



Cinema/Chicago Education Program Screening: *The Class (Entre les murs)*
(Director : Laurent Cantet)
2008, 130 minutes

In French with English subtitles, rated PG-13

Please use the below synopsis, study ideas and questions, and helpful websites to lead your students in preparation and post-screening discussion. Following the film, students in the audience are required to respond to the screening with a one page essay that is sent to Cinema/Chicago.*

Synopsis

Teacher François Marin and his colleagues are preparing for another school year teaching at a racially mixed inner city high school in Paris. The teachers talk to each other about their prospective students, both the good and the bad. The teachers collectively want to inspire their students, but each teacher is an individual who will do things in his or her own way to achieve the results they desire. They also have differing viewpoints on the students themselves, and how best to praise and discipline them. The administration of the school tries to be as fair as possible, which includes having student representatives sit on the student evaluation committee. Marin's class this year of fourteen and fifteen year olds is no different than previous years, although the names and faces have changed. Marin tries to get through to his students, sometimes with success and sometimes resulting in utter failure. Even Marin has his breaking point, which may result in him doing things he would probably admit to himself are wrong. But after all is said and done, there is next year and another group of students.

Themes and discussion topics: education, race, class, communication.

1. What are some of the cultural differences and similarities you notice between your classroom/classmates and the classroom/classmates in *The Class*?
2. Before you saw the film, what did you imagine a French classroom and students would look and act like? After seeing the film, were you right?
3. The man who plays Mr. Marin is also the writer of film, which is based on his real-life experience teaching in France. How do you think his first hand experience influenced the film? How does it make it more believable and realistic to you?
4. What character do you relate to most or like the most, and why?
5. Do you think Mr. Marin is a good teacher? Do you think he handles his classroom well? When he disciplines Khoumba, do you think he does it well? How would you suggest he (or your teachers) go about disciplining students?
6. Mr. Marin asks the students to make a journal. Make your own journal in class, either by writing, drawing, taking photographs, etc. Compare your journals to the journals made by the students in the films. Are they similar? Are they different?
7. When the teachers of Dolto High have a staff meeting, they spend more time talking about the faculty coffee machine than the process for disciplining students. How did this make you feel? Why do you think this happened, and do you think it happens in Chicago schools?
8. Do you feel Mr. Marin has an impossible task? Do you feel he is getting anywhere with his students, or making any progress? Why or why not?

9. The student Wei speaks in class about his classmates having a lack of shame. Mr. Marin thinks he means a lack of discipline. How are shame and discipline related and how are they different?
10. Have you ever seen a foreign film with subtitles before? Was it hard to follow?

Helpful websites:

www.cinemachicago.org/education (Cinema/Chicago Education Outreach program)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1068646/> (film information and trailers)