



FROM AN OBJECTIVE POINT OF VIEW

Runtime: 10 minutes
Category: Drama

Queens, NY
2001 New York Contest Winner

Two best friends who make a pact not to have sex without consulting the other. With their agreement on the verge of being broken, the result is an look at teenage desire.

STUDENT VIDEO GUIDE

Film Topics:

The film explores friendship, communication, pressure, and self-awareness.

Story Behind the Story:

"From an Objective Point of View" was adapted from a short story written by 16-year old Janet Aponte. Janet formed a unique friendship with husband and wife filmmakers, Jim McKay and Hannah Weyer, as they spent over four months transforming her short story into a shooting script. The team met bi-monthly in Jim and Hannah's apartment in New York's Lower East Side; with Janet's mom and the directors' newborn baby watching in the background as the excitement unfolded.

The film was shot in a beautiful brownstone house in Brooklyn, NY. The two day shoot occurred on an unusually cold weekend in the city, leading many of the cast and crew to huddle around the catering (craft services) truck for warmth! Janet was at the directors' sides soaking in the process and giving her opinion. She also recruited five of her friends to participate as interns on-set.



For Janet and the actresses of "From An Objective Point of View," the fame didn't end after wrapping the Scenarios shoot. In December 2002, Janet's Scenarios experience was profiled by the Sundance Channel. They interviewed and filmed Janet at her school and at the screening party for her film in New York's trendy Tribeca district. Actresses Melonie Diaz and Judy Marte would later co-star together in the critically-acclaimed independent feature, Raising Victor Vargas.



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STUDENT VIDEO GUIDE (CONT'D)

Writers Bios:

Janet Aponte has been writing all her life. Her stories often have a common link, all of the main characters break away from the life that was laid down for them. Although this doesn't always Writing isn't just part of her life; it is my reason for life.

Talent Bios:

Jim McKay is a film and video maker, and co-founder of C-Hundred Film Corp. He has produced and directed a full-length documentary (Lighthearted Nation), a feature-length concert film (REM's Tour film); numerous music videos; and an award-winning series of public service announcements called Direct Effect. He also co-wrote and directed, Girls Town, which received the Filmmakers Trophy and a Special Jury Prize for Collaboration at the 1996 Sundance Film Festival, and wrote and directed Our Song, which was released by IFC Films in 2001.



Hannah Weyer's award-winning short film, The Salesman and Other Adventures, won awards at the Sundance, Locarno, Melbourne, and Claremont-Ferrand Film Festivals. Hannah is a recipient of both the 1994 Princess Grace Award and the 1995 IFP/East-Independent Film Channel Award. Her first documentary, La Boda, screened at various film festivals and aired on PBS' POV-American Documentary. Most recently, Weyer completed La Boda's sister story entitled, La Escuela, which won the Special Jury Prize at South By Southwest Film Festival and San Antonio Film Festival, and the MTV News/Doc Award at the Doubletake Documentary Film Festival.

Honors:

"From an Objective Point of View" was screened at the Pawtucket Film Festival, the Taos Talking Pictures Festival, the Lower Eastside Girls Club, the Garden State Film Festival, Fledgling Film Festival, Cine Las Americas and New Latino Filmmakers Series. NPR's 'On The Media' did a story on the filming process from Janet's point of view. Janet was featured on The Sundance Channel in Spring, 2003. "From an Objective Point of View" is used in various school districts around the country, including the New York City School District.



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DISCUSSION GUIDE - QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

1. Together, Kelly and Rachel talk about whether or not to do many things. Identify other people in Kelly and Rachel's lives whose opinions might matter to them when deciding about whether or not to engage in sexual activity.

(It is also useful to talk about why students think that certain people's opinions may or may not be valuable.)

2. When talking about whether or not it was "right" to have sex, Kelly says, "Sex can be good and sex can be bad." What could this mean to her?

(Point out that sexuality is a natural and healthy part of life, but that decisions regarding sex should be made responsibly. Also note that if Kelly had chosen to have intercourse, she was prepared to protect herself by using a condom.)

3. Trent is disappointed, but ultimately respects Kelly's decision not to have intercourse. What things are sometimes said about people who engage in foreplay but then decide that they do not want to have intercourse? Are these comments different when made in reference to girls rather than boys? If so, how do you think these comments might make someone feel and what does this say about our society's view of boys' versus girls' desire for sex?

(Be sure to note that it is o.k. to decide not to have sex or intercourse *at any point in time*. Also, help students recognize different expectations that may exist for boys and girls as well as the assumptions that are made about who should want sex and who should not. Discuss how these expectations and assumptions may affect boys' and girls' sexual experiences.)

4. Kelly says she is not ready to have sex now, "But when it happens, it is going to be when I'm ready." What things are important for people to think about and talk about with their partner before deciding whether or not to have sex?

(These things may include life goals, trust, the desire to finish school, the quality of the relationship with one's partner, financial stability, etc.)

5. What can be said to a boyfriend, girlfriend, or friends if they are pressuring someone to have sex or intercourse before he or she is ready?

(Ask students to act out conversations that people may have with friends, practicing responding to pressure from others.)



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DISCUSSION GUIDE - THROUGH THE LENS OF A FILMMAKER

1. Deciding whether or not to be in a sexual relationship is a sensitive topic and can be difficult to address in a film. How could a writer tackle this issue?

(Writers should know who their audience is. For example, is it comprised of adults or teens? They should tailor the story to that demographic by using language, clothes, and settings that are familiar to their viewers. Remind students that in trying to convey a message, writers can use action as well as dialogue.)

2. How does the writer achieve resolution in this short film? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a short film versus a full length feature?

(Discuss the reasons that a filmmaker might want the viewers to come up with their own endings to a film. Point out that the purpose of a film may be to encourage the audience to think about particular issues, not necessarily to tell an entire story.)

3. Why do you think this film includes individual dialogue with the viewer? Is this technique effective?

(Ask students to think about how a writer might use this method to pull their viewers into a story and focus their thoughts in a particular direction. Also ask students to name other movies or television shows in which they have seen this technique used.)

4. Although the young people in this film seem to be wearing very ordinary clothing, many decisions were made regarding costuming. Comment on these decisions.

(Note that the costumes in the film are intended to reflect a very specific cultural and socioeconomic group and to help the viewers relate to the characters. Ask students to consider how such costuming may make actors seem more real, but also may outdate a film in time. Ask them to think of costumes from television shows or films they have seen recently.)

5. What meaning do you think the title of the film conveys? Can teenagers be objective about sex? Can adults?

(Encourage students to think about whether the writer is, or can be, truly objective about the situations she conveys. Ask students to think of titles they may have used if they had written the script.)



LAYING THE GROUND WORK

The questions contained in this guide are designed to utilize critical thinking and dialogue to promote teenagers' self-awareness and understanding of relationships and sexual health. Working through these questions will provide adolescents with a forum to discuss their own opinions and choices, hear others' viewpoints, and to analyze the behavior of the characters they see in the films. This process will encourage the sharing of valuable information and the development of skills that can help young people make positive decisions that will affect their health and their lives.

Much of the dialogue that is generated may involve sensitive subjects. Therefore, teachers may wish to offer students an **Anonymous Question Box** in which they can insert questions before or after class. If this is done, it is important for teachers to be prepared to recognize, in some appropriate fashion, all issues that are raised and to let students know that

- No question is wrong or silly
- Anyone who contributes a question to the box will remain anonymous, and
- All questions will be addressed, either by the primary instructor or a facilitator who is invited to cover specific issues.

Given the nature of the material, it is useful to introduce **Ground Rules** that may be posted in the classroom. These may need to be referred to regularly, particularly when sensitive issues arise. As an ice-breaking activity, teachers can allow students to develop their own ground rules and help them discuss their importance. Such a list may include the following:

1. **Right to Pass:** We will respect one's choice to abstain from the discussion.
2. **Respect:** We will listen attentively to what others have to say, allowing one person to speak at a time.
3. **Sensitivity:** We will recognize that it may be difficult for our classmates to share stories about themselves and their feelings.
4. **Supportiveness:** We will not criticize other people, although we may disagree with their point of view.
5. **Understanding:** We will be aware that others may differ in their religion, cultural background, or in other ways and we will, therefore, be thoughtful about the comments we make.
6. **Confidentiality:** We will not repeat anything that is shared within the group to anyone outside of the group. While we may talk about the content of the group discussion, we will not identify who has raised a particular issue or who has disclosed a personal story or feeling.

SCENARIOS USA—A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Scenarios USA is an award-winning non-profit organization dedicated to helping youth make smart decisions about their lives by giving them a creative forum to explore who they are and how they see the world. Scenarios USA holds the annual story writing contest called "What's the Real Deal?," in which teenagers in Miami, South Texas and New York City are asked to write and submit stories on such topics as HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, and relationships.

The winning stories, selected by a group of young people, educators, filmmakers, and health professionals are made into short films in partnership with the young writer and a Hollywood filmmaker. Directors who have worked with Scenarios include Doug Liman (*The Bourne Identity*), Michael Apted (*Gorillas in the Mist*), Tamara Jenkins (*Slums of Beverly Hills*), Jim McKay (*Our Song*), and Griffin Dunne (*Practical Magic*). The winning writers participate in all aspects of the production of their stories and attend a premiere of their films in New York City.

The finished products are innovative films used by school teachers, community groups, and after-school programs across the country to facilitate discussion and present information connected to teen sexual health. In addition, Scenarios films have been seen on MTV, Showtime, PBS, and Oxygen. Scenarios has been recognized with Porter-Novelli's Award for Excellence and Innovations in Social Marketing, Council on Foundations Award for Excellence in Film & Digital Media, and numerous honors from film festivals.