



# The Chicago International Film Festival

Cinema/Chicago and the Chicago International Film Festival  
Education Program Screening: *Walking Distance (Distincias Cortas)*  
Director: Alejandro Guzmán Álvarez  
104 minutes

Please use the below synopsis/study questions to lead your students in film preparation and post-screening discussion. Following the field trip, students are required to respond to the screening with a one-page essay. Essays must be sent to Cinema/Chicago in order to be invited to subsequent film screenings.

## **Synopsis**

The film *Walking Distance (Distincias Cortas)* is a modern day urban fairytale about Fede, a morbidly obese man whose weight makes it difficult for him to leave his house. Living a life of isolation, his only human connection comes through weekly visits by his overbearing sister and her long-suffering husband. After his brother in law shows Fede his vacation photos, Fede becomes inspired to leave his house and develop an old roll of film found in his house. Through this experience, Fede's life becomes renewed, introducing friendship, discovery and joy into his life.

## **Film Industry in Mexico**

Since Alfonso Cuarón became the first Mexican director to win the Oscar for Best Director, Mexican cinema has been experiencing a renaissance. While Cuarón was directing a Hollywood film, since then there have been many Mexican films gaining international attention.

The "Golden Age" of Mexican cinema took place from 1930-1954. Because Mexico supplied films for all of Central America and some of South America, these films were commercially successful. One of the most famous films from Mexico's golden age was the romantic drama *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (1936). It is considered by many scholars to be one of the first films from the "golden age."

After the 1950s, and the advent of television, the Mexican film industry experienced an international decline. In the 1990s, as the country was suffering economic decline, funding for filmmakers was cut, and as few as 25 films were produced by the end of the decade.

It was the 2001 film *Y tu mamá también* that helped spur Mexican cinema back into the international spotlight. In 2007, the Mexican government passed a law creating funding for

projects where 70% of the financing be spent in Mexico and 70% of the cast and crew be Mexican.

Recently, the 2013 film *Instructions Not Included* became the most successful Spanish language film ever in the U.S. While the independent film community is still struggling for resources, this renaissance is an indication of where Mexican cinema may go in the future.

### **Study Ideas/Questions**

1. What “distances” does Fede overcome over the course of the film?
2. How would you describe the relationship between Fede and Paulo? Does it change from the beginning of the film to the end?
3. How does photography connect the characters (particularly Ramon, Federico and Paulo)? Would the film be different if another hobby like sports or movies brought the characters together? Why or why not?
4. Does your perception of Fede change during the film? If so, how?
5. Why do you think Fede enjoys photography?
6. One of the themes in the film is overcoming an adversity or a struggle. Have you had to overcome an adversity in your own life? If so, how did you do it?
7. Why do you think his weight is openly discussed towards the second half of the film? Does this change how we see his character?
8. What do you think about the character Rosaura? How would you describe the relationship she has with her brother?
9. The beginning of the film has darker lighting scheme than the second half the film. Why do you think the director made that choice? What do you think it symbolizes?
10. There is a scene where Fede, Ramon, and Paulo go to a travel agency. How is the interaction among the three of them and the travel agent different from Fede’s interaction with the kids playing soccer at the beginning of the film?
11. Paulo is an avid reader of the comic book *Death List* and introduces the series to Federico. What does Fede’s own “death list” say about him as a character?
12. What do you think is the allure of the beach? What words, phrases or feelings do you associate with going to the beach? Why might these appeal to Federico?

13. Was there a particular character that you connected with the most? Who was it? What about him or her resonated with you?

**Useful Resources**

Chicago International Film Festival website: [www.chicagofilmfestival.com](http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com)

*Guide prepared by Hannah Hoffman – Cinema/Chicago, 2015*