



Cinema/Chicago and the Chicago International Film Festival  
Education Program Screening: *Wadjda*  
Director: Haifaa Al-Mansour  
98 minutes

Please use the below synopsis/study questions 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. **Schools that do not send in essay requirement will not be allowed to attend future Education Screenings.**

### Synopsis

Wadjda is a 10-year-old girl living in a suburb of Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. Although she lives in a conservative world, Wadjda is always pushing the boundaries of what she can get away with. After a fight with her friend Abdullah, Wadjda sees a beautiful green bicycle for sale. She wants the bicycle desperately so that she can beat Abdullah in a race. Wadjda's mother won't allow it, fearing repercussions from a society that sees bicycles as dangerous to a girl's virtue. So Wadjda decides to try and raise the money herself. Soon enough, Wadjda's plans are thwarted when she is caught running various schemes at school. Just as she is losing hope of raising enough money, she hears of a cash prize for a Koran recitation competition at her school. She devotes herself to the memorization and recitation of Koranic verses, determined to continue fighting for her dreams. *Wadjda* is the first feature length film to be shot completely in Saudi Arabia, as well as the first feature film made by a female Saudi director.

### Study Ideas/Questions

1. How do you identify with Wadjda? Think about the things you have in common with her and the things between you that are different. How is Wadjda's life different than her peers?
2. What are some societal "rules" you noticed in the film that women in Saudi Arabia abide by? In what ways are these rules different from our culture?
3. The film's director, Haifaa Al-Mansour, is the first female director in Saudi Arabia. What are some of the obstacles she might have faced while making the film? Why do you think she chose to tell the story of Wadjda?
4. How does the film make you reflect on the freedom to express individuality that we are afforded in the United States? Do you think we are more free to express ourselves here than in Saudi Arabia? Why and how?
5. When Wadjda is praying with her classmates after the Quran competition, some of her peers made fun of her, calling her a "coward". Why do you think those girls were being mean? Can you identify or think of a time when something similar happened to you or someone you know?
6. What role does religion play in the story? How was it a part of Wadjda's everyday life even when she wasn't in school?
7. What does the bicycle represent to Wadjda and why is it so important to her?

8. How is the meaning of marriage for the characters in the film different than in our country? Are you familiar with the idea of arranged marriages in other countries? If so, what are your thoughts on that tradition?
9. How did Wadjda and her mother change in the film? Think about their relationship, individual journeys and beliefs from the beginning to the end.
10. Can you recall any ways in which women and girls in the film try to be independent and gain more freedom in their everyday lives?

Official website (includes trailer): <http://www.sonyclassics.com/wadjda/>

### **Interested in Film?**

The Chicago International Film Festival's Student Film Council is a program for students who have a passion and appreciation for film, cinema and the moving image. During the school year, Council members will experience and attend the numerous film festivals and film centers in Chicago and engage in conversations with directors, producers and festival programmers. **Visit [chicagofilmfestival.com/education](http://chicagofilmfestival.com/education) for more details.**

Adobe Youth Voices helps students/teachers get a film club started at their school to encourage students to foster their creativity, practice their storytelling techniques, and even influence change through experimenting with society's most powerful medium. Find out more at **[youthvoices.adobe.com](http://youthvoices.adobe.com)**