



***My Architect***  
**US 2003, 116 Minutes)**  
**Director: Nathaniel Kahn**  
**Study Guide**

**Synopsis**

Louis Kahn, a giant among twentieth-century architects, left a legacy of brilliantly designed and engineered buildings that have a tough beauty and deep spirit. His work challenges us to discover an astonishing sensibility and poetry through light, space, and texture. Kahn's personal life was even more mysterious, and his death, alone and unidentified in Penn Station in 1974, revealed that he led not a double but a triple life, shuttling between his legitimate family and two women and the children they bore him. One of these, his son Nathaniel, takes us on a personal journey to consider the contradictions of this complicated genius and eccentric parent.

**Study Questions**

- In your opinion, do adults define themselves more through their personal relationships or their professional accomplishments? Why?
- Is there a particular person that you are curious about in your family who died when you were younger? What steps would you take to learn more about this person?
- What are your thoughts on architecture? How important is the design of a building compared to its actual function?
- What do an architect's buildings reveal about the designer?

**Classroom Exercises**

- Have the students evaluate the structures they encounter in everyday life (home, school, office, place of worship, etc.). In what ways do these buildings succeed or fail?
- Have each student list their favorite buildings in Chicago and discuss their choices.

**Discussion Questions**

- At the time of his death, Louis Kahn was near bankruptcy. How do you define "success"?
- Do you think the film director's search to learn more about his father helped make up for his father's lack of involvement in his life? Is so, why? If not, why not?
- Can you compare Nathaniel Kahn's filmmaking style to other biographical

documentaries you've seen?

- What do you think of Louis Kahn's buildings? Do they live up to the praise of his colleagues?
- What makes his creations stand out from others?
- What do you think Louis Kahn meant when he said "Ask a brick what it wants to be"?