-i-drive-i-understand-freedom>

Wall on Wall: This is a photo exhibition on the Berlin Wall about walls that separate people worldwide. Photos and videos are available on the website.

<http://www.wallonwall.org>

World Affairs Council: Resources for teachers and students to understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

<https://www.world-affairs.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Israel-Palestine-Resource-Packet.pdf>

Various Links for Lesson Plan Ideas, Media Awareness, Critical Literacy and Documentary Films

Centre for Media Literacy: A US website which provides resources for making, understanding and criticizing media.

<http://www.medialit.org>

Hot Docs' Looking at Documentaries: A teaching guide that sets out questions designed to help teachers include the study of documentary film in their curriculum. Free PDF download.

http://www.hotdocs.ca/youth/docs_for_schools_monthly/

Media Awareness: A Canadian non-profit media education and Internet literacy resource library.

<http://www.media-awareness.ca>

NFB: Valuable education resources for the classroom.

<http://www.nfb.ca>

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

What do you think the title *Speed Sisters* means? Discuss the connotations and denotations of the title.

What are the different issues and themes that surface in this film?

How do the racers prepare before a race?

What are the different restrictions and opportunities faced by each of the Speed Sisters?

What social and traditional obstacles and restrictions do the Speed Sisters face, and why?

Why is it important to stand up for what you believe in like the Speed Sisters do in the film?

What does it mean to live under occupation? What are some examples of regions around the world that are currently under occupation? What are the repercussions of occupation and ongoing conflict on civilians?

What or who encourages the Speed Sisters to continue to strive for their dreams? What obstacles do they face, and how do these obstacles contribute to their success?

Marah's father, Khaled, says, "I was going to support her so she could do whatever she wanted. I was deprived a lot of things. I had a difficult life. I want my kids to have the complete opposite. I'm working as hard as I can to earn as much as possible so I can support her financially and fix her car so she can reach the top." Marah's mother later reveals that when they had to decide between building a house and buying a new car for Marah, they chose to buy a new car. Marah's family is incredibly supportive of her dreams. How important is family when someone is trying to achieve their dreams? How does your family support your talents and interests?

Maysoon reads through online comments about Noor after an interview. People are very divided about a female race car driver in Palestine, but one commenter writes that "Knowing the Qur'an, liberating Palestine and this girl's talent are all important." What is the public's perception of the Speed Sisters? Where do you think this diversity of perspectives comes from?

How do you think it feels to race as a team but also against your teammates? Do male competitors face the same issues?

What is Ramadan? Why does Marah choose not to fast during Ramadan?

Many issues behind the Palestinian Motorsport Federation are revealed in the film. If racers object to anything that has happened in a race, they must pay \$140 to the federation to file their complaint. After Marah is forbidden from racing in Jericho, she says, "I can't call this a racing 'federation' when just one person makes the rules and the judges are just for show." What other issues surrounding the Palestinian Motorsport Federation are revealed in the film?

While the Speed Sisters have thrived as women in their sport, discrimination and prejudice continue to exist within athletics. What other types of prejudice and discrimination continue to exist within athletics? How does this differ between different types of sports?

Can you think of any other pioneers in sports? What challenges did they face? How did they change people's perceptions?

The film offers a perspective of Palestinians living within the Israel-Palestinian conflict. What other perspectives are presented in the documentary?

QUOTATIONS FROM THE FILM TO EXPLORE

1. *"It's uncommon to see girls racing anywhere in the world."* Maysoon
2. *"We're teammates and we compete against the guys. At the same time we compete for the title of the fastest woman."* (3:55)
3. *"We used to be able to see the other side of the road here. We would stop and do some shopping. It was one street. They divided the street with the wall and now each side belongs to a different authority with different laws.... Kids are throwing stones and soldiers are throwing bullets."* Maysoon
4. *"For a period we lived under a 24-hour curfew. The army only allowed us two hours to shop for bread and water. It was really tough. But what are we supposed to do—stop living? No. Life must go on."* Marah
5. *"When I'm racing and have my helmet on, people assume I'm a guy. Then they come closer and see 'Oh, it's a girl!'"* Noor
6. *"I just want to point out the irony that a car rally could easily happen in any country but Palestine, because every few minutes you face a military checkpoint."* TV host
7. *"I've been under a lot of pressure lately to get married and have a family... but I won't get married just to get it over with."* Maysoon
8. *"The media is always after me because I know how to talk to them and I'm beautiful and attractive. I'm good publicity for the federation. 'Betty Saadeh'—I'm a brand."* Betty
9. *"The team's success benefits both me and the girls. The problem is that men are afraid of a strong woman. They worry she will take over. This is causing problems in the management. Sometimes I have to make myself smaller as the team manager so the head of the federation feels he has the power instead."* Maysoon
10. *"Why would I stop practicing because of Israeli soldiers?"* Noor
11. *"I was surprised by Jaffa and Jerusalem. We are separated by only a checkpoint and the wall, yet the difference is huge between here and there. They took the most beautiful places we had."* Marah

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: PROFILING A FEMALE ATHLETE

The Speed Sisters have made great strides for females in racing in Palestine and around the world, but they have also fought against social and traditional expectations, restrictions on movement and other obstacles.

You are now going to select another female athlete. You are going to collect and synthesize the following information from at least three sources into a blog entry of between 400 and 500 words:

- The athlete's origins (where she came from and how she grew up)
- The struggles and discrimination faced by the athlete, and how/if she overcame these struggles
- Her main influences and motivations
- Career highlights and achievements

You will also need to include the following:

- A catchy title
- Some type of hyperlinked multimedia. You could use a photograph, a video or an audio clip
- A works-cited page that includes all of the online sources that you used for this assignment
- Appropriate tags and categories

Your blog entry will be posted on a site provided to you by your teacher. You will need to comment on at least three of your classmates' blog entries.

Remember to share your work with film@speedsisters.tv so that the Speed Sisters team can share some of these profiles on their social media!

Optional: You can include a timeline of the individual in your blog entry (<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline/index.html>).

ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC: PROFILING A FEMALE ATHLETE

Knowledge/Understanding

| Concepts | 2.5 2.9 | 3.0 3.4 | 3.5 3.9 | 4.0 5 | |
|---|---|---|--|---|----|
| Quality of the blog entry | The blog entry is basic and does not encourage conversation in the blogging community | The blog entry is sometimes thoughtful but rarely encourages conversation in the blogging community | The blog entry is often thoughtful and encourages conversation in the blogging community | The blog entry is thoughtful and encourages critical conversation in the blogging community | /5 |
| Participation in the blogging community | The student does not participate in the blogging community | The student rarely participates in the blogging community | The student participates moderately in the blogging community | The student participates actively in the blogging community | /5 |

Thinking/Inquiry

| Research | 2.5 2.9 | 3.0 3.4 | 3.5 3.9 | 4.0 5 | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|---|----|
| Quality of categories and tags | The blog entry is not categorized and/or tagged | The blog entry is categorized and tagged with some success | The blog entry is categorized and tagged with moderate success | The blog entry is categorized and tagged with great success | /5 |

Application

| Report | 2.5 2.9 | 3.0 3.4 | 3.5 3.9 | 4.0 5 | |
|---|---|--|--|--|----|
| Student's ability to synthesize information | There is little to no evidence of the student reading other information in order to form new meaning of the topics in the blog post | The student pays little attention to classroom materials and mostly regurgitates personal views in the blog post | The student attempts to synthesize information and form new meaning in the blog post | The student synthesizes learned content and constructs new/original meaning in the blog post | /5 |

Communication

| Connections | 2.5 2.9 | 3.0 3.4 | 3.5 3.9 | 4.0 5 | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|----|
| Expression and organization of ideas | The blog entry contains numerous grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors | The blog entry contains some grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors | The blog entry is largely free of grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors | The blog entry is free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors | /5 |

Comments:

Total: _____/25 = _____/100

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

| COURSE | OVERALL EXPECTATIONS |
|--|---|
| Grade 9–12 English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience. • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. |
| Grade 11 Media Studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • deconstruct a variety of types of media texts, identifying the codes, conventions and techniques used and explaining how they create meaning. |
| Grade 11 Family Studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the role parents play in affecting how children form relationships within and outside the family. • identify and describe environments provided by families, care-givers and others that offer positive conditions for child development. |
| Grade 12 Family Studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze theories and research on the subject of individual development, and summarize their findings. • analyze theories and research on the subject of parent-child relationships and their role in individual and family development, and summarize their findings. • demonstrate an understanding of the critical role that a family plays in the socialization of its members. • analyze the many relationships that are a part of human development. |
| Grade 10 Careers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use appropriate decision-making and planning processes to set goals and develop a career plan. • demonstrate an understanding of the decision-making process as it relates to career planning. • identify potential barriers (e.g., learning difficulties, financial constraints, distance from opportunities) that could interfere with the achievement of their goals, and use problem-solving strategies to identify appropriate actions. • demonstrate an understanding of career development as a lifelong process that will include transitions, changes and lifelong learning. |
| Grade 11 Intro to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the social forces that influence and shape behaviour as described by anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists. • analyze socialization patterns from the perspectives of anthropology, psychology and sociology. |
| Grade 11 Equity, Diversity and Social Justice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore topics related to equity, diversity and/or social justice, and formulate questions to guide their research. • demonstrate an understanding of the impact individual action can have on equity, social justice and environmental issues, and of how the media can create awareness of these issues. • evaluate the contributions of individuals and groups and/or movements identified with specific aspects of the struggle for equity and social justice. |
| Grade 11 Gender Studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of how attitudes, behaviours, roles and norms relating to gender are socially constructed, and of the complexity of gender as a concept and as a lived experience. • analyze sexism and the dynamics of power relations with respect to sex and gender in a variety of contexts. • analyze representations of women and men in media, popular culture and the arts, and assess the effects of these representations. • demonstrate an understanding of concerns and objectives of women’s rights movements and men’s movements, and explain issues related to the rights of sexual minorities. • analyze a range of social, political, economic and environmental issues relating to gender in Canadian and global contexts. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Grade 11 World Religions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the challenges that adherents of various religions and belief systems experience in society. • describe and analyze ways in which various religions and belief traditions are interpreted and adapted within civil society and popular culture. |
| Grade 11 World History Since 1900 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze the relationship between the individual and those in authority in various societies since 1900. |
| Grade 12 Physical Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the evolution of physical activity and sports. • analyze the relationship of society and culture to sports and physical activity. |
| Grade 12 Canada and World Issues Geography | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compare the cultural, economic and political aspirations of selected groups and the effects of their actions on local, national and global geographic issues. • analyze the influences that increase the interdependence of countries around the world. • analyze instances of international cooperation and conflict and explain the factors that contributed to each. |
| Grade 12 Canadian and International Law | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the relationship between law and societal values. • assess the influence of individual and collective action on the evolution of law. • evaluate the effectiveness of international laws, treaties and agreements in resolving conflicts of a global nature. • explain the factors that make framing, interpreting and enforcing law on a global scale a complex and difficult process. |
| Grade 12 World Cultures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the elements and functions of culture and of the nature of cultural influence. • analyze how cultural identities are socially constructed, preserved, transmitted and transformed. • demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of power relations within specific cultural groups and between minority and majority cultures. • demonstrate an understanding of past and present policies and issues affecting cultural diversity in Canada, and compare approaches to such policy in Canada with those in other countries. |
| Grade 12 Politics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the rights and responsibilities of individual citizens, groups and states in the international community. • describe the main ways in which sovereign states and non-state participants cooperate and deal with international conflicts. • evaluate the role of Canada and Canadians in the international community. • analyze how international organizations, the media and technology are able to influence the actions of sovereign states. • explain the role and function of ideologies in national and international politics. |

The Overall Expectations listed above are from the *Ontario Curriculum*. Complete course descriptions, including all Overall and Specific Expectations, can be found at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html>