



## ***Strictly Ballroom***

### **Film Study Guide**

**Director: Baz Luhrmann**

**English | Fiction | Australia | 1992 | 94 Minutes**

**Synopsis:** Competitive ballroom dancer Scott Hastings has been groomed his entire life by his dance-teacher mother and reclusive father to win the coveted Pan-Pacific title. However, he has grown bored performing classic dances and starts dancing unconventional steps, thus disqualifying himself from the winner's circle. Quiet beginning dancer Fran, however, encourages Scott to dance his own steps, and she becomes his secret partner. Chaos breaks out at the championships as Scott is torn between dancing with established winner Tina Sparkle or taking a chance on Fran, though it is sure to cost him the win. Meanwhile, a cast of wacky characters grows out of control while trying to maintain tradition in this romantic comedy/mockumentary about competitive ballroom dancing in Australia.

### **Post-Screening Discussion Questions**

1. Family plays an important role in both Scott's life and Fran's life in this movie. What is the relationship between dancing and family for each person? How are the two families' relationships to dancing different from each other?

2. Many dance movies include stories about dancers breaking with tradition (Step Up, Dirty Dancing, Footloose, Shall we Dance). Think of another dance movie you have seen (or cheerleading movie—Bring it On) and write down the similarities and differences you see between that film and Strictly Ballroom. What do you make of these similarities and differences?
3. Scott loves dancing but wants to break with tradition and dance his own steps. Are there any traditions in your life that you enjoy but would like to change? Why do you want to make these changes? How might these changes affect others involved with the tradition?
4. This film uses numerous close-ups of faces. Close-ups in film are thought to reveal a character's emotions most effectively. However, close-ups in Strictly Ballroom also are used for comedy and to call attention to how a character looks or behaves. Think of a moment when the film focuses on a character's face. How did he or she look? Silly? Serious? Outrageous or out of control? Why do you think the film uses so many close-ups, or what effect do they create?
5. The film starts as a "mockumentary," but it quite quickly veers away from that style and becomes a more straightforward fictional narrative. What elements of the film's opening recalled documentary films? What is the effect of beginning the film this way? Do you have any ideas about why the film did not stick with this style?
6. Director Baz Luhrmann says he drew inspiration from The Ugly Duckling when writing this film. How does that classic story play out here, and what is its message?
7. Peer pressure plays an important part in Strictly Ballroom. Can you think of a time when peer pressure caused you to act in a way that did not feel natural to you, or a time when you fought against peer pressure to be yourself?
8. Strictly Ballroom began as a stage musical and is currently being made into one again (it is set to premiere in March). What changes do you think might need to be made for the film to work as a musical? Which sets do you think they will keep? Do you think any scenes might need to be cut or changed?