



#9981

## FROM FAR AWAY

NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA, 2000

Grade Level: K-3

7 mins.

### DESCRIPTION

How does a new girl in school ask permission to go to the bathroom when she can't speak English? Seven-year-old Saoussan and her family flee to Canada when war comes to their country. Her first year in school is difficult as she copes with learning English, making new friends, and adjusting to cultural differences. Animated version of the book by Robert Munsch and Saoussan Askar.

### ACADEMIC STANDARDS

#### Subject Area: Language Arts–Reading

- Standard: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process
  - ◆ Benchmark: Establishes a purpose for reading (e.g., for information, for pleasure, to understand a specific viewpoint) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 3.)
  - ◆ Benchmark: Makes, confirms, and revises simple predictions about what will be found in a text (e.g., uses prior knowledge and ideas presented in text, illustrations, titles, topic sentences, key words, and foreshadowing clues) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 2.)
  - ◆ Benchmark: Understands the author's purpose (e.g., to persuade, to inform) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 5.)
- Standard: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts
  - ◆ Benchmark: Knows the defining characteristics of a variety of literary forms and genres (e.g., fairy tales, folk tales, fiction, nonfiction, myths, poems, fables, fantasies, historical fiction, biographies, autobiographies, chapter books) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1.)
  - ◆ Benchmark: Understands elements of character development in literary works (e.g., differences between main and minor characters; stereotypical characters as opposed to fully developed characters; changes that characters undergo; the importance of a character's actions, motives, and appearance to plot and theme) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 6.)
  - ◆ Benchmark: Makes inferences or draws conclusions about characters' qualities and actions (e.g., based on knowledge of plot, setting, characters' motives, characters' appearances, other characters' responses to a character) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 6.)

## C a p t i o n e d M e d i a P r o g r a m

- ◆ Benchmark: Makes connections between characters or simple events in a literary work and people or events in his or her own life (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 4.)

### **Subject Area: Language Arts–Viewing**

- Standard: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media
  - ◆ Benchmark: Understands different messages conveyed through visual media (e.g., main ideas and supporting details; facts and opinions; main characters, setting, and sequence of events in visual narratives) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1, 6, and 7.)
  - ◆ Benchmark: Understands techniques used to convey messages in visual media (e.g., animation; different tones of voice in audio productions; adjusting messages for different audiences) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 10.)

### **Subject Area: Grades K-4 History–The History of Peoples of Many Cultures Around the World**

- Standard: Understands the causes and nature of movements of large groups of people into and within the United States, now and long ago
  - ◆ Benchmark: Understands the experience of immigrants groups (e.g., where they came from, why they left, travel experiences, ports of entry and immigration screening, the opportunities and obstacles they encountered when they arrived; changes that occurred when they moved to the United States) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 8.)

### **Subject Area: Life Skills–Thinking and Reasoning**

- Standard: Applies basic trouble-shooting and problem-solving techniques
  - ◆ Benchmark: Identifies simple problems and possible solutions (e.g., ways to make something work better) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 9.)

### **Subject Area: Civics–What are the Basic Values and Principals of American Democracy?**

- Standard: Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society
  - ◆ Benchmark: Understands the concept of diversity (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 8.)

## **INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS**

1. To examine the story *From Far Away*.
2. To make predictions about *From Far Away* before and during the viewing of the video and then confirming and/or revising them by the end of the viewing.
3. To set a purpose to read or view the story.
4. To relate the story to personal life experiences.
5. To state the author's purpose for the story.

## C a p t i o n e d M e d i a P r o g r a m

6. To examine the main character Saoussan.
7. To examine the importance of setting to the story *From Far Away*.
8. To recognize the diversity of a newly immigrated child.
9. To identify problem-solving skills.
10. To relate the importance of animated visuals to the story's plot.

### VOCABULARY

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|------------|--------------|
| 1. argued  | 6. horrible  |
| 2. choice  | 7. skeleton  |
| 3. chose   | 8. sneak     |
| 4. decided | 9. strange   |
| 5. guest   | 10. suddenly |

### BEFORE SHOWING

1. Locate Beirut, Lebanon, and Canada on a world map. Discuss the cultures of each area/country. Address language, clothing, and peace/war issues.
2. Discuss the title of the video *From Far Away*. Make predictions about the story.
3. Review the elements of the plot of a story.
4. Set a purpose before viewing the story. Suggested purposes for *From Far Away* include:
  - a. The problems of the story.
  - b. Elements of the settings and cultures of: Beirut and Canada.
  - c. The author's purpose.
  - d. Special effects—animated techniques that help tell the story.
  - e. The appropriateness of the title *From Far Away*.

### DURING SHOWING

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. Stop the video during the scene where Saoussan and her family are experiencing the war in Beirut and discuss the situation.
3. Stop the video when Saoussan first feels the urgency to "pee." Imagine solutions to her problem. Then continue viewing to see how she handles the situation.
4. Stop the video to identify and relate animated techniques that help tell the story:
  - a. The classroom door appears to move farther away as Saoussan ponders what to do about her bathroom crisis.
  - b. The bathroom door figure relates Saoussan's feelings (several times).
  - c. The skeleton represents war images.
5. Stop the video after Saoussan discovers that she got the teacher's clothing wet. Interpret her feelings and analyze the situation.

### AFTER SHOWING

#### Discussion Items and Questions

1. Review and discuss the purposes set before the video.

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2. Summarize the plot of the story.
3. Discuss Saoussan's experience on the airplane.
4. Identify the cultural differences which Saoussan did not understand including:
  - a. Language (English).
  - b. Puppetry (story-telling).
  - c. Holiday (Halloween).
  - d. Education (school practices).
5. Revisit predictions. Confirm or revise them.
6. Identify the main problem, as well as related problems in the story and how they were resolved:
  - a. Saoussan needed to go to the bathroom.
  - b. Saoussan couldn't speak English.
  - c. Saoussan was afraid of a paper skeleton.
  - d. Saoussan was new to the Canadian school, community, and country.
7. Conclude the meaning and significance of the toilet costume at the end of the story.
8. Identify the author's purpose for writing the story *From Far Away*, giving supporting details from the story.
9. Relate personal life to this story.
10. Interpret how the settings affect the story.
11. Evaluate the importance of diversity as related to the story.

### Applications and Activities

1. Conduct a character study of the story's main character Saoussan. Use a variety of graphic organizers.
2. Dramatize the story, rewriting the plot to depict ways the teacher and children characters can help Saoussan during her initial adjustments.
3. Rewrite the story depicting a different diversity situation:
  - a. The main character is a child who is deaf.
  - b. The main character is a child who is hard of hearing.
  - c. The main character is a child who is hearing, but the teacher and students are people who are deaf.
  - d. The main character is a recently immigrated child who is deaf and joins an American class of students who are deaf.
4. Play GUESSTURES or any game which challenges communication without using language.
5. Read factual and fictitious works, including poetry, about diversity. (See RELATED RESOURCES Web site.)
6. Read about immigration. (See RELATED RESOURCES Web site.)
7. Investigate immigration and citizenship practices in your area.
8. Investigate children of other cultures.
9. Read the book *From Far Away* by Robert Munsch and Saoussan Askar. Compare and contrast the book with the video *From Far Away*. (Use a Venn diagram.)

### CMP RELATED RESOURCES

- [The Friends of Kwan Ming #9983](#)
- [Roses Sing on New Snow #9982](#)

## World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and “kid safe” sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

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- **TOPICS: AN ONLINE MAGAZINE FOR LEARNERS OF ENGLISH**

<http://www.topics-mag.com/Electronic/Magazine.html>

This Web site is an online magazine for people who are learning English as a second language. It is assessable to everyone who wants to learn about cultures from a variety of countries. Topics presented include: proverbs, customs, clothing, foods, toys, cultural issues, and more.

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- **KIDS ON THE NET: A CELEBRATION OF FRIENDS**

<http://kotn.ntu.ac.uk/allabout/friends/index.cfm>

This Web site is a gallery of elementary children’s writings and accompanying artwork from all over the world. International communications encourages collaboration and opportunities for your students to use their writing skills and to recognize peer talents and abilities while celebrating their own.

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- **COLLABORATIVE THEMATIC UNIT—A CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY: IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

<http://www.libsci.sc.edu/miller/diversity.htm>

This teacher’s site presents lessons plans with connected resources for teaching primary grades about diversity, immigration, and citizenship. Included are goals; activities; discussion questions; audio-video, community, and literature resources; internet links; and more.

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- **IMMIGRATION (GRADE 2-4)**

<http://nancykeane.com/ri/30.htm>

This Web site is a reading list of text related to immigration issues appropriate for primary students. Selected titles include picture books, easy chapter books, independent reading, and read-alouds. Both fiction and nonfiction selections are included.