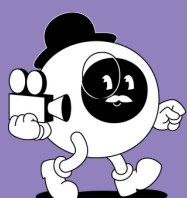


BULLETIN ON THE 2ND CONFERENCE ON FILM LITERACY

FILM AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



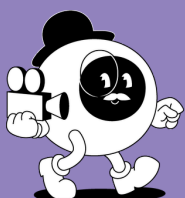
ZAGREB, MAY 2026



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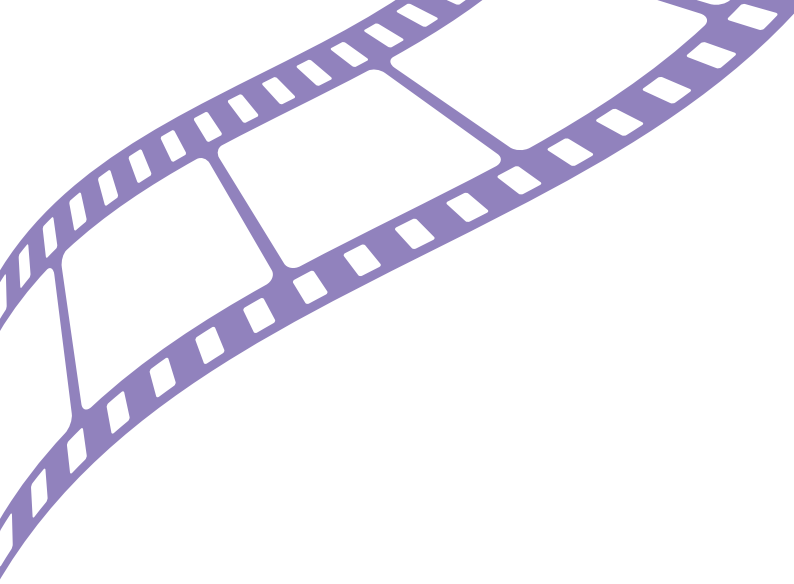
**Hrvatski
audiovizualni
centar**
Croatian Audiovisual Centre



**FILMSKA
PISMENOST**



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audiovizualni
centar**
Croatian Audiovisual Centre



IMPRINT

BULLETIN OF THE 2ND CONFERENCE ON FILM LITERACY

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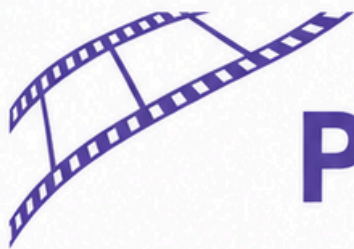
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PROGRAMME

2ND CONFERENCE ON FILM LITERACY

Film Art and the Mental Health of Children and Young People

13 April 2026 | 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. | Kaptol Boutique Cinema in Zagreb (Screen 3)

- 10:00** Opening of the Conference and welcome addresses
- Croatian Audiovisual Centre
 - Office of the Ombudsperson for Children
 - Education and Teacher Training Agency
 - Ministry of Science, Education and Youth
 - Ministry of Culture and Media
- 10:15** Presentation of the work of the Department of Film Literacy and Audience Development at the Croatian Audiovisual Centre (Ingrid Padjen Đurić)
- 10:20** Promotion of the book *Film and the Mental Health of Children and Young People* and the Thematic Roundtable
- Dr Nikica Gilić, author of the book and full professor of film studies at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb
 - Ida Šamanović, author of the book and specialist in clinical psychology – psychotherapist
 - Marina Zlatarić, author of the book, Croatian language teacher in primary school and film educator
 - Đurđica Radić, author of the book, Croatian language teacher in secondary school and film educator
 - Dr Bruno Kragić, reviewer of the book and film scholar
 - Mirna Medaković Stepinac, UNICEF Ambassador and actress
- 11:00** Presentation of the animated film *Ana and Lovro in the World of Film – Film Types* (Petra Zlonoga)
- 11:10** Presentation of examples of good practice – video presentations
- ZAG School Film Group
 - Croatian Network of Cinemas Exhibitors
 - Photo Cinema Video Club Zaprešić
 - 10 Years of Sensory-Friendly Screenings – Assoc Prof Dr Eva Brlek and the Croatian Film Association
 - Vrti svoj film portal – a safe place for film in the classroom
- 12:10** Presentation of awards for excellence in the development of film literacy in Croatia





Christopher Peter Marcich

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE
CROATIAN AUDIOVISUAL CENTRE



FOREWORD BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

IT IS AN HONOUR, ON BEHALF OF THE ENTIRE HAVC TEAM, TO THANK EVERYONE AND WELCOME YOU.

THE PROGRAMME LED BY INGRID PADJEN ĐURIĆ IS ONE OF THE KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR WORK. THE DEPARTMENT SHE MANAGES IS CALLED “FILM LITERACY AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT” FOR A REASON. OUR INTENTION IS TO DEVELOP AUDIENCES FOR FUTURE FILMS AS FUTURE VIEWERS, BUT WE ALSO WANT A LITERATE AUDIENCE.

This is an audience exposed to film from an early age, as well as to other dimensions of film, about which we will hear more later during the roundtable. This is one of the important objectives of this programme.

Ingrid leads it excellently. We have already run hundreds of activities, many of which have attracted international attention. As an example, I would like to mention the book for which I have already received requests for an English-language edition, even though it has not yet been published, with interest coming from colleagues at other film centres and from the European Commission.

In addition, there are other creative programmes. “Cinema, Game, Film” was launched last year and has also achieved recognition beyond Croatia. It is a creative programme that connects film, cinema and education, in which children have the opportunity to use film and games to comment on and deepen their learning. There are also the programmes “Film Literacy Days at the Cinema” and “Little School of Film Literacy”. This is truly commendable work.

We are grateful for the excellent support of the Ministry of Culture and Media and Minister Nina Obuljen Koržinek. I say this as someone who is in contact with colleagues from film centres across Europe. They often congratulate me and emphasise how fortunate we are to have a minister who understands the sector so well and who, through the Ministry, provides continuous support in terms of what is possible.

I WILL NOT GO ON AT LENGTH – I AM VERY PLEASED TO SEE SO MANY OF YOU HERE, AND I WISH EVERYONE A SUCCESSFUL AND PRODUCTIVE CONFERENCE.



Ingrid Padjen Đurić,

HEAD OF THE HAVC DEPARTMENT OF FILM LITERACY
AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

FOREWORD BY THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT

Dear colleagues, dear friends of film, art and education,

It is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you to the 2nd Conference on Film Literacy, a gathering that once again brings us together around a common idea, that film has an exceptional power to educate, connect and encourage critical reflection on the world in which we live.

We live in a time marked by the strong dominance of images and audiovisual media. Children and young people today grow up surrounded by screens, content and information that shape their attitudes, emotions and ways of communicating on a daily basis. This is precisely why film literacy is no longer merely an added value in education, but a necessity of contemporary society. To understand film means to understand the language of images, to recognise the messages conveyed by content and to develop creativity, empathy and the capacity for critical reflection.

This year's conference theme, titled "Film Art and the Mental Health of Children and Young People", is particularly important and current. At a time when the pace of life is accelerating, increasing social pressures and the challenges faced by young people, mental health is becoming a crucial issue in our society. Film can play a powerful role here: it can open up a space for conversation, help young people recognise and express emotions, foster a sense of belonging and understanding, and provide support through stories with which they can identify.

Film art has a unique capacity to address sensitive topics in ways that encourage empathy, dialogue and emotional connection. Film content helps children and young people learn about themselves and others, develop emotional literacy and gain a sense of safety that allows them to speak openly about their experiences, fears and challenges. This aspect is precisely why discussing how film can be used as a valuable tool in upbringing, education, and the preservation of mental health is important.

This conference is a space for dialogue, the exchange of experience and the creation of new forms of cooperation among educational professionals, filmmakers, cultural institutions, researchers and all those who believe that culture and education together can help create active, aware and responsible citizens. We are particularly pleased that interest in film literacy topics is growing year by year, confirming how important it is to continue investing in audience development and education through art.

The programme before us brings together a range of information, experiences and conversations that I believe will raise new questions, offer inspiring examples of good practice and encourage us to continue reflecting on the role of film in education and society. I am confident that this conference is a place for new ideas, professional networking and the collective empowerment of all of us who work with children, young people and audiences of all generations.

I cordially extend my appreciation to all speakers, partners, associates and participants who have contributed to the organisation of this conference through their effort, knowledge and enthusiasm. I extend special thanks to all those who, through their daily work, promote film culture and develop a love of film among new generations. Welcome and thank you for joining us in building a space of film literacy, dialogue, understanding and creativity.



Nina Obuljen Koržinek, PhD

MINISTER OF CULTURE AND MEDIA
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

To begin with, I would like to congratulate you on the choice of theme for this year's 2nd Conference on Film Literacy, because, as we have seen from the programme of the book that will be presented, as well as from the many activities, the theme is extremely relevant. The contribution of culture, and certainly of film literacy and film as an art form, to addressing mental health issues is extremely important. There are numerous areas and topics in which these two fields intersect.

I will therefore begin my intervention by noting that last year, at the European Union level, a two-year work process through the open method of coordination between Member States was completed, specifically on the theme of culture and health. This affirms the importance of culture and art, meaning prevention and as one of the segments of therapy for various conditions within the healthcare system, as well as complementary to numerous other activities.

In Croatia, at the end of last year, we presented the first study that mapped all stakeholders involved in culture and health. In cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Croatian Institute of Public Health, we are continuing to develop programmes to encourage all in the culture and arts sector, as well as colleagues from the health sector, to design content that connects culture and health. In that sense, through the Kultura nova Foundation, a pilot project was launched last year to support cultural projects that address health broadly.

If we broaden this further, we can see links to what is being developed at HAVC in the Department of Film Literacy and Audience Development, as well as to what we are doing at the Ministry of Culture and Media.

There is, for example, the "A Backpack Full of Culture" programme, which brings cultural content, including film workshops and programmes, to deprived and less developed areas, schools and kindergartens. This approach is, in fact, audience development understood in a broader sense.

Then there is the national strategy for promoting reading, incorporating a series of activities, and I would particularly highlight the "Born to Read" programme. You may already have heard of it. It is a programme that, from the earliest age, from the sixth month of life, introduces parents to the importance of reading for a child's development through paediatric workshops and the gifting of picture books.

"THAT IS WHY THIS PROGRAMME, THIS INITIATIVE AND ALL PROGRAMMES BEING IMPLEMENTED ACROSS CROATIA AND EUROPE IN THE FIELD OF FILM LITERACY ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. I HOPE THAT FILM LITERACY WILL ENTER THE CURRICULUM AND BECOME AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM."

I mention all these activities because it sometimes seems to us that, as a society, we have already made sufficient progress in cultural and artistic content, and that there is no longer any need to speak of literacy and literacy-building. However, it is worrying that, under the strong influence of social media and digital platforms, we have reached a point where we must once again teach children and young people what we once considered fundamental and obvious. In other words, we must once again attract children and young people and build their literacy through content that was once an integral part of their formative development.

I would only add, without taking time away from those who will present the book and the research, that we are two to three weeks away from starting the "Culture Card" programme. This is a pilot programme that will provide all 18-year-olds with a 100-euro card, which they can use for any cultural content of their choice. The programme is already being implemented in several European countries, and we have designed it as a pilot in Croatia. I mention it because we expect a large number of 18-year-olds to use this card precisely to go to the cinema. This opens up considerable scope for all of you involved in promoting media literacy and education to bring young people closer to the value of film and cultural content, precisely at the moment when they are, for the first time, independently deciding what they want to watch, read or visit.

I am also pleased that representatives of Kinomreža are here, because despite the challenges related to cinema attendance, the digitalisation and development of the cinema network across Croatia have enabled our fellow citizens, even in the smallest towns and villages, to have access to film and cinema screenings. This is a major opportunity to send young people the message that cultural content is for them, that culture enriches our society, and that it shapes us as a community of thinking, engaged people. I wish you all the best in your work, and thank you for the excellent turnout.



Katarina Mišković,

DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATION AND
TEACHER TRAINING AGENCY



FOREWORD BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING AGENCY

It is an honour and a particular pleasure to greet you on behalf of the Education and Teacher Training Agency on the occasion of the opening of the 2nd Conference on Film Literacy, dedicated to an exceptionally important topic – film art and the mental health of children and young people.

At a time when children and young people are surrounded by audiovisual content daily and exposed to a large amount of information, visual content and digital media, it is the responsibility of the education system to help them learn how to watch, understand and create film.

Film enables young people to recognise emotions, understand different life situations, develop empathy and critical thinking, and express their own feelings and experiences with greater confidence.

As a powerful artistic and communication medium, film has a special role in shaping emotions, attitudes, values and views of the world. Accordingly, film literacy is not only a cultural or artistic competence but also an important part of comprehensive upbringing and education, as it encourages creativity, empathy, communication, and analytical thinking, and contributes to the holistic development of pupils.

THROUGH FILM ART, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CAN SPEAK ABOUT TOPICS THAT ARE SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO PUT INTO WORDS – ABOUT FEARS, PRESSURES, RELATIONSHIPS, IDENTITY, AND EVEN LONELINESS, BUT ALSO ABOUT HOPE, FRIENDSHIP AND SOLIDARITY.

IN THIS WAY, FILM BECOMES A VALUABLE TOOL FOR STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE, AND THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS AND THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THIS AREA IS VERY IMPORTANT.

YOU, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF AND PRINCIPALS, WORK EVERY DAY TO CREATE A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH PUPILS CAN DEVELOP THEIR POTENTIAL, LEARN TO UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES AND OTHERS, AND BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.

INCORPORATING FILM ART IN THE TEACHING PROCESS FURTHER ENRICHES EDUCATIONAL WORK BECAUSE IT CONNECTS ART AND PEDAGOGY, AND ULTIMATELY ALSO CARE FOR MENTAL HEALTH.

The Education and Teacher Training Agency is a key institution in the education system of Croatia. It performs professional and advisory tasks and ensures the quality of education by providing professional support to educational workers. Our mission is to improve quality in line with national objectives, European standards and global trends, while our vision is to create a stimulating, inclusive and equitable education system.

The Agency continuously supports the development of media and film literacy through the professional development of teachers, curriculum development and cooperation with institutions, convinced that connecting the education system, film professionals, and the civil sector is the key to creating high-quality programmes that will enable pupils to participate actively and responsibly in the contemporary media environment.

It is our common responsibility to ensure that the education system recognises the needs of pupils in contemporary society and supports them not only in acquiring knowledge, but also in developing emotional stability, creativity and social skills.

Film can be a powerful ally in this.

The Education and Teacher Training Agency therefore believes that this conference opens up a space for dialogue, the exchange of experience and the creation of new ideas that will strengthen film literacy in our schools, improve the education system and contribute to preserving the mental health of children and young people, as well as to developing their cultural awareness.

I thank the Croatian Audiovisual Centre, all female and male speakers, partners and participants who have contributed through their work to the organisation of this conference for the benefit of children and young people.

In that spirit, I wish you successful and inspiring work, many useful discussions, new insights and impetus for further action.



Robert Tomljenovic,

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE AGENCY FOR
ELECTRONIC MEDIA

FIRST OF ALL, MY SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO HAVC ON ITS THOROUGH AND HIGH-QUALITY WORK IN THE FIELD OF MEDIA LITERACY – OR, MORE PRECISELY, FILM LITERACY – AND ESPECIALLY ON THIS EXCELLENT BOOK, FILM AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, WHICH IS ALSO THE THEME OF TODAY’S CONFERENCE.

The issue of the mental health of children and young people, but also of all of us, in this new media and communication age, marked by a kind of dictatorship of social media and algorithms, is extremely important.

Research conducted by the Agency for Electronic Media and UNICEF over the past several years on the occasion of Media Literacy Days shows that the impact of social media on mental health is precisely what most concerns children and young people, as well as the wider population. It is also not difficult to notice – simply by observing the world around us – a pronounced lack of empathy, and not only in the digital space. On the other hand, watching carefully selected films and series encourages and develops empathy, emotional literacy and critical thinking. Through film art, children learn about other cultures and can confront the consequences of violence and other harmful behaviours.

In other words, film art, together with high-quality educational programmes such as those run by HAVC, opens up and broadens the world – unlike social media, which narrows it day by day. Empathy and the development of emotional literacy are also the main themes of our own Media Literacy Days, which begin in one week, on 20 April. In other words, we are all working together on the same shared task. I wish you a successful conference.



Maja Gaberica Šupljika

DEPUTY OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN



FOREWORD BY THE DEPUTY OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN

I think we can all agree that films play an important role in our lives – in our maturation and in how we understand the world and our own role within it. I am sure that each of us in this room has a film that is particularly important to them and that they carry with them through life. For me, these are, for example, *The Sound of Music* and *Tko pjeva, zlo ne misli*, and I still regularly cry during reruns of *Hachiko: A Dog's Story*.

So, I am also sharing with you the emotional aspect of experiencing film. Twenty years ago, in 2006, to be precise, at the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, we decided to speak about positive content for children. Of course, we also addressed negative content, which at the time was mostly discussed in terms of the media. But we invited both a writer and a representative of the filmmaking industry to our conference and discussion.

We were fascinated by research showing that positive content has a much greater impact on children than negative content – although this is often perceived differently. The problem is that there is not enough such content. That is the message we still carry today: more work needs to be done to create and strengthen positive content. That is precisely why, and thank you for this invitation, it seems to me that we are in the right place today. Film literacy is, of course, connected with all other forms of literacy – media, communication and emotional literacy. If we look at it more broadly, we are on the right path. It is extremely important to build literacy among children, but also among all of us – parents and everyone who participates in the upbringing and education of children: in the education system, the family, peer groups and, of course, the digital space.

When we speak about film, this does not mean simply watching film as a form of entertainment, but understanding how it is produced, what messages it conveys and why, and reflecting on what we ourselves will do with its messages. Our data from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children show that there is still insufficient communication about film literacy, film and media art, and the media space.

We can conclude that this area has been somewhat neglected compared with topics such as the protection of children from violence and other risks. Yet this area is exactly what we need to establish balance, strengthen resources and equip children with a positive understanding of the world and their own role within it. In recent years, we have had children's films that have left a mark and are being discussed, showing that film continues to have its place and value.

We are particularly proud of our cooperation with the creative and authorial team behind the film *Glavonja*, which shows that, with institutional support, a high-quality programme and good materials for teachers, children and parents, a significant step forward can be made – especially in raising awareness of the differences we live with. We need more films like this, and we hope that in the years ahead, in cooperation with HAVC and other institutions, we will see even more of them.

You have dedicated this year's conference to connecting film art and the mental health of children and young people, which is very important. This connection is, in fact, natural – film strongly influences emotions, attitudes and the way we see ourselves and others. Film literacy acts as a kind of filter – it does not prevent emotions, but helps us understand, process and use them in a healthy way. Consequently, film ceases to be mere entertainment and becomes a tool for caring for mental health. That is why involving children and young people in the creation of cultural content is very important.

In this way, we help them to speak about themselves, their needs, their way of life, and what they need and want. At the same time, we give them the opportunity to participate and become creators in an important area of our lives. Films that do not include children and their perspective cannot convey authentic messages or emotions. Such films do not enable us to truly recognise the needs, wishes and real concern for



WHAT WE DO – ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FILM LITERACY AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The Department's core activity is the systematic promotion of film literacy among children, young people and adults. The Department develops and implements more than 100 educational activities annually, including lectures, workshops, seminars, training courses and public events. Programmes are organised in cinemas, schools, libraries and other cultural institutions, with particular attention devoted to communities that do not have continuous cinema exhibition activities, in order to reduce territorial inequality in film education across the country.

HAVC has recognised the need for systematic data on film literacy and education at a national level. In 2023, three key documents were published: "Mapping of Financial Support for Development Programmes for Film Literacy"; "Situation Analysis and Strategic Guidelines for the Development of Film Education and Film Literacy"; and the "Action Plan for the Development of Film Education and Film Literacy".

Following the plan, the first nationally representative survey on film literacy was conducted in 2025, focusing on the preschool and school population, including preschool institutions, primary and secondary schools, as well as educational workers, school principals and parents. This comprehensive study covered a broad range of factors, including film-viewing habits, teacher competencies, cinema attendance trends, criteria for selecting content, and the general perception of the importance of film education in the contemporary world. The survey is available in Croatian and English through the official links.

Through research and practice in the field, it has become clear that, given the absence of a systematic approach to film literacy within the education system, most activities are carried out by teachers on a voluntary basis.

To support them, curricula for film art have been developed for all levels of education, from kindergarten to university. This material directly responds to the needs of educators and enables independent, high-quality teaching of film art, whether as a separate subject or as an elective/optional subject. It also serves as a basis for discussions with the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth concerning implementation.

Cooperation with the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth and the Education and Teacher Training Agency is limited to the occasional joint organisation of county-level expert councils on the development of film literacy and the implementation of film art in the existing curriculum. The need and interest are far greater, and registering these councils in the ETTA Catalogue is useful to teachers as confirmation of participation and also supports their professional advancement. HAVC would gladly cooperate more intensively with ETTA, and there is also a signed 2021 Cooperation Agreement that would presuppose precisely this kind of cooperation.

It would be of great benefit if the Ministry recognised the need and adopted the proposed film art curriculum, at least as the official curriculum for extracurricular classes in primary schools and as an elective subject in secondary schools.

Practice has shown that educational workers at all levels need support in delivering lectures in the field of film art. Professionally prepared educational materials, that is, methodological manuals for individual films, offered to them on the Film Literacy website subsection, fulfil this need and are supplemented with new titles throughout the year.

These materials include methodological manuals, teaching materials, educational publications, animated educational films and analytical materials accompanying the films. The materials are intended for teachers and preschool educators, enabling the structured delivery of film literacy classes, and HAVC, in cooperation with experts, has produced the following methodological manuals:

- "Croatian Documentary Film Classics",
- "The Beginnings of Film Literacy in Nurseries",
- "First Steps into the World of Film",
- "Filmokret", a methodological manual for conscious expression through film,
- "Film in Correlation with Cross-Curricular Topics",
- "Adaptation, Analysis and Tasks for Tko pjeva, zlo ne misli / Dnevnik malog Perice",
- From Idea to Premiere of a Short Film,
- "Methodological Preparations for the Films: Široko and the Kingdom of the Winds, The Inventor, The Secret of the Old Attic",
- "Doku: 1" – a methodological manual on making documentary film for young professionals,
- "Doku: 2" – a methodological manual on making documentary film for young professionals,
- "Films for 5! – for primary schools",
- Ana and Lovro in the World of Film: Film Types – a picture book for preschool children and preschool educators, and for children in the 1st and 2nd grades of primary school,
- Ana and Lovro in the World of Film: Film Types – worksheets for preschool children and preschool educators, and for children in the 1st and 2nd grades of primary school,
- "Emotions in Film – I Feel Like a Film Character", and
- "Film Signposts – Discover Film through Play and Imagination", manuals for developing film literacy in preschool institutions.
- The book Film and the Mental Health of Children and Young People has been completed and will be promoted at the 2nd Conference on Film Literacy on 13 April 2026, while the following is also in preparation:
- The book Cinema for All: Sensory-Friendly Screenings, Inclusion and Film Literacy.
- The animated educational film Ana and Lovro in the World of Film will also be promoted at the 2nd Conference on Film Literacy in 2026.

All the above-mentioned documents, as well as other documents, have been published on the specialised film literacy website filmskapismenost.hr. The website also provides information on festivals, workshops and events, announcements, news, and links to other platforms that offer access to films for children and young people or present their filmmaking. It is a key resource for teachers because it contains teaching manuals and examples of good practice. Each year, the website generates approximately 500 announcements and events, has 12,000 regular users, records 1,500 downloads of teaching manuals and half a million views of video materials, with very positive feedback from teachers.

The work of school film groups is further hampered by a lack of equipment and by limited funds available to schools for purchasing it. HAVC, therefore, in partnership with the Croatian Film Association, provides financial and professional support, working with film pedagogues to encourage young people to produce audiovisual works and to identify early interest in audiovisual professions. These extracurricular activities offer pupils a unique opportunity to become actively involved in the filmmaking process. Through these programmes, children and young people develop teamwork



Over five years of allocating financial resources, HAVC, in cooperation with the Croatian Film Association, has funded 176 projects out of 361 applications submitted to the public call. Ninety-two towns and municipalities across Croatia took part in the call. A total of EUR 239,434.00 was invested in school film group projects. This led to the following results:

- 1) more than 200 mentors were involved in the work of the groups,
- 2) more than 200 film works were created as a direct result of the public call,
- 3) a 93% increase in applications to film festivals for children and young people confirms that films are being made with enthusiasm and are finding their own film path.

HAVC continuously encourages cooperation between schools and independent cinema exhibitors, primarily through the national Kinomreža network, to enable films to be shown in cinema auditoriums for an authentic film experience.

The strategic objective is to create a strong link between the formal education system and the cinema exhibition sector through specialised school screenings and educational programmes in cinemas. Through the “Film Literacy Days at the Cinema” programme, HAVC organises training for teachers in all regions of Croatia, as well as lectures on film art and film analysis, which is of great assistance to teachers in their work in primary and secondary schools.

The “Cinema, Game, Film” programme is an educational initiative for children and young people that includes educational screenings of Croatian video games in independent cinemas across Croatia. It offers children and young people a unique opportunity to develop not only their technical skills and creativity through games and film, but also critical thinking and film literacy. Through educational games, children have an opportunity to learn about history and culture through interactive approaches, such as games inspired by Croatian literature and tradition.

The objectives of the project are to:

- 1) promote Croatian video games co-financed by HAVC,
- 2) encourage children and young people to watch Croatian films on the cinema screen,
- 3) develop and educate the youngest audiences through cinema events, and
- 4) educate and create a foundation for a better understanding of content – both video games and films.

Finally, in 2025, the First Conference on Film Literacy was organised as a platform for exchanging examples of good practice, bringing film education issues up to date and empowering children, young people and film educators from across Croatia.

The conference is a central gathering place that brings together pupils, teachers, film professionals and institutions from the fields of culture and education to initiate important changes in the education system and in the development of Croatian cinema, as well as to create critical audiences, improve understanding of film art and strengthen Croatian cinema.

After the Conference, a bulletin on the Conference was also prepared, containing all relevant data from the research, the curriculum and examples of good practice in the development of film literacy in Croatia.

At the First Conference on Film Literacy, held on 15 April 2025, the results of the national survey on film literacy conducted by the Croatian Audiovisual Centre (HAVC) were presented. The survey involved primary and secondary school pupils, as well as educational workers. It showed that film literacy among children is relatively well developed and that it is extremely important to continue developing it.

Representatives of associations that have been working in film literacy for many years shared their experiences: Children Meet Art, Filmaktiv, the Croatian Film Association, advisor and teacher Marina Zlatarić, who has the longest continuously operating school film group, and Shadow Casters. They spoke about their achievements to date, as well as their plans for the future in terms of educating young people, audience development and promoting Croatian films.

The Conference participants were also presented with a proposed curriculum for all educational levels of the Croatian school system, prepared by HAVC and the members of the expert group composed of: Dr Nikica Gilić, Dr Dejan Durić, Dr Marina Gabelica, Dr Jelena Modrić, Dr Ana Đorđić, Dr Krunoslav Lučić, Professor Dubravka Kalinić Lebinec and advisor-teacher Marina Zlatarić.

This was followed by a panel discussion that raised many important topics, among them the need for a stronger connection between the education system and the film industry, which was particularly emphasised. The panel participants were Vjera Matković, Head of the Sector for Audiovisual Activities and Entrepreneurship Support in the Cultural and Creative Industries; Ingrid Padjen Đurić, Head of the Department of Film Literacy and Audience Development at HAVC; film scholar and professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, full professor Dr Nikica Gilić; Dr Ana Đorđić, teacher at the 13th Grammar School in Zagreb and President of the Croatian Film Association; Jasminka Bijelić Ljubić, film pedagogue and Head of the Čakovec School of Animated Film; and secondary school graduate Katja Mušćet.

BOOK PRESENTATION FILM AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



THE BOOK IS AVAILABLE IN DIGITAL FORM
ON THE FILM LITERACY WEBSITE.



FILMI MENTALNO ZDRAVLJE DJECE I MLADIH

NIKICA GILIĆ
IDA ŠAMANOVIĆ
MARINA ZLATARIĆ
ĐURĐICA RADIĆ



FILMSKA
PISMENOST



Hrvatski
audiovizualni
centar
Croatian Audiovisual Centre

CHAPTER: FILM, TRAUMA, THERAPY. ON THE PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT OF FILM ART, FILM STUDIES AND THERAPY

PROF. DR. SC. NIKICA GILIĆ

The basis for a discussion of the relationship between film and therapeutic practices should examine the historical relationship between film, as a medium and an art form, and the fundamental therapeutic traditions, and assess the extent to which those traditions have influenced both film and the study of film. Of course, it should be clearly stated that the therapeutic functions of art are only one of many possibilities, applications, aspects and objectives of artistic creation. This applies to film just as much as to music, literature, theatre, painting and sculpture, which are also used in various functions, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that any art form can be therapeutic. If a new artistic form has not yet been used in this way, that is only temporary. Sooner or later, someone will use it for therapeutic purposes. On the other hand, many artists, critics, and scholars advocate artistic value as the first or only relevant objective of creation – often referred to as the autonomy of art – while other artists and critics place strong emphasis on the political, ethical, or religious function of art. Still others attempt to combine these ten

dencies, uniting or linking artistic value with the moral, political and other features of a work or its creator. Other approaches are also possible, but that is not the issue here. Personally, I see no reason to subordinate artistic value to other criteria, although this is not essential to the present discussion. None of the approaches mentioned, if we think about them seriously, can rule out the benefits of the therapeutic use of art. The additional possibility that an artwork or the process of artistic creation may help a person with health-related or, for example, developmental difficulties of any kind should not harm the pursuit of other objectives. This is not a matter of restricting art-for-art's sake or autonomous thinking about film. We are speaking here only about one of the film's functions in society, by no means the most important or central one, but certainly a current, legitimate one.

Given the greatest visibility and viewership, as well as the greatest social impact of the fiction film type, the examples mentioned here will mostly be fiction-film examples, although documentary film, as well as animated film, is also often associated with therapeutic and self-therapeutic purposes, hence a few examples of those types will also be given. This text offers a possible introduction to the relationship between the seventh art and the idea of therapy, focusing on fiction films and some fiction series as the most influential film mode of the twentieth century, one that is also present in our own, twenty-first century. Of course, film has also influenced media that are younger and more recent than itself, and the broader benefit of any serious engagement with film in a cultural community should also be viewed in that light.



CONCLUSION

After all the observations presented so far, it can be said that the influence of therapeutic, psychological and psychoanalytic methods on understanding film as an art form is significant. However, psychology and psychoanalysis, as methodological frameworks and as inspiration for the study of film, were often directed either towards affirming film as art, through existing disciplines and methods, or towards analysing certain aspects of the theme of an individual artwork or of its perception. Of course, all this can also be said of the influence of psychological or psychoanalytic methods on the understanding of other arts or media of communication. On the other hand, as Janet Bergstrom rightly states (1999: 1-2), psychoanalysis and psychology in film theory are often something quite different from general psychology and psychoanalysis that use film and engage with film. The methodologies of other disciplines change substantially when they enter the humanities, the criticism of artistic creation and art itself. Yet these other disciplines still often, and increasingly, use art in their own way for their own, non-humanistic and non-artistic purposes.

Thus, an impulse towards the scholarly investigation of film's artistic effect – an attempt to explain what makes film effective in a way that differs from other arts – was often woven into the topics discussed in this text. In other words, this is often a kind of film formalism, historically very influential in the work of theorists such as Rudolf Arnheim, but still active today. We see it among scholars of film modernism and specialists in video art, digital art and related disciplines. Although these methodologies do not have a primarily therapeutic purpose, they nevertheless help us gain a more comprehensive and complete understanding of a film work and its effects. This approach, in turn, means that some benefit can be drawn from all, or at least many, of the observations and approaches mentioned for the conception and implementation of the film therapy process, or for developing concepts useful in understanding the possible relationship between film and therapeutic practices, that is, between film and health.

CHAPTER: FILM AND EMOTIONAL LITERACY

IDA ŠAMANOVIĆ

We take it for granted that we acquire intellectual knowledge through persistent learning throughout our lives. Nonetheless, when we think about emotional literacy, we believe we are born academics, or at least close to it. From an early age, we are taught how to speak and write, how to be obedient and hardworking, but not how truly to hear ourselves and others, how to recognise emotions and real needs, or how to prevent conflicts and misunderstandings. If we had those abilities, the world would be a happier and fairer place, in which we would recognise and respect our own emotions, condition and needs, as well as those of others. But how capable are we of recognising and naming our own emotions, let alone those of others? Are we all even born with the same emotional capacity, or does it differ, too, like our bank accounts? And does our emotional capacity change over the course of life, does it grow or decline, and what affects it? Can we learn about this even in retirement? Or is emotional learning reserved exclusively for a small number of people? These questions are particularly significant when we consider that emotions are the fuel and driving force of life, and that they contribute to a deeper understanding of the experiences we acquire from cradle to grave.

School is not only a source of knowledge but also a space where interpersonal relationships are learned and the self is discovered. On that path, one of the key subjects, though never formally taught, is knowledge about emotions. It is learned and developed from an early age. It is a skill we can work on throughout our lives. Emotional intelligence or literacy is defined as the ability to recognise, understand and regulate one's own emotions, and to understand and respect the emotions of others (Goleman, 1997). This means the ability to perceive what we feel, to understand why we feel it, to speak about it clearly, without fear or shame, and to use our own feelings and those of others as a compass, not as an obstacle. From this perspective, emotional literacy is an imperative for mental health, a fundamental prerequisite for healthy growing up and successful coping in life.

The concept of emotional literacy emerged in the early 1970s in humanistic psychology, while Daniel Goleman's 1995 book on emotional intelligence brought it broader popularity. Numerous studies have shown that a high level of emotional literacy correlates with better mental health, more positive social relationships and greater resilience to stress. This is also supported by large meta-analyses in the fields of social-emotional learning and emotional intelligence (Martins et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2017). Conversely, a lack of emotional competence can lead to difficulties in behaviour and communication. Systematic work on emotional literacy is extremely important, especially in these fast-paced times of online communication, when, amid a multitude of stimuli, we miss many things or process them only superficially, particularly at the emotional level. Research shows that children who communicate online most of the time sometimes find it harder to recognise even basic emotions in their interlocutors in live interaction (Uhls et al., 2014). The authors conclude that even a short-term increase in direct social interaction, combined with the simultaneous removal of digital media, improves the ability to understand other people's emotional cues. In other words, a lack of face-to-face communication due to excessive screen use may lead to reduced sensitivity among children to emotional signals.

In this respect, film presents itself as a natural ally of emotional literacy, acting directly on the viewer's emotional experience. It does not explain emotions; it simply activates them. The viewer learns about emotions indirectly, by observing characters in a film. For this reason, film is often closer and more understandable to children and young people than abstract explanations in books. Film language strongly encourages viewers to identify with characters, so that emotions are not only observed but also experienced.

Film literacy does not refer only to knowledge of film concepts but also to the ability to understand film language and the emotional messages it conveys. We could say that film literacy is a foundation for emotional understanding. Films can also be used to encourage discussion about feelings, thereby developing children's social-emotional skills through film analysis. In psychological terms, film activates a process of emotional processing through which children learn to recognise basic emotions, such as sadness, fear or joy, as well as more complex emotional states, such as pride, shame or envy. Naming and recognising emotions is precisely the first step towards emotion regulation. For children who have not yet developed a vocabulary, especially an emotional one, film functions as a dictionary of emotions through moving images. Identification is one of the key psychological mechanisms through which film operates. The viewer recognises parts of themselves in the film hero. Film enables the viewer temporarily to see the world from another person's perspective, thereby developing the capacity for empathy. It is precisely this process that



makes film an extremely valuable tool in the development of emotional literacy. Empathy develops not only through cognitive understanding of other people's feelings, but also through emotional experience.

Film enables this in a safe way. Children can empathise with a character who is suffering without being exposed to real danger or loss themselves. This creates an emotional distance that both protects and teaches. In school, such experiences help pupils better understand their peers, reduce impulsivity and develop more tolerant behaviour. In addition to recognising emotions, film also helps regulate them. Wedding and Niemiec (2014) link this concept to watching films that evoke strong emotions but end with a sense of meaning and a reduction of inner tension. Films reduce stress and anxiety precisely because they enable safe emotional expression. For children and young people who have not yet developed strategies for regulating emotions, film can serve as a first step towards understanding and coping with feelings.

Film does not solve the problem, but it creates a safe space for exploring emotions. Film simultaneously engages pupils' emotions and thoughts as they experience stories that can make them laugh and inspire them. Film becomes an emotional laboratory. Through other people's stories, under controlled conditions, pupils examine their own reactions and develop emotional maturity. While watching a film, children have the opportunity to see a broad range of emotional states on actors' faces, thereby learning to recognise feelings even before a character names them. They may notice tears and a quiet voice when a character is sad, or a sharp and raised voice when a character is angry. In addition to recognising emotions in others, film encourages children to become aware of their own emotions. After the film ends, perhaps the most important moment in the process of emotional learning begins: reflection. A quality film resonates for a long time and prompts reflection, and in an educational context, the teacher can use this opportunity to guide the pupil's reflection towards personal growth. Talking about the film helps children translate their emotional and cognitive experiences into words, much as in a therapeutic process, so others can better understand them and they can hear themselves more clearly. Pupils recount their impressions and analyse the characters' actions, which they then connect to their own lives. At that point, they take a step beyond mere emotional experience, identifying lessons and insights. The film then becomes a mirror; through the fate of the hero, the pupil observes their own values and behaviours.

Perhaps they will realise that they themselves sometimes reject friends when they are unhappy, just like the hero of the film, and along with the teacher and their peers, they can reflect on why such behaviour is not good and how they can react differently. By watching favourite characters face difficulties and make progress, children can gain hope and inspiration that they too can overcome difficulties in life. A discussion of the film, skilfully moderated by the teacher, helps pupils develop critical thinking and moral reasoning. Questions are asked, such as: Why do you think the character did that? or What would have been most important to you in that situation? Teachers encourage pupils to think more deeply about the causes and consequences of emotions and behaviour. The self-reflection prompted by film leads to a deeper understanding of oneself and others, which is the core of emotional literacy. The film narrative is analysed, and a critical understanding of media content is encouraged. Pupils learn to recognise how film elements, such as music, shots and dialogue, convey messages and influence the viewer's emotions. In this way, awareness grows among audiences, and content is no longer absorbed passively but is reflected upon. In this respect, the context in which the film is used, the age-appropriateness of the content, and the time for discussion after watching the film are all significant.

PRIMARY SCHOOL, CLASS TEACHING

CHAPTER: USING HUMOUR AGAINST ANXIETY AND FEAR

MARINA ZLATARIĆ, ADVISOR AND TEACHER

LAUGHTER AS CONTAGION

They always tell me that I seem to have come from a land of smiles and that my laughter is contagious. For a long time, I wondered how it could be contagious and whether a cure for it should be searched in pharmacies. A medicine against laughter. I did not understand why anyone would need to be treated for that. I like this contagion of mine, this laughter of mine. I have not noticed others avoiding me because of that terrible contagion either. Nobody puts their hand over their mouth to stop it. They always wave to me and call me over.

After thinking about it for a long time, I came to the conclusion that laughter is a kind of good contagion. If that is so, and it is, since I have already said why, then my task is to infect everyone. And so I would make people around me laugh, so much that some of them would even get stomach aches, clutch their bellies and, through laughter and tears, say in a stammer: "O-o-oh, sto-op, I can't take any more." I did not invent that laughter. It simply happened. As soon as I woke up, it greeted me. The two of us are inseparable friends.

And then... then once, while I was gasping with laughter, a serious voice suddenly stopped me and concluded: "Everything is funny to you. You never take anything seriously. You don't care about anything. All that matters to you is having fun." The laughter suddenly withdrew from my face and turned into something I do not know how to call it. How could that be? Isn't laughter a wonderful contagion that everyone loves? I, too, am serious when something is troubling me. There have been moments like that, but they did not notice them. At such times, I try to become invisible because I feel even worse when they ask me a thousand questions and try to make me laugh by force.

I am wondering whether it would be better if I stopped laughing. Do I really never take anything seriously? Perhaps I don't, but it is not true that I do not care about anything or anyone. I care about all of them. That is why I cheer them up when I am in a good mood. But perhaps, from time to time, as my mother says, about other things though, I should slow down... Slow things down – what does that mean? I hope that is not some kind of contagion either.

**Think about what you would do/make sure to do in this situation.
Choose one of the three offered responses and briefly explain your choice.**

A

**I would keep smiling
and move on as
before.**

B

**I would talk to my
friends about it
and smile/laugh.**

C

**I would not smile/laugh
anymore when
I'm with others.**

Film title: FROM MORNING TILL TOMORROW

Director: Ljubica Heidler

Main illustration: Ljubica Heidler

Animation: Ljubica Heidler

Screenplay: Nenad Pavlica

Music: Vanja Dražinić

Voice: Slavica Knežević

Camera: D.I.A.T.

Production: Zagreb Film

Film type: animated film

Year: 2005

Duration: 6:36

Link: <https://zagrebfilm.hr/filmovi/od-jutra-do-sutra/>





Photograph from the film – screenshot

SYNOPSIS

A girl named Klara talks about herself and her family. She presents and comments on her family as she sees and experiences it.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE FILM

Share your impressions of the film and explain them.

DISCUSSION OF THE FILM'S THEME AND THE CHOICE OF FILM EXPRESSIVE MEANS

Describe how the film was introduced.

(a portrait of the girl with different facial expressions appears, accompanied by cheerful music)

Describe the girl's facial expressions in the film's introduction.

(the girl laughs, is angry, surprised, pleased, cries, talks on the phone...)

Think about what the different facial expressions communicated.

(the theme of the film is a girl whom we will get to know in different situations)

Describe what you concluded about the content of the film from the first shot, that is, from the beginning of the film. Explain.

(the plot of the film will be funny and joyful)

Consider whether the shot in which the girl introduces herself met your expectations of an entertaining film. Explain.

(individual answers by pupils, possible answer: yes, the girl enters her room, which is full of toys; on the walls there is a row of frames containing different animals, which move/flicker as if they were dancing; the girl jumps cheerfully, greets the viewers and introduces herself in an unusual way/her name is Maja, but that is not her name; that is a "silly joke" she read about – Maja everywhere, but no parents anywhere) Recall how the girl delayed revealing her name and what she says about it.

(she says that everyone calls her something different and that she does not know what her name is even used for)

Describe how the film shows that the girl is puzzled by stories in which there are no parents and the conclusion that she does not know what her name is used for.

(she is puzzled: she slaps her forehead, closes her eyes, raises one hand; she talks about stories in which there is Maja, but no parents anywhere. She is thoughtful: she puts a finger on her nose, looks thoughtfully to the side; she says she does not know what her name is for)

Describe what feelings the girl brought out in you already at the beginning of the film.

(individual answers by pupils; possible answer: affection and joy)

Draw a conclusion as to why the girl brought out those feelings in you.

(because of her behaviour, the way she introduces herself and her facial expressions)

Recall what we call a film in which characters are brought to life and behave like people.

(animated film)

Describe the shot in which the girl introduces her mother.

(the girl enters the room; her mother is lying in an armchair, sleeping with her mouth open; she has a funny pose and hairstyle; her T-shirt is pulled up so her stomach can be seen; while she breathes, her stomach rises and falls; the girl stands in front of her mother, who is still sleeping, and says that her mother works hard, comes home only in the early evening, and that the girl has to manage on her own and sometimes even cooks at times)

Share your experience of what the girl cooked.

(the girl brings her mother the coffee she has made, turns the cup upside down, the coffee remains on the saucer like a cake, the girl expresses the hope that the coffee is strong enough, and her mother continues sleeping)

Describe how the girl introduced us to the story about her mother's fear related to food.

(on leaving the room in which she left her mother the coffee, she adds, "thank God coffee isn't fattening"; she enters her own room and says disapprovingly that her mother is always on some kind of diet)

Recall how the girl's story showed that her mother is pleased with her weight-loss results.

(the girl narrates; a thought bubble appears showing her mother looking at herself in the mirror and commenting with satisfaction on how her jeans fit)

Draw a conclusion as to how the girl continues to present her family.

(humorously, with comments)

Recall the moment when we find out the girl's name.

(her mother is ironing; the telephone rings; her mother calls her by name and says that the call is for her)

Describe how the girl behaves when she answers the call and why.

(she comments that it is certainly Denis; she answers and confirms this; she covers the receiver with her hand and quietly says that Denis attends her class and that he has been in love with her since nursery; she rolls her eyes)

Consider how the conversation between Klara and Denis is shown and what this additionally emphasises.

(they are shown alternately while they talk; their behaviour during the conversation is further emphasised)

Describe what made you laugh during their conversation.

(individual answers by pupils; possible answers: Denis wrote that two plus two is eight; Klara says that it is four, six at most, and that eight is definitely too much)

Describe Klara's facial expression and behaviour when Denis invites her to the cinema and sends kisses.

(Klara bristles, moves the receiver away, makes disgusted grimaces, produces strange sounds and says that the connection is breaking up)

Recall the comment where Klara ends her story about her family before going to sleep.

("I sleep in an old-fashioned bed in which, as Mum said, half of her family slept." Klara does not know how they were not cramped)

Draw a conclusion as to whether Klara's story is convincingly presented in the film through the presented characters and rooms, as well as through acting. Give an example.

(individual answers by pupils; possible answer: yes, the appearance of the rooms/scenography – each room is presented in its own way, but all are colourful, cheerful and full of details characteristic of the rooms shown; the appearance of the characters/costume design and acting – Klara is cheerful, which is also noticeable in her brightly coloured clothes; she has a bow on top of her head; her facial expressions, gestures and actions show what she is like; Denis is mischievous and a little full of himself, which is noticeable in the way he speaks, behaves and in his tousled hair)





RETURN TO THE PROBLEM POSED

Recall the initial problem story.

Consider whether you would like to change your previous choice of reaction to the situation described.

If you have changed your opinion, explain the reason for the change.

REACTIONS TO THE PROBLEM STORY AND WHAT THEY MEAN

A

I would continue laughing as before.

Correct decision. You should definitely continue laughing as before, of course, not in places and situations where laughter is inappropriate. Laughter is healthy for everyone, both children and adults. It encourages joy, helps build self-confidence and makes it easier to move on from unpleasant situations. When in company, it can bring you even closer together and free you from anxiety and stress that may stem from obligations at school or outside it. Laughter can help you reduce or eliminate peer violence and help you learn to work in a team. Laughter is real medicine for everyone.

B

I would laugh less often in company.

There is no need to hold back your laughter if you find something funny. Of course, not in situations where laughter is inappropriate. The idea that laughter is a sign that someone does not care about anyone or anything is incorrect. Laughter can help eliminate fear and anxiety, build and strengthen wonderful friendships, help suppress peer violence and develop awareness of the importance of teamwork. Laughter helps overcome obstacles and builds self-confidence. If laughter happens at the right time and in the right place, it is a cure for everything. Still, think about this: perhaps your laughter bothers someone at a particular time because they are in a difficult life situation. In that case, softening your laughter would be a good way to show understanding.

C

I would no longer laugh in company.

Think about whether that is a good decision. One person's opinion is not the group's opinion. If the group enjoys your laughter and the cheerfulness you spread, and if you enjoy it too, do not give up. Continue as you did before that comment. Sometimes comments are not well-intentioned. Still, consider whether the person who said that to you may have been bothered by your laughter at that moment because they are perhaps in a difficult life situation. If that turns out to be the case, talk to that person. Point out that you did not mean to hurt their feelings. Try to cheer them up in an unobtrusive way. Perhaps even make them laugh, but not with a wildly funny joke. Let it be something that will bring a smile to their face. Laughter does heal; it helps with coping with fear and anxiety, and with unpleasant situations. Perhaps it will bring you closer together, and perhaps you will help that person in this way.

CONCLUSIONS

(individual answers by pupils, with explanations)

CREATIVE TASK

Choose one of the three tasks provided.

Write a short, funny class story together. Record it on a mobile phone and show it during the class teacher period.

Draw a poster for the film From Morning Till Tomorrow, directed by Ljubica Heidler.

Retell the film From Morning Till Tomorrow, directed by Ljubica Heidler.

Sources:

Zagreb Film. (n.d.). Zagreb Film. <https://zagrebfilm.hr/>

Obitelj.hr. (n.d.). Development of Humour in Children. <https://www.obitelj.hr/razvoj-humora-kod-djece/>

Zlatarić, M. (2023). Film Manual for Kindergartens, Primary Schools and Secondary Schools. HAVC Film Literacy. <https://filmskapismenost.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/FILMSKI-PRIRUCNIK-MARINA-ZLATARIC.pdf>



PRIMARY SCHOOL, SUBJECT CLASS

CHAPTER: SOCIAL MEDIA, INFLUENCERS, CHALLENGES

MARINA ZLATARIĆ, ADVISOR AND TEACHER

Read/listen to the problem story.

I WANT THEM TO ADMIRE ME

I could hardly wait until morning to see how many likes my latest post would get!

So, my latest post is a-ma-zing! If it were not mine and if I could, I would like it a thousand times! Well, maybe I wouldn't if it belonged to someone else. Especially Iva – I'm just saying. I put a lot of effort into that photograph. How much I had to persuade Ana to go to that great place so she could take photos of me. I kept assuring her that she would have a great photo too, but she just waved it off. She is not bothered by that at all. She photographed me in that place several times, actually... a little more than several. It annoyed her that I kept asking her to repeat it so many times. She claimed they were the same. But they were not. I could see that nuance interfering with my expectations. True, the smile was the same. It is the one I have practised and always put on. It suits me. Once I refine it a little more, it will be great. Sometimes my practised smile gets out of control and turns out badly, but I delete it immediately. Anyway, after half an hour, Ana had an even more dissatisfied expression on her face. I was getting on her nerves, and she told me so. To somehow put her in a better mood, I said to her: "Here, now I'll take one of you!" She just turned around and gave a sour smile. I clicked at that moment. That sour photograph was definitely not for posting online, and anyway, that is not important to her, nor is it her intention.

We walked towards school without a word. I do not know whether she was still angry with

Think about which of the three characters in the story is on your side.		
Choose one of the three offered responses and briefly explain your choice.		
A The author of the text.	B The narrator.	C The character Aninoj.

FILM ANNOUNCEMENT AND SCREENING

Film title: IRIS

Director: Lucija Bužančić

Screenplay: Lucija Bužančić

Animation: Lucija Bužančić

Music: Mišo Komenda, Hrvoje Štefotić

Sound Design: Mišo Komenda

Voice: Lucija Bužančić

Design: Lucija Bužančić

Technique: Digital video

Producer: Vinko Brešan

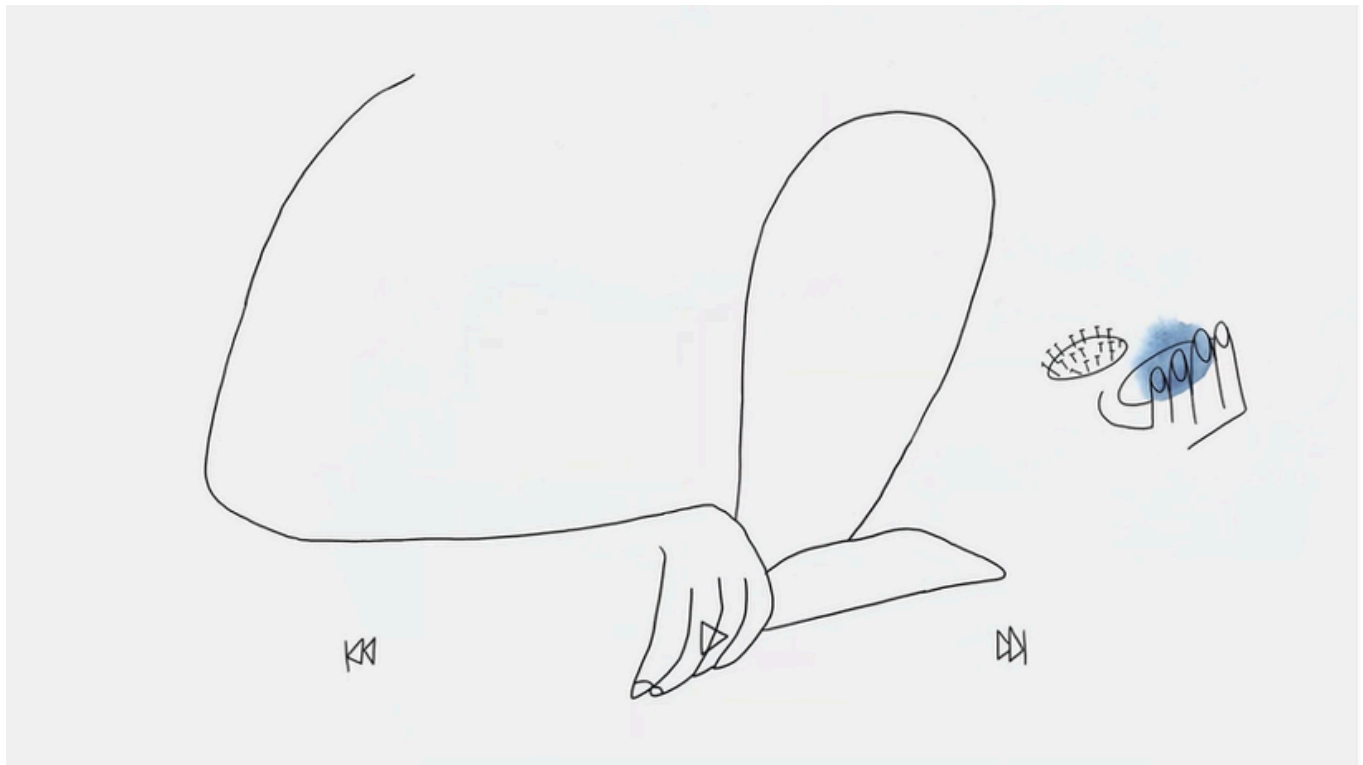
Production Company: Zagreb Film

Film type: animated film

Year: 2020

Duration: 8'10"

Link: <https://zagrebfilm.hr/filmovi/iris/>



SYNOPSIS

The short film Iris is inspired by the Greek myth of Narcissus. It tells the story of a vain girl named Iris who fell in love with her own projection and then, one day, disappeared in the bathtub.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE FILM

Share your impressions of the film and explain them.

DISCUSSION OF THE FILM'S THEME AND THE CHOICE OF FILM EXPRESSIVE MEANS

Recall why Iris liked to think about herself in the third person singular.

(it let her become the main character of every story and every film, all songs were about her and every book described her life precisely)

Describe how Iris is presented at the beginning of the film.

(through simple animated forms and the narrator's story)

Think about what bothered Iris even when she was little.

(her name, which sounded pointy)

Describe what bothered Iris about her name when she grew up.

(the name Iris was no longer pointy to her, but Anamaria, a mean girl, had said so in childhood, and Iris accepted it at the time)

Draw a conclusion as to what Iris, as a grown-up girl, thinks about Anamaria's behaviour in childhood.

(she was a mean girl, that is, the worst kind; because of that, she deserved to be a supporting role on a swing in horror films, but instead she was the most popular girl in the class)

Describe the animations that accompanied the story about Anamaria.

(in the shot, we see a drawing of a girl in a blue dress with a smile; the outlines of characters and swings fill the shot over Anamaria; murmuring is heard)

Think about how the short descriptions or presentation of characters and events in the film are intertwined with the narrator's voice.

(the drawings gradually appeared and filled in as the narrator spoke, then dissolved at the end of the story)

Conclude whether the drawings are detailed and whether this changes the quality of the animated film. Give an example.

(they are not; they consist of patches of colour and lines; this does not reduce the quality of the animated film, but gives it distinctiveness and interest; for example, the story about the grandmother – in the shot there are several simple lines in which we recognise eyes, a nose and lips with wrinkles, colour appears as patches, colour builds the grandmother's portrait, and the lines from the beginning of the shot join the colour and define the grandmother's portrait)



Describe when Iris cried most often.

(when she grew into a young woman and watched films with moving scenes in which she could easily associate with)

Recall when Iris accepted her name.

(as a grown-up girl, she became beautiful and vain; aware of her beauty, every time she passed a mirror, she would look at herself; she liked everything about herself, and her name was also fine)

Describe the way Iris thinks about herself.

(she places herself in compositions like in paintings, and specifically in the ones in which she turned out well; she thought she knew exactly how others saw her; she directed everything; she was also convinced that she was more beautiful from the left side, so she always positioned herself that way, and it was easier to approach her from that side)

Think about what this behaviour of hers brings to mind. Explain.

(posts on social media; most people choose photographs in which they have turned out well, and some even edit them beyond recognition; on social media, we can show ourselves in photographs and words in whatever way we want and as whatever we want, and we can hide behind that)

Describe what Iris could also have concealed or presented differently on social media.

(lack of self-confidence – she did not like being in the company of more than five people because that required spontaneity, which she did not have)

Recall whom Iris imitates in the film and how.

(the actress Ingrid Bergman – Iris did not smoke cigarettes, but she thought that a cigarette would look good in her hand; she liked watching the smoke and imagining that her eyes shone like Ingrid Bergman's in the film Casablanca; she imagined that she was like her, but her eyes were not shining, they were watering from the smoke, and neither did the cigarette suit her)

Consider whether you can compare her identification with the plot and actresses in films with your peers, perhaps even with yourself, and in what way.

(yes, teenagers often identify with influencers, try to be like them, and seek popularity; neither one nor the other is real life – Iris is in the world of film in which she places and imagines herself, while teenagers sometimes want to be like influencers, and that world is also not their real world; Iris like some teenagers make themselves feel important in this way, want to feel important and want to be popular)

Describe how the events, descriptions and persons in the film are presented.

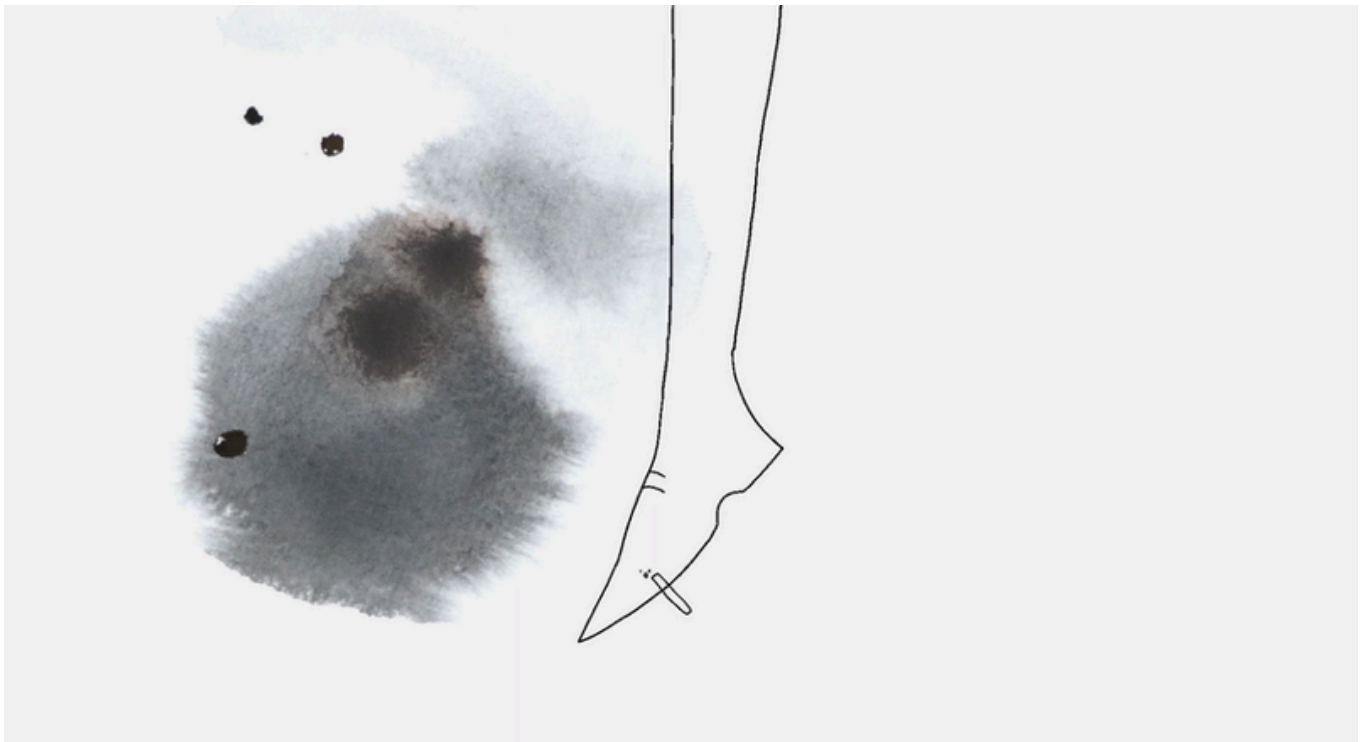
(through a series of very short stories of several sentences that also include the narrator's commentary; the narrator's voice is accompanied by simple drawings, which are created with each new story and disappear when it ends)

Draw a conclusion as to why Iris was not satisfied with her story in the end.

(for the whole day, she had not been the main character in that story, but only a passerby in other people's much more exciting lives; she is the protagonist)

Recall what Iris chose at the end and how she presented her choice through drawing.

(some other person; perhaps: I will, you will, he/she/it will, we will, you will, they will; she presented it as a scribbled circle)



RETURN TO THE PRESENTED PROBLEM

Recall the initial problem story.

Consider whether you would like to change your choice regarding which of the three characters in the story you side with.

If you have changed your opinion, explain the reason for the change.

REACTIONS TO THE PROBLEM STORY AND WHAT THEY MEAN

A

On the side of the author of the text.

The author of the text likes posts on social media, as do many of her peers. However, in these posts, she has become obsessed with how she will present herself: a practised facial expression – a smile – carefully selected locations, photo editing... It is important to her that everyone admire her. Her interest in social media has crossed the boundaries of what is normal: she wakes up at night to check how many likes her post has. Her intention may even be to provoke jealousy among her female peers, for example, Iva, whom she mentions and whose post she would not like even if she genuinely liked it. This kind of relationship with social media leads the author of the text into an unreal world; it increasingly takes hold of her, so that she becomes more devoted to them than to what surrounds her in reality. She may be experiencing FOMO (fear of missing out), the fear that she might miss something on social media, so she constantly checks it. Consider whether the number of likes and expressions of admiration on social media are sincere. Would you complain publicly to any of those people if you felt bad because of someone or something? True, sincere friendship, regardless of how many friends you have on social media, is far more valuable. It is enough to have one true, sincere friend. They are worth more than thousands of likes and “friends” online.

B

On Marko’s side.

TikTok challenges can be harmless and funny, but they can also be very dangerous. Sometimes young people, including Marko, take part in challenges to prove themselves and gain popularity. These challenges can be dangerous to health and even life-threatening. A shocking challenge encourages viewers to do something even more frightening, more reckless, more shocking; it erases the boundaries of reality and fear because, if others can do it, so can they. The number of views raises their self-confidence and popularity. It can all end fatally. Sometimes, at a certain age and level of maturity, one of them would like to delete the posted video, but it has been recorded forever. Think about whom you need to prove yourself to, and why. There are many ways to make someone admire you. And if that happens in person, it is real and sincere. The number of TikTok views is not a measure of admiration. Encourage a discussion about challenges during the class teacher period.

C

On Ana’s side.

According to the author of the text, Ana is strange because she does not know how to have fun. Perhaps Ana also follows social media and posts on TikTok, but she is not obsessed with them. She does not post her content only so that someone will like her; she does not build false self-confidence through posts and does not like and comment on everyone’s posts only so that they will return the favour on her own posts. It is possible that, for Ana, posts are part of entertainment and useful information, and that she is aware of the dangers hidden in some challenges. Ana, like most of her peers, cannot isolate herself. In the past, young people’s role models were actors, singers and athletes. Today, young people’s role models are influencers. Of course, not all of their posts are bad. Many of them have a positive influence on young people. It is simply necessary to know how to recognise such content. No one is preventing young people, at a certain age, from enjoying posts, whether their own or others’, but this should be done thoughtfully. Think about the fact that your posts remain in the future as well. Do not accept everything that you are offered.

CONCLUSIONS

(individual answers by pupils, with explanations)



SECONDARY SCHOOL

CHAPTER: FILM THERAPY

ĐURĐICA RADIĆ, TEACHER

POSING THE PROBLEM

Read/listen to the problem story.

I keep thinking about Ana these days. She no longer wants to spend time with me; she told me that over coffee recently. I froze. Completely shocked, I kept trying to find out the reasons for her decision. She answered all my questions briefly, only with yes or no. There is no reason; she has to work on herself; she has to think a little about her life and everything around her. She does not know when it will pass; she needs peace and solitude. I do not know what to think. I am very sad. We have known each other for a very long time; we were friends even in kindergarten. We have so many memories: we played all day long, collected stickers and filled albums, played teachers and shopkeepers, cooked green fruit and leaves in her grandmother's yard. Then we spent whole days learning to paint our nails and steal Mum's make-up, read scary stories, sleep over at each other's houses and share secrets about boys. So much time together, joking and laughter. So many trips and meetings; we knew everything about each other, and we were really close.

And now... I saw Ana the other day; she did not see me. For a while, I walked behind her because I was really worried and could not understand what had happened. It seemed to me that she was talking to herself, smiling strangely and nodding. She did not notice me; she was obviously in some imagined world of her own. I found out that she is not getting back to any of our friends, and we really have many. She has completely isolated herself. I am very frightened; I do not know what to do, whom to turn to or how to help her...

(fictional story, author Đurđica Radić – any resemblance to actual events or persons is coincidental)

Think about what you would do/make sure to do in this situation. Choose one of the three offered responses and briefly explain your choice.		
A I would keep moving on, it's not my problem, others will deal with it.	B I would try to find out more about it and see if there's something I can do to help.	C I would turn to someone I trust at school and talk to them about it.

FILM ANNOUNCEMENT AND SCREENING

Film title: MELANKOLIJE

Directors: participants of the documentary film workshop of the 13th Dr Ante Peterlić School of Media Culture

Mentor: Damir Čučić

Screenplay: participants and mentor

Film type: documentary

Genre: biographical

Year: 2011

Duration: 14:27

Link: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/3917452>



SYNOPSIS

The film presents excerpts from Marko Filipović's novel *Melankolie* and, in a confessional tone, speaks about his anxieties and fears, sorrows and pains.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE FILM

What can you say about this film? How did you like this story? Explain. What associations and feelings were awakened during the film? What did you feel?

DISCUSSION OF THE FILM'S THEME AND THE CHOICE OF FILM EXPRESSIVE MEANS

Recall the very beginning of the film and describe what you first saw and heard.

(a sentence on a black background: "...I sang about the wall and the friendship of those on the other side...", signed Marko Filipović; then the voice of a radio presenter announcing her guest, Marko Filipović, author of the novel *Melankolie*; and then, in a close-up, we see a male person riding in a car, Marko)

Try to characterise the hero of this film work in as much detail as possible; describe what he looks like, how he speaks and how he behaves.

(around forty years old, tall and handsome, with blue eyes, dressed in a T-shirt and jeans; he looks somewhat dreamy, speaks slowly, at times unclearly, and appears calm, sleepy and slowed down; later we learn that the cause of this is the medication without which he cannot function)

Think about what troubles Marko and describe how we learn about this in the film.

(Marko's mental health is impaired; he has had hallucinations, has often been in hospital, and cannot do without medication because he starts talking incoherently and loses his bearings; we learn this through excerpts from his autobiographical novel and through conversations with a group of people, participants in the documentary film workshop)

Explain what or who *Melankolie* is and how it is evoked.

(the need for love and belonging that he has lost; it appears in his difficult states and brings him back from the abyss, restores his faith; it is shown as a young and fragile female person, appearing in several shots, always associated with tender feelings; this state of his is also highlighted by gentle music)

Did you remember any saying, thought or sentence that vividly describes this person? Describe some features of his manner of speech and expression.

(Marko reads excerpts from his book; in some places he is poetic, with lyrical descriptions associated with a woman and love; elsewhere he describes his mental difficulties and the misery of society as a whole in vivid terms; he is sincere and lays himself completely bare; he describes all the difficulties faced by people with problems connected to impaired mental health; he is a hypersensitive person who often cannot get through the day without medication; he expresses satisfaction at being in the film, feels that he is seen and heard, acknowledged; the ending of the film is optimistic because he hopes for brighter days)



Think about the space in the film, describe which colours predominate and explain what led the authors of the film to choose precisely those filming locations; explain the role of the space.

(a long white corridor and white, at places dirty, ceramic tiles; a white ceiling; a room with beds, suggesting a hospital; lamps, an old building, weeds, broken windows, a close-up of a broken window, something resembling a storage space full of rubbish; shots of the space evoke his psychological state)

Recall some of the shots that evoke Marko's state and identify their type.

(close-ups: a fly, a spider, a broken window, dirty tiles, water running from a tap, a peeling wall, an onion, rubbish, old newspapers, canned luncheon meat, a sign: entry prohibited and must be locked. All these shots help evoke the difficult state of the main character; they reflect his feelings, which are gloomy and so heavy that he cannot cope without the help of medication)

Describe what the sounds in the film are like, whether there is music, and identify their role in the film.

(Marko's voice is very pleasant; when the girl who symbolises Melankolie appears, pleasant jazz music is heard; when Marko speaks about his mental difficulties, the sound of breaking glass is heard; sound also accompanies the thousand layers of Marko's personality)

Do you think that mental health is discussed openly enough in our society today? Explain your view.

(today, this topic is still something that is bypassed and avoided in our society; people deny or belittle mental imbalance, think that it should not be exaggerated, sweep their own problems or the problems of those close to them under the carpet, and if they realise they need help, they often obtain medication on their own, without a doctor, which can be dangerous and further worsen their condition; the psyche is extremely complex and, just as a specialist is needed for surgery on an arm or a heart, a specialist is also needed to restore mental balance)

Try to explain what causes such a situation and what could lead to change.

(the reason is the attitude that a person like Marko is declared mad and stigmatised; prejudices are too strong, and that is why people avoid this topic, and the only way to change this is through conversation and learning, because a state of mental imbalance can happen to any of us; stress leads to serious states, and instead of condemnation, help is needed)

Explain how Marko, in the film, improves his mental health.

(he writes a novel, acts in the film and speaks openly about his condition; he speaks honestly about his life, feels connected with the participants, has the impression that what he is doing matters and experiences a kind of catharsis)

Do you remember Marko's last word in the film? Does film help him? Explain your view.

(the last word is laughter; the film ends optimistically, with the open sharing of thoughts and feelings, and with faith that one can enjoy small things, especially talking with someone)



RETURN TO THE PROBLEM POSED

Recall the initial problem story.

Consider whether you would like to change your previous choice of reaction to the situation described.

If the answer is yes, explain your view.

REACTIONS TO THE PROBLEM STORY AND WHAT THEY MEAN

A

I will move on; it is not my problem, it is better not to get involved.

A person who suddenly changes their behaviour in this way has certainly experienced stress, a loss, or something bad has happened to them. Perhaps they have no one they can confide in; perhaps it is too hard for them to deal with their problems, and that is why they escape into a world of imagination.

A conversation with you could:

- a) frighten the person and make them withdraw even more; they may interpret your well-intentioned act as an attack
- b) open the way to discovering what is troubling that person; you could go together to the school psychologist for a conversation, or through conversation, the person may open up and be ready to accept help

B

I will call their parents and tell them what I have noticed.

Parents understand their children best and should be most attentive to what is happening to them. Still, you must be prepared for their different reactions:

1. They will belittle your concern, relativise everything you have told them and convince you that you are not right because their child is only a little tired. They will turn everything into a joke.
2. Their reaction to your observations will be extremely harsh; they will shout at you and explain to you in a rough tone that something is wrong with you, that you are imagining things, talking nonsense and lies. They will threaten you, demand that you stay away from their child and try to convince you that you are the one who actually needs help.
3. They will listen carefully to what you are saying, they will be interested, frightened and motivated to help their child. They will react positively and will be grateful.

C

I will seek out a professional and tell them about this experience.

A doctor, psychologist or another person, a professional in the field of mental health, will look at your story rationally, and you will receive advice on what to do and whom to contact.

CONCLUSIONS

(individual answers, explanations of decisions)

CREATIVE TASK

Choose one of the three tasks offered:

1. Devise a concept for possible therapy through another art form.
2. Create a poster for a film dealing with art therapy.
3. Make a dictionary of feelings with their definitions.

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DR NIKICA GILIĆ

AUTHOR OF THE BOOK FILM AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE

FULL PROFESSOR OF FILM STUDIES AT THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES IN ZAGREB



My approach and my contribution to this book fall within a theoretical framework. I was invited to present on how film studies and film history have addressed psychological health, mental health, trauma and developmental difficulties – from the perspective of art and the scholarly study of film art.

That is why psychologist Ida Šamanović and I, as a film scholar, present the theoretical part of the book, while our colleagues from practice, Đurđica Radić, who works with the secondary-school population, and Marina Zlatarić, who works with primary school children and young people, have addressed what may be the most valuable part: templates for work in teaching, schools and school film groups. In this way, everyone who reads the book and works with children and young people is given specific methods and ways of working.

One of the most interesting features of the 20th century was the convergence of several important phenomena. One of these was certainly film, which became an important art and industry, but also a heightened interest in the psyche, in the psychological area and the inner, beneath the surface.

In this sense, theory even claimed that film “invented psychoanalysis”, which may be an exaggeration, but it shows well how important film is for understanding and studying the human psyche. Film has also been described as a medium that depicts people from imagination –people, but originating in the imagination – and has been compared to dreaming and dreams. In essence, the process of film communication often draws on fundamental human perceptions of the world and of others.

This means that film often presents all kinds of relationships, both traumatic and problematic. On the other hand, film artists often depicted, almost literally, what troubled or interested them, in the same way as painters, writers or theatre authors had done before them.

In this way, through film, one can very clearly trace, if you like, the history of the traumas of the 20th century – both in a personal sense, through the experiences of individuals and in a broader social sense: the traumas of wars, the First World War, the Second World War, numerous crises and social changes.

All of this somehow ran through film, and all of it was addressed through film. So whichever topic from 20th-century history interests you, you can observe it through film art and see, through film examples, how society dealt with it.

Film studies has been developing in recent decades, but not quickly enough to be included in the official curricula of primary and secondary schools. That is why my colleagues, Radić and Zlatarić, do this through additional programmes and extracurricular activities. Still, the network of school film groups and film teaching in schools is developing and becoming richer, which gives grounds for optimism.

One thing that is particularly important is that film entered the DNA of all later media, first television and then the digital media we use today.

Today, for example, algorithms bring me clips from the 1970s Television Zagreb series or fragments of Croatian films by Krsto Papić. In other words, film elements continue to circulate in the digital space and form the basis of contemporary digital literacy. On the other hand, this confirms that film can still be used to speak relevantly about important topics, including to new generations. Not every film is equally suitable for this, nor has every film “aged” equally well, but some are even more relevant today than they were at the time of their production. This is a constant dialogue between the present and history.

In that dialogue, the experts gathered around HAVC, projects such as these, and books on film literacy are seeking ways to make the best possible use of film heritage and film theory in work with young people and in navigating the contemporary world – both at the media level and at the health level – because film makes communicating about complex topics easier. From experience and from the literature, it seems to me that film is a very powerful tool because, similar to therapies in which a puppet or symbolic object is used, through film – through the image you are watching or have created yourself – you can speak about yourself in a safe way.

You can deal with even the most difficult problems without feeling exposed. It is precisely for this reason that I consider this artistic, and especially filmic, therapeutic potential to be exceptionally great.



IDA ŠAMANOVIĆ

AUTHOR OF THE BOOK FILM AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE
SPECIALIST IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY – PSYCHOTHERAPIST

The significance of art for mental health has been present since time immemorial – since the first campfires and the stories that brought people together. Throughout history, it has become clear how much bibliotherapy, books and various forms of art contribute to preserving mental health.

In the last 130 years, we have also had film. From its very beginnings, film has shown a clear connection with mental health. It is interesting that, at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, film, psychology, psychotherapy and psychoanalysis emerged simultaneously, while psychiatry was increasingly taking shape as a scientific field. It is as if, in that period, art once again powerfully demonstrated its connection with mental health.

In what way? In the sense that, through art, we bypass the rational part and open up space for emotions? Through film, our emotions come out more freely; we have an opportunity to experience, become aware of, analyse and understand what is happening within us and in our relationships with others.

For this reason, encouraging emotional literacy through film literacy also improves mental health, which is especially important from the earliest age. Alongside learning the alphabet and writing, children should also learn to recognise, analyse and understand their own emotions and relationships between people.

For now, film literacy in schools remains largely in the hands of a group of enthusiasts – people who work with heart and, as is often said, “leave their heart out on the field”. But there remains hope that it will soon become a systematic part of education as well.

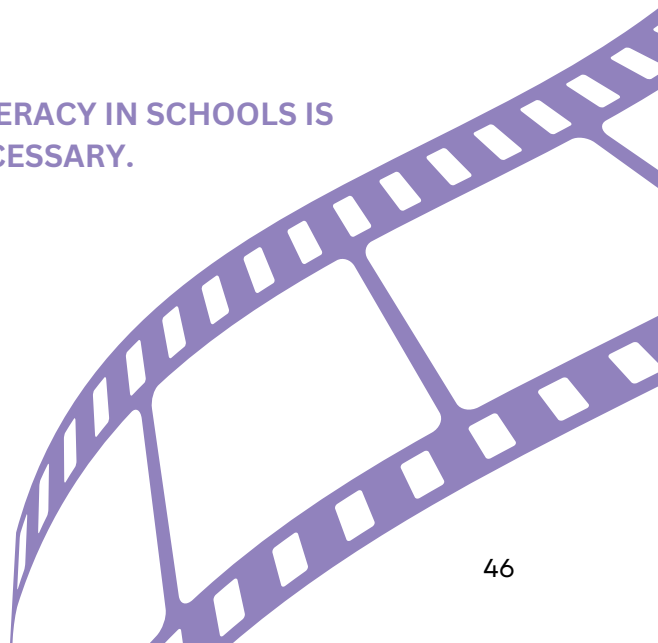
I believe that my own profession will then also have an easier task in its later work with patients, because many interpersonal and emotional situations will have been learned, recognised and understood earlier.

When watching a film, it is important that, regardless of age – as children, young people or adults – we are not merely consumers, but active participants in the process: that we reflect on, analyse and understand what we are watching.

But can children do that today? Research by the Croatian Audiovisual Centre from 2025 shows that only around 20% of children and young people fully understand what they are watching, although almost all of them watch films.

On the other hand, more than 60% of them state that analysing a film with an educator is precisely what helps them better understand the content they are watching.

**THIS CLEARLY SHOWS HOW IMPORTANT FILM LITERACY IN SCHOOLS IS
AND WHY ITS SYSTEMATIC INTRODUCTION IS NECESSARY.**



MARINA ZLATARIĆ

AUTHOR OF THE BOOK FILM AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE

CROATIAN LANGUAGE TEACHER IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL AND FILM EDUCATOR



In this new book of ours – a unique book and the first of its kind, titled *Film and the Mental Health of Children and Young People*, in addition to the first two chapters, which Nikica and Ida have spoken about, there is also a third chapter, divided into two sections: for primary school and secondary school.

I worked on the part for primary school, since I work with upper-primary school pupils, as well as in class teaching. This part is divided into two sub-sections – class teaching and subject teaching – and constitutes the practical segment of the work on film and children's mental health.

It concerns specific approaches to working with children through film, encouraging them to think about problems that trouble them, how to recognise such problems, and those they may encounter in the future.

The topics in class teaching include, for example, humour as a way of coping with anxiety, work habits, adopted children and the importance of friendship and mutual help. There are eight of them in total. In subject teaching, more complex topics are addressed – fourteen or sixteen of them – such as depression, anxiety, sexual violence, domestic and peer violence, as well as the pressure of learning and achieving success.

All the topics have a similar structure. They begin with a problem story, which my colleague from secondary schools and I designed as a kind of card presenting problem situations. Depending on the topic, pupils are offered a particular problem.

Subsequently, pupils can choose among three offered responses on how they would act if they were in the character's position in the story, and they must explain their choice. Then, without a conclusion, a short film is introduced, most often around ten minutes long, from a database of films that are available free of charge, for example, the productions of Zagreb Film and Croatia Film.

This is followed by an analysis of the film and a psychological analysis. After that, we return to the initial problem situation, with pupils having the opportunity to change their answer, this time based on arguments. At the end come conclusions and creative tasks.

I think this is extremely important today. One often hears: "We also watched films, and we did not make a big deal out of it." But today's generations are growing up in a completely different environment. They are exposed to a constant bombardment of content – social media, the internet, influencers, TikTok.

I am not claiming that all of this is bad, but children often do not know how to distinguish what is of good quality from what is not. That is precisely why we have to help them – to teach them how to watch and think about what they see. It is important that they not remain on the surface, but enter into the depths of characters and stories, so that they understand their identification with what they are watching.

At the same time, we must not impose anything on them. These are generations that need to be guided, and very carefully. That is why we ourselves have to be well educated in the field of film, so that we can guide them, always one step ahead, and when they catch up with us, take another step forward again.

Film has a powerful influence on children, but only if it is actively analysed rather than passively watched. If a film is watched without discussion and analysis, children can just as well watch it at home – and in that sense, school loses its role.

When pupils learn to recognise the expressive means of film, understand why they are used and how they convey emotions, then they truly experience film.

Let me provide an example from practice. I often make short films with pupils as part of an assigned reading. For example, we worked on *Sadako Wants to Live*. After reading the book, the pupils had to create a short video in three parts: the past (presentation of the content), the present (the world in which we live today) and the future (the world in which they want to live).

When one of the pupils showed his film, silence fell over the classroom. I was left speechless. After a few moments, a pupil raised her hand and said, "Please, do not show any more films today."

It left a deep impression on them, and that is exactly what we want to achieve. When a film truly touches them, they develop empathy and begin to recognise the destinies around them. That is crucial, because we are not alone in the world.



ĐURĐICA RADIĆ

AU AUTHOR OF THE BOOK FILM AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE
CROATIAN LANGUAGE TEACHER IN SECONDARY SCHOOL AND FILM EDUCATOR



In our new manual on film literacy, my task was to prepare methodological materials for secondary school. I prepared around 15 films, intended for all teachers who wish to engage with film culture and promote film literacy in schools.

The materials are designed primarily for the class teaching period. My colleague devised the introductory problem story for the film that follows, while my first task was to select films that would be interesting to young people and thematically connected to mental health.

After the introductory story, pupils choose how they would act in a situation related to the film story. This is followed by watching the film and then by analysing it. In this part, much depends on the teachers, such as their readiness and approach, but young people need to think about shots, the film narrative, lighting, acting, that is, all the elements of film language.

After that, we go through their solutions together and discuss possible choices: whether it is better to keep the problem to oneself, confide in a friend or seek professional help. At the end comes a creative task.

The extent to which young people recognise problems in film varies from person to person, but in general, they are very interested. They like the films because they are short. As for the subject matter, we chose a range from simpler challenges, such as shyness and difficulties in communication – whether within the family or in relationships with peers – to more complex topics such as depression, anxiety, prejudice towards persons with disabilities, fear of war, addiction and the influence of social media.

Young people often do not know how to distinguish clearly between good and bad, but that is precisely why they must talk and exchange experiences. That is why film analysis is a key part of the process. A creative task follows the film analysis, and pupils have shown they respond very well to it, often producing high-quality work. We also suggest additional literature and films for further exploration.

Watching short films has a powerful effect on young people. They express their views and emotions clearly. Sometimes they do not immediately know how to recognise their own feelings, but through conversation, they reach conclusions and exchange opinions. Just as a book or a poem awakens emotions, film too has a powerful effect on young people's emotions.

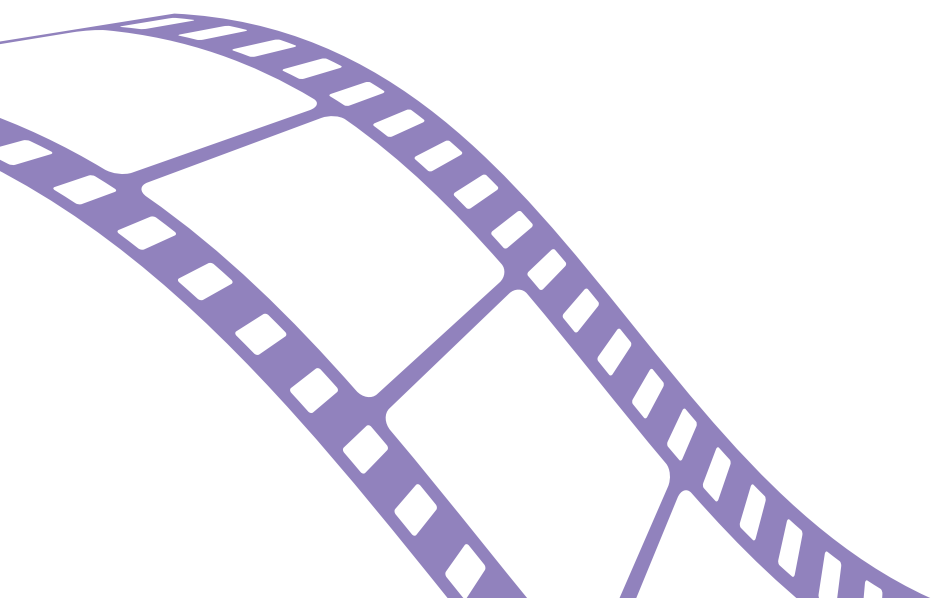
Pupils' reactions can be very intense. For example, with more difficult topics, anger arises – as in the film *Roko*, which explores a young man and the system's failures in recognising his problems. Pupils then express anger towards institutions. If they find a film boring, they also say so clearly. On the other hand, they may also cry – for example, a film about the war in Ukraine prompted strong sadness and fear of the possible spread of the conflict.

Although many do not follow traditional media, they are very aware of the world they live in and feel the uncertainties it carries.

The films we use last up to 15 minutes, which has proved optimal. Although their concentration spans are getting shorter, when a topic interests them, they are highly motivated to watch and analyse. For example, the film *Then I See Tanja*, which deals with shyness and insecurity in approaching a girl, was particularly liked by second- and third-year secondary school pupils.

I have been working on film with pupils for around twenty years. When I started, there were no programmes of this kind. Today, I am extremely proud to be part of this project and grateful to the Croatian Audiovisual Centre. My heart is full because I see how much is being done today, how many people are involved, and how more and more teachers are interested.

The hall is full, and I believe this is extremely important because film is still a very attractive and relevant medium for young people.



DR BRUNO KRAGIĆ

REVIEWER OF THE BOOK FILM AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, FILM SCHOLAR



First of all, this is the first book of its kind in Croatia. We, living in a globalised world, often think that everyone knows English, which is not true and that there is no need to write in Croatian because everything already exists in English. But not everything exists in English, nor is everything that does exist necessarily of high quality. Here we have a book written by our authors, in our language and one that is genuinely good. The book is very well thought out. It begins with a filmological introduction by my friend Nikica Gilić, which, I admit, I found easiest to read because this is an area I am well acquainted with. I also thank Nikica for mentioning me in a note. After this introductory theoretical and historical overview of the relationship between film and different dimensions of mental health – including the depiction of psychological problems, as well as the ways in which film shapes these topics and how viewers experience them – the book opens further chapters of equal value. The next two chapters presented me with particularly new insights. The first is the psychological chapter by Ida Šamanović, which presents, in great detail, different models of relating to film and film art in terms of psychological states and problems. This is followed by the experiential, school-based part by Professors Zlatarić and Radić, which is extremely valuable. From the text itself, it is clear how much experience lies behind this work, as it involves years-long, carefully considered work with pupils. Their contribution is particularly significant because it successfully connects the theoretical framework from the first part of the book with relevant practice. They offer a broad repertoire of problems, connect them with fictional situations and with films that thematise those problems, and, most importantly, provide clear and usable instructions for work. I must say that I sincerely admire teachers in primary and secondary schools. Working with a class of 20 or 30 pupils is already a challenge in itself and on top of that, they have to teach, guide and motivate them. And then they also have to carry out activities of this kind, which go beyond the basic curriculum. That is why I fully support the idea that film, audiovisual media and media culture should become a separate school subject. I hope I will live to see it, although I am somewhat sceptical. Returning to the book, through the analysis of each film, a space for discussion opens up in which psychological aspects and film literacy are brought together. Pupils learn how to relate to characters, how to connect film situations with their own experiences, but also how to understand film language – the shot, the camera, the mode of narration. In this way, Professors Zlatarić and Radić simultaneously encourage pupils to think about the world and life, as well as about film as an art. As has already been emphasised, film and life are inseparably connected. Film is so similar to reality that this is precisely where its strength lies – but also its potential danger.



MIRNA MEDAKOVIĆ

ACTRESS AND UNICEF AMBASSADOR

I will speak from experience – not from my own childhood, because there were not so many children’s films back then, or at least they were not as accessible to us, but from the present day.

Today, for example, alongside Croatian films, I genuinely enjoy watching them with my children. We watch Croatian children’s films, and every time, both during and after watching, we talk about what we have seen. In this way, we open topics we might otherwise not have.

For example, in the film *The Diary of Paulina P. 2*, the topic of the grandmother’s illness appears. This opened up a completely new topic for conversation for us – something we had not encountered before, but which is part of everyday life.

I think that, in general, there should be more conversation about art and more emphasis on good examples. Film art is ideal for this because it is close to children and they like it, making it the easiest way to communicate.

Through film, empathy can be encouraged – in fact, a great deal can be achieved through film art. When, in a film, we see someone as a kind of mirror, we can recognise our own emotions and say: “I feel that way too” or “I would feel that way in that situation too.”

It is particularly interesting that, through film, we can place ourselves in different perspectives – in the position of one character or another – and, in this way, “try out” different life roles. We do all this in a safe way, at a certain distance, but the experience nevertheless remains with us.

THAT IS WHY FILM ART IS AN EXCEPTIONALLY VALUABLE TOOL FOR DEVELOPING EMPATHY.

PROMOTION OF THE ANIMATED FILM ANA AND LOVRO IN THE WORLD OF FILM



PETRA ZLONOGA, author of the animated film Ana and Lovro in the World of Film

My name is Petra Zlonoga, and I participated in the project Ana and Lovro in the World of Film, which focuses on educational materials for children in preschool and early school age. We have been developing the project for a year and a half in cooperation with class teacher Mirjana Vedak, and have recently completed an animated film that premiered and is now part of that teaching material.

The project Ana and Lovro in the World of Film focuses on film types. Since HAVC recognised the need for materials for the youngest age group, our experience working with children has shown that the best approach is through the media closest to them – animated films, picture books and various creative tasks such as colouring and similar activities.

The animated film was based on the picture book. From the outset, we thought about its film adaptation, and what mattered most to us was to devise characters with whom children can identify. Alongside Ana and Lovro, curious first-graders, we also introduced Šapica the Cat, who brings dynamism to the story, and Mr Oku, the film literacy mascot.

The aim is for children, through a simple, unobtrusive and playful approach, to gradually acquire the basic concepts of film literacy, because an overly direct or overly educational approach does not have the same effect at this age.

At the conference, I was particularly pleased to see the growing number of participants and the strong connection between different groups engaged in film literacy. This networking and exchange of experience are extremely important.

Education in the field of film literacy does not relate only to understanding film as an art, but also to recognising film as a communication medium that strongly influences children and society as a whole. This is precisely why developing critical thinking in children has long-term significance for future generations.



EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

ZAG SCHOOL FILM GROUP

Melita Horvatek Forjan, Croatian language teacher, co-leader of the ZAG school film group at Marija Jurić Zagorka Primary School in Zagreb



The ZAG school film group has been active for 24 years, and we participate in all festivals and showcases depicting Croatian children's filmmaking.

The topics we deal with are fully aligned with this conference: children's and young people's mental health and inclusiveness. We make films about differences: at our school, we have children who are hyperactive, who have Turner syndrome, cerebral palsy and other challenges. Every award gives us wind in our sails and motivates us to keep going. I believe that children can develop a critical attitude towards film. It is important that they watch films thoughtfully, not merely as consumers but also as active content creators. It is precisely through making films that it becomes easier to understand the situations in which their peers find themselves, especially when it comes to children with certain difficulties or mental-health challenges. For example, we made the film *When You Are Sad*, based on the song "When You Are Happy". We noticed the problem of domestic violence in a family and tried, through film, to show how difficult it is for the children. I think we succeeded – the film was well received in the class and prompted further action, including reactions from the competent services. Every film that addresses mental health has special value. Empathy is crucial here. When children watch films about peer violence, they often grasp the basic message, but for deeper, more hidden layers, they need support from us, educators. So – make films, watch them, play. Teamwork around the camera is what connects us.



CROATIAN NETWORK OF INDEPENDENT CINEMA EXHIBITORS

DANIJELA FABRIC FABIJANAC, PRESIDENT OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD OF KINOMREŽA AND DIRECTOR OF SLATINA PUBLIC OPEN UNIVERSITY



We were founded on 7 November 2014, with 27 founding members, at Kino Europa in Zagreb. Today, 11 years later, we bring together 57 members across 81 cinema screens in cities and on islands throughout Croatia. What began as an initiative to connect independent cinemas is today a strong network that connects cinema, audiences and the community, and actively contributes to the development of film culture in Croatia. First of all, I would like to thank everyone who has taken part in the creation and development of Kinomreža. I extend special thanks to the first president of Kinomreža, Hrvoje Laurenta, who laid the foundations for our collaborative work, as well as to all subsequent presidents. Thank you to all members of Kinomreža who work every day to ensure that cinemas remain an important part of the cultural life of their towns and communities. Special thanks also go to the Management Board of Kinomreža, as well as to our secretary, without whose dedicated work, many activities would not be possible. Over the past 11 years, Kinomreža has developed a series of joint programmes that connect cinemas and audiences across Croatia. Among these programmes, “Ženijalni dani”, “Summer in the Network” and “World Day for Audiovisual Heritage” particularly stand out. An important part of the programme also consists of those carried out in cooperation with the Croatian Audiovisual Centre, such as “Month of Our Film”, “Rendez-vous au cinéma” and the “Short Film Marathon”. Through these programmes, 166 feature-length films and 263 short films have been screened through more than 50 programme activities in cinemas across Croatia.

One of the key segments of Kinomreža’s work is conferences, that is, professional meetings of cinema exhibitors. Twice a year, we organise meetings that provide a space to exchange experiences, learn and develop new ideas. To date, 20 such conferences have been held in cities across Croatia – from Rijeka and Zagreb to Pula, Varaždin and Zadar, and to Slatina, Labin and Prelog. With the support of the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Croatia, and through an inseparable connection with the Croatian Audiovisual Centre and the Kultura Nova Foundation, Kinomreža has become a key actor in Croatian cinematography. Education is one of the foundations of Kinomreža’s work. Thus, under the “Kinodoktor” programme, experts visit cinemas that need support and work with local teams to develop programmes and organise work. To date, 14 such programmes have been held.

The “School for Cinema” programme enables additional professional development through more than 20 workshops and training sessions. Workshops for cinema projectionists are particularly important to us, because no formal education exists for them.

I would point out that Kinomreža has also been recognised at festivals, and our members participate on the juries of the Pula Film Festival and the Mediterranean Film Festival. We work together on the “Cinema, Game, Film” project, carried out in our cinemas. The first such project was held in Novska. Sixteen of our cinemas take part in organising inclusive and sensory-friendly screenings with the Croatian Film Association, and this number is growing every year. In the “My First Trip to the Cinema” programme, cinemas collaborate with various associations and festivals, such as Filmaktiv, The Seventh Continent, Zagreb Film Festival and others and, of course, with their local schools and kindergartens.

One of the most important projects in recent years is “Film Literacy Days at the Cinema”. The programme officially began in 2023. In 2024, six workshops were held in our cinemas, and in 2025, the programme was significantly expanded, with more than 20 training sessions held in 15 cities across Croatia.

For 2026, 16 cities have already applied, clearly showing how strong interest in film literacy is and how important the role of cinemas is in audience education.

A particularly innovative project that children especially love is “Escape the Cinema” – an educational film-literacy workshop through play that brings film closer in an interactive and creative way. The programme has been held in nine cinemas, and this year it is expanding to other cities as well.

Today, Kinomreža connects cinemas across Croatia – in large cities, in smaller communities and on islands. Each of these cinemas represents an important space where audiences and film meet. Together, they form a network that connects people, film and ideas.

With the support of partners, and especially the Croatian Audiovisual Centre, Kinomreža continues to develop programmes that strengthen film culture and audiences throughout Croatia, because film is not only art – film is an experience that connects us.



PHOTO VIDEO CLUB ZAPREŠIĆ

Jadranko Lopatić, Photo Cinema Video Club Zaprešić



In my experience, film is an important medium, especially in the context of mental health, because it is part of the everyday reality that children face. Film is one of the means – or rather one of the ways – of expressing one's own views, wishes, fears, thoughts and everything else that can be expressed through the film medium. I think that precisely this freedom in creating and making film has a very strong influence on, and contributes greatly to, mental health. I believe that the atmosphere of shooting and the process of making a film, whether fiction, animated, documentary or any other form, inherently help focus on what one wants to say and how it is expressed. In this way, a person becomes aware of their own problems and the situations they find themselves in. I do not know what to expect – this is our first time at the conference. We will, of course, hear the impressions later on the way home, but I believe it was instructive and interesting for the children to see and hear what is being done in other clubs and communities, and to explore other possible ways for expression and literacy-building. Even here, while we are sitting in the audience, I have noticed that the participants have met and made contact, so there will certainly be an exchange of experiences as well.

It is important to bring together in one place all these experiences, impressions and possibilities concerning film, where we are primarily speaking about the creative work of children and young people, rather than professional film – although it is certainly present here as well.

It is precisely this creative work by children and young people that is important to showcase, so we can see what is being done in the country and beyond and how all of this can be further connected, brought to awareness and improved. Why do we do this in the club, and why do I do it personally? Because it is very interesting work – on the one hand close to the school system and education and on the other without its rigidity, curriculum, bells and timetable. This enables the best of both worlds: the possibility of educating young people in an informal, free and creative way.

Of course, within this whole spectrum of children, films and work processes, there are different experiences and impressions. But what they have in common is a sense of pride when a film is completed, shown to an audience or published on a platform. It is the material result of their work – something they can see and say: “We made this.” That feeling of satisfaction and affirmation is extremely important. And if the film also manages to be shown at a festival, reviewed or win an award, it becomes an added motivation.

Trips to festivals and showcases are also especially important, because it is precisely there that children have the opportunity to see what others are doing, socialise and exchange experiences. This mutual communication and these encounters are an important part of the filmmaking educational process. Finally, I must say that I am positively surprised by the whole organisation. If I had one message to give, it would perhaps simply be: get a slightly larger hall.

SENSORY-FRIENDLY SCREENINGS

Dr Eva Brlek, expert in educational-rehabilitation sciences,
psychotherapy and communication

Sensory-friendly screenings are adapted film screenings that arose from the need to sensitise society further and to enable children with developmental disabilities to attend cinemas, that is, cultural institutions.

The idea was to adapt the cinema environment to make it accessible and comfortable for these children. In this kind of space, children with disabilities can meet their typically developing peers, enabling mutual learning and the development of tolerance, empathy and acceptance.

The aim is to create a place where all children are welcome and where parents, teachers and therapists can come without pressure or worry – a space where a child can be who they are, in a safe and supportive environment.

One of the challenges children encounter is sensory overload, which varies greatly depending on the moment and environment. What we, as a society, can do is adapt the conditions to the child, rather than trying to fit the child into predetermined frameworks. This is precisely why it is important to build an inclusive society in the full sense of the word – and that begins by creating concrete opportunities in local communities.

It is also important to note that sensory-friendly screenings are free of charge, making them accessible to everyone. Educational materials have also been developed alongside the screenings, serving as an additional tool for post-screening work. These materials can be used in schools or at home to further address and deepen the content.

Every individual in this process is important. Small changes in local communities can have a major impact – what may seem like a small opportunity to one person can represent a major step forward for children with disabilities.



VRTI SVOJ FILM

Ivana Jakobović Alpeza, editor-in-chief of the Vrti svoj film portal



For us, as extra-institutional stakeholders who promote film literacy, events of this kind, organised by the umbrella national institution – the Croatian Audiovisual Centre – are extremely important. Each time, this conference focuses on a particular topic and presents examples of good practice. In this way, we as stakeholders have the opportunity to see what our colleagues are doing, while many participants – especially primary and secondary school teachers – can draw inspiration from what they see. I often hear that new partnerships were formed precisely after the first conference.

The introduction of the award for encouraging excellence in film literacy further increases the visibility of the whole sector, namely, the community engaged in this field. In this way, high-quality examples are highlighted, and the raising of standards in work is encouraged, especially among film educators and school film groups, as well as in the development of methodological materials and programmes originating outside the institutional framework.

Film art can make a significant contribution to opening up topics within the broader framework of mental health. In 2020, the World Health Organization published rather alarming data – around 14% of children and young people aged 10 to 19 face some form of difficulty, whether anxiety, fear of loneliness or other challenges. That is why it is important to discuss mental health in the classroom as well. In this sense, we strive to develop content that opens up space for conversation, encourages empathy and helps children recognise and better understand their own emotions. Primary and secondary school teachers play a key role in this process. As we heard today, someone is needed who will act as a kind of guide or “translator” – someone who helps children understand what they are watching and recognise deeper messages.

I believe that this book, too, which I am eagerly looking forward to reading, will provide additional tools for work. On our portal, we already have 75 films, at least 20 of which address mental health, and it is precisely through materials of this kind that we can further enhance their educational potential.

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FILM LITERACY

The Annual Recognition for Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Film Literacy is a national award that recognises and affirms excellence in the field of film literacy development. In response to the Call for Awards for Excellence in the Development of Film Literacy, published on 2 March 2026 on the website of the Croatian Audiovisual Centre, as an annual recognition for outstanding contribution to the development of film literacy, 70 applications were received in the following categories:

- Award for the Best School Film Group in the 2024/2025 school year
- Award for Excellence in the Work of Film Educators for Non-Professionals in the 2024/2025 school year
- Award for the Best Methodological Film Literacy Material in the 2024/2025 school year
- Award for the Best Programme Encouraging Film Literacy and Film Audience Development in 2025

To systematically evaluate the quality of work in the field of film literacy, strengthen mentors, teachers and programme leaders, encourage audience development from the earliest age and visibly position film literacy as an integral part of the cultural and educational system, the Committee, composed of Katarina Ivče Farnell, Silvestar Mileta and Ingrid Padjen Đurić, decided as follows:

- Award for the Best School Film Group in the 2024/2025 school year: Film Group of Ambroz Haračić Secondary School, Mali Lošinj
- Special Recognition to the ZAG School Film Group, Marija Jurić Zagorka Primary School
- Special Recognition to the School Group Kamera. Režija. Film. Slatine Primary School
- Award for Excellence in the Work of Film Educators for Non-Professionals in the 2024/2025 school year: Dijana Pasarić, Strahoninec Primary School
- Award for the Best Methodological Film Literacy Material in the 2024/2025 school year: My Little Cinema Vol. 3
- Award for the Best Programme Encouraging Film Literacy and Film Audience Development in 2025: Film in Hospital programme, The Seventh Continent
- AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FILM LITERACY: VERA ROBIĆ-ŠKARICA



AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FILM LITERACY: VERA ROBIĆ-ŠKARICA



Through years of dedicated and visionary work, Vera Robić-Škarica tirelessly built a space in which film is not only an art to be watched, but also one to be understood, reflected on and learned from. Her ability to recognise the importance of film culture in education and in society as a whole has opened new paths and set high standards in the field of audiovisual education.

For more than thirty years, Vera Robić-Škarica was a successful secretary of the Croatian Film Association, transforming it from a small association into one comprising more than forty film associations. From 2000, she also worked at the Croatian Film Association as a producer on more than 100 short fiction, experimental, documentary and animated films, which received awards at numerous festivals around the world.

During Vera Robić-Škarica's term, the Croatian Film Association also became Croatia's most prolific publisher of film writing. She initiated the revitalisation of the network of cinema exhibitors, advocated the introduction of film culture into regular teaching in primary and secondary schools, and encouraged the expansion of film art into all segments of cultural and social creativity in Croatia.

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FILM LITERACY: VERA ROBIĆ-ŠKARICA

Since 1999, she has been involved in launching the School of Media Culture, which, according to the recommendation of the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, is providing a valuable contribution to the development of film culture within the teaching of Croatian language and literature in Croatian schools. Today, the school is called the Dr Ante Peterlić School of Media Culture. She served as president of the Croatian Film Association and as chair of the Croatian Audiovisual Council. She received the Grand Golden Arena in 2012 for the best film, *A Letter to My Father*, directed by Damir Čučić. She also received the UNICA Award for her lifetime contribution to film in 2017.

Vera did not only create programmes and projects – she created opportunities. Opportunities for young people to discover the world of film, for teachers and educators to develop contemporary teaching approaches, and for audiences to experience film at a deeper, more conscious level. Her work connected institutions, authors, pedagogues and audiences, laying solid foundations for film literacy in Croatia to continue to develop today.

It is particularly valuable to emphasise her perseverance and belief in the importance of making film education accessible to all, regardless of age or prior experience. Thanks precisely to this dedication, many people learned for the first time to watch film not only with their eyes, but also with understanding.

Her contribution goes beyond individual projects – it has shaped an entire field and left an indelible mark on our country's cultural and educational landscape. The generations to come will continue to build on the foundations she herself laid.

Dear Vera, thank you for the vision you courageously pursued, for the knowledge you selflessly shared, and for the energy you inspired in everyone around you. Your work remains a lasting inspiration and a guide.

With great respect and sincere gratitude, we congratulate you on this Award for Excellence in the Development of Film Literacy in Croatia.



AWARD FOR THE BEST SCHOOL FILM GROUP IN THE 2024/2025 SCHOOL YEAR

FILM GROUP OF AMBROZ HARAČIĆ SECONDARY SCHOOL, MALI LOŠINJ, RUŽICA DODIG

I sincerely thank the Department of Film Literacy, HAVC and everyone who supports the work of our film group, and on behalf of Ambroz Haračić Secondary School from Mali Lošinj, I extend a very big “thank you” and a very great recognition – from the heart. I am happy that our film group has been recognised. I do not know what the other applications were like, but our children, although they are on an island, are extremely active and engaged. This support and recognition mean a great deal to us. The group includes 26 pupils through two optional subjects – film art as well as visual and media culture. In addition, when necessary, their classmates also take part in filming. This is encouraging because something creative and concrete is being done, and behind it all are real projects, trips and experiences.

I think this is precisely what is missing in secondary schools, since many subjects are quite theoretical. These subjects, on the other hand, offer something artistic, creative and concrete. It is essentially an activity with its own process, and a very interesting one at that. I believe that such subjects help. After one process, one pupil said to me, “I now look at film in a completely different way.” I believe that, similarly, they also begin to look critically at social media – because they understand how content is created, what the messages are and what lies behind them.

When we start making a film, we actually begin from the end – what do you want to say? What do you want to communicate with this film?

When it comes to social skills and empathy – which we discussed today at the conference – my colleagues emphasised that, because they are overwhelmed by digital content, children today find it increasingly difficult to feel and recognise others' emotions. But after a period of time, when this is discussed, when the film is paused, and the topic is addressed, children begin to think differently. And this is crucial: they should not merely be consumers of content, but authors of their own stories. When it comes to working on sensitive topics and mental difficulties, the process generally works so that this is not spoken about immediately in the foreground. The work begins, and through the process of creation and the development of trust, such things often open up spontaneously – for example, in the car, on set, in informal situations, and not at a table where it would be imposed as an official topic of conversation.

In those moments, during work, the children relax and begin to speak about their experiences and problems. Finally, I thank everyone who has recognised the work of our film group. And I would encourage all children to understand that it is worth exposing themselves, relaxing and stepping out of their safe zone – because that is precisely where real results and the fruits of their work emerge.



SPECIAL RECOGNITION TO THE ZAG SCHOOL FILM GROUP, MARIJA JURIĆ ZAGORKA PRIMARY SCHOOL

SPECIAL RECOGNITION TO THE SCHOOL GROUP CAMERA. DIRECTION. FILM. SLATINA PRIMARY SCHOOL, 21224 SLATINA



AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE WORK OF FILM EDUCATORS FOR NON-PROFESSIONALS IN THE 2024/2025 SCHOOL YEAR

DIJANA PASARIĆ, STRAHONINEC PRIMARY SCHOOL, ČAKOVEC

This kind of award is, above all, a source of pride. It is the feeling I have had throughout the conference, as I mentioned earlier. When we spoke this morning about the importance of media literacy among young people, I actually felt proud, because it is something I have been doing continuously for 15 years. This recognition is not only the “icing on the cake” but also an additional wind in my sails for further activities and projects. It is certainly motivation, and already during today’s conference, new ideas began to emerge in my mind.

When you ask me how much of it has been in recent years, I would say that this is work that proceeds like a domino effect – an activity begins, then a new idea develops from it, and everything naturally builds on itself. All of this is interwoven, and the greatest wind in my sails actually comes from the motivation of pupils who want to take part in such activities.

I am fortunate that, in my community, there is great interest in film literacy – both in the school and in the wider community. There is support from the local community, which encourages us and helps us organise film workshops for pupils, not only at school but also during the holidays.

At school, word spreads quickly, because “a good reputation travels far”. Interest already exists in the lower grades; pupils stop me in the corridors and say: “We can hardly wait to join your school film group!”

I believe that, with good guidance from mentors and teachers, every message is understandable to pupils. The key is to approach each pupil individually – every teacher knows their interests and abilities – and clearly define the goal we want to convey, as well as devise a way to reach the pupils.

Today’s pupils often find it difficult to speak about emotions, whether in relation to a literary work or a film. But film is a more natural medium for them – they live it, create it and participate in it. They were born with a mobile phone and, whether we want to admit it or not, it has become almost a “fifth limb” for them.

That is why film can be a tool through which we can reach them more easily, encourage them to open up and speak about themselves. When we analyse characters and situations objectively, without bias, we find it easier to recognise emotions, which also makes it easier for us to identify and work on our own emotions.



AWARD FOR THE BEST METHODOLOGICAL MATERIAL IN TEACHING IN THE 2024/2025 SCHOOL YEAR, MY LITTLE CINEMA VOL. 3, ČAKOVEC MARINA ZLATARIĆ

I would like to thank Helga Lajtman from the Čakovec Cultural Centre for nominating me for the best methodological material in the past school year – My Little Cinema 3.

My Little Cinema is a booklet that details four feature-length world films, screened in several centres in Croatia. It contains questions, answers and analyses intended for work with children. The aim is to bring children to the cinema and enable them not only to watch, but also to receive education and take part in interactive film analysis.

I am extremely proud of that. The project is continuing – we have completed the fourth part, and the fifth is also in preparation.



AWARD FOR THE BEST PROGRAMME ENCOURAGING FILM LITERACY AND FILM AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT IN 2025 “FILM IN HOSPITAL” PROGRAMME, THE SEVENTH CONTINENT, ZAGREB



EDITA BILAVER, PRESIDENT OF THE CHILDREN MEET ART ASSOCIATION AND EUROPEAN COORDINATOR OF THE “FILM IN HOSPITAL” PROJECT, WHICH ENABLES CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN HOSPITALS TO ACCESS EUROPEAN FILM AND CULTURAL CONTENT

HAVC’s award for the best film literacy programme has special significance for us because it is the first award of its kind presented in Croatia, and “Film in Hospital” has been recognised precisely in the area in which film moves out of cinemas and classrooms and reaches children for whom access to culture is most often the hardest to obtain. In the hospital environment, film becomes much more than content: it is an occasion for conversation, for emotion, for encounter and for a moment in which a child can once again be a child.

It is especially important to us that the conference theme focuses on the relationship between film and the mental health of children and young people, because this is precisely the area in which “Film in Hospital” has been developing for years, with research confirming the effects of the programme on children’s wellbeing. Additional weight is given by the fact that “Film in Hospital” has already been recognised in the European context through the publication Culture and Health: Time to Act, as an example of practice that connects culture, health and wellbeing. This recognition comes at a time when Croatia is taking over coordination of the project’s European network for the period from 2026 to 2028, confirming that the practice developed in Croatia has broader European value.

The award is also recognition of all the hospitals, partners, educators, authors and film professionals who believed that culture can be part of support for children in vulnerable situations. We hope that this topic will further strengthen cooperation between culture, healthcare and education, and open up space for access to film and cultural content in hospitals to be recognised as an important part of caring for children’s wellbeing.

VIDEO "HOW CHILDREN'S FILM DEVELOPS EMPATHY AND EMOTIONS"

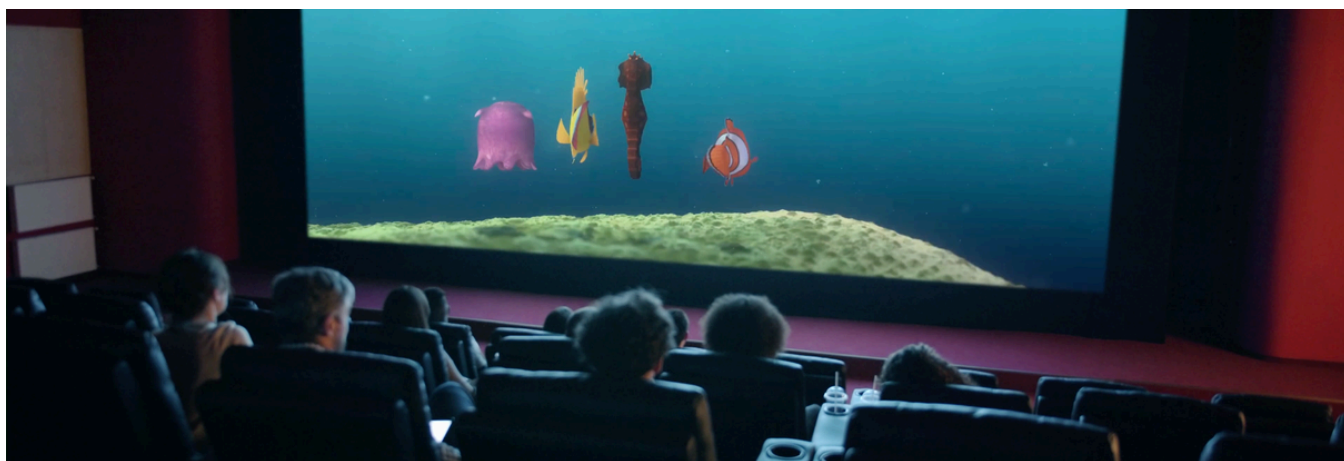
The video explores, in a humorous and dynamic way, how children's film influences the development of empathy and emotional intelligence in the youngest audiences. Through a combination of acted scenes, spontaneous reactions and recognisable film references, it shows how films encourage understanding of emotions, compassion and togetherness. Short interviews brought particular value, showing firsthand how children experience films and connect them to everyday life.

Screenplay and direction: Zoran Pribičević

DOP: Ante Gugić

Editor: Antonio Pavlović

Sound recordist: Luka Mustač





2. Konferencija o filmskoj pismenosti

Filmska umjetnost i mentalno zdravlje djece i mladih

13.4.2026. | Kaptol Boutique Cinema



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