



Cinema/Chicago and the 48th Chicago International Film Festival

Education Outreach Program Screening: *Mad Hot Ballroom*

Director: Marilyn Agrelo

105 minutes, rated PG

In English and Spanish with English subtitles

Please use the below synopsis, study ideas/questions and helpful websites to lead your students in preparation and post-screening discussion. Following the film, students are required to respond to the screening with a one-page essay. Essays (either all or select) must be sent to Cinema/Chicago.*

Synopsis: Eleven-year-old New York City public school kids journey into the world of ballroom dancing and reveal pieces of themselves and their world along the way. Told from their candid, sometimes hilarious perspectives, these kids are transformed, from reluctant participants to determined competitors, from typical urban kids to "ladies and gentlemen," on their way to try to compete in the final citywide competition. Providing unique insight into the incredible cultural diversity that is New York City, *Mad Hot Ballroom* profiles several kids from three schools (out of 60) at this dynamic age, when becoming that "cool" teenager vies for position with familiar innocence, while they learn the merengue, rumba, tango, the foxtrot and swing.

Recommended for: cultural and social studies, socioeconomics, gender studies, and film and video students.

Appropriate for: all 5-12 grade students.

Study Ideas/Questions:

1. Many different neighborhoods of New York City are represented in the film. What cultures, languages and cultures are represented, and how?
2. Which student or teacher do you most related to and why?
3. Think about competitions you participate in. How do you prepare for the competition?
4. What is the goal of competition? To win...to do your best? Do you think it's worthwhile to participate in a competition even if you don't win?
5. How is student life in New York City different and/or similar to student life in Chicago?

6. How can people of different cultural and ethnic groups work together and respect one another? What obstacles stop people from working together successfully? How do you see culturally different people working together in the film?
7. How do the female/male roles on the dance floor translate to roles in society? Both the male and female students talk about the expectations of their gender. How are these roles and expectations learned?
8. There are many dance styles that don't require a partner. How does dancing with a partner differ from dancing alone?
9. Do you like to dance? How is dancing a way to express yourself?
10. A few students are not allowed to participate in dancing because of their religion (so they act as DJ instead). How do different religions view dancing? Look into the history of dance. How has it been viewed in different cultures and eras?

Useful Links and Resources:

New York Department of Education Mad Hot Ballroom study guide:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/Documents/Mad%20Hot%20Ballroom.pdf>

Film trailer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5wEb_3S2VM

Information about Ballroom dance and video tutorials: <http://www.ballroomdancers.com/>

Information about Cinema/Chicago's Education Outreach Program:

<http://cinemachicago.org/education/>

*Schools who do not send in essay requirement will not be allowed to attend future Education Outreach Screenings.