FILM STUDIES –

“Bend it like Beckham,” directed by Gurinder Chadha

Topics –

Ideology
Plot
Characters
Themes
Camera Shots
Symbols in Films
Evaluation of Film

Study Guide by Sr. M. Luke (Kenna) RSM
This work is dedicated to the memory of my friend and colleague
Maureen Mary Gibcus,
She encouraged and advised me throughout the writing period. The Study Guide’s
purpose was to help Maureen’s Yr. 8 class of 2006 to appreciate good films, in
particular Bend it like Beckham.

Rest in peace, Maureen, your work will be continued by those who teach and study
this programme.

Sr. M. L

Aims and Objectives

The writer wants the students -
• To enjoy and appreciate the film Bend it like Beckham
• To understand conflict, values, and emotions, and to appreciate how these
  components enrich the story.
• To experience an involvement in the interesting plot, helped by the splendid
  characterizations of the actors.
• To study the themes – “Cultural Conflicts” and “Lies and Deceptions”
• To write in detail about the plot and the characters in the film.
• To recognize and understand some symbols used in the film.
• To examine a variety of camera shots and understand their purposes.
• To study questions which can help students evaluate any film.

How to use this programme

This programme was developed to help students in Years 8 and 9, who have
difficulties with literacy skills – reading, writing and spelling. Students with these
disabilities can be very intelligent and equal to their more literate peers when they
express themselves verbally. It is recommended that each section of the Study Guide
be dealt with separately. Students should have their own copies of the activities, and
the teacher can read and discuss these with the class. After suitable explanation and
demonstration of each task by the teacher, the students may attempt the written work.
If teachers feel a need for further modification of activities, they should be free to
alter them.

Sr. M. Luke (Kenna)
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VALUES

A value is something we think is worthwhile. It is very important to us. We truly appreciate it. Some people will suffer or even die to attain (gain) values and protect them. A few worthwhile values are:

- A spirit of fairness
- Attaining (gaining) skills at sport
- Family love
- Friendship
- Accepting people as they are
- Truthfulness

There are many more important values to be explored.

CONFLICT

Conflict occurs when people’s values oppose (strongly disagree) with each other.

An example might be – a thief steals something a person has worked very hard to attain.

Thief – dishonest person
Victim – an honest, hard working person

Conflicting Values – honesty versus dishonesty

People with conflicting values experience all sorts of unhappy emotions (feelings). Examples are - anger, sadness, dislike, hatred.

Sometimes these emotions can be acted out by abusing others, quarrelling, fighting, hurting others by telling lies about them, destroying what is theirs and causing all sorts of troubles for them. Good films present people with conflicting values, which cause all sorts of emotions. These are the “ingredients” which make a plot (story) very interesting or entertaining for viewers. They are kept wondering how the conflicts will be solved. The viewer identifies him/herself with the main characters, as they work out – or fail to work out their relationship problems.
VALUES OF THE HINDU PEOPLE FROM INDIA OR NAIROBI

Jess’ family are Indians. Her parents came to England from Nairobi in Africa, but Jess was born in England. The parents have the values of the Indian Hindu religion, but they like and respect British people. They are grateful that England has done so much good for their family, but they love their own customs and beliefs best.

Put a tick after the Hindu people’s values and customs in the following list.

- Teenage girls learn and practise cooking, housekeeping and being ladies who will attract good husbands.
- Young people must respect their elders, especially their parents.
- Teenage girls are encouraged to play football.
- Teenage girls should wear sexy clothes, showing a lot of bare skin.
- Family is the most important group in society.
- Young men must respect their future wives – sex is for after marriage.
- The body of a woman is considered sacred and it should be well covered in beautiful clothing.
- Teenage girls are encouraged to play contact sports e.g. football with teenage boys.
- Hindu girls should choose their husbands from any culture e.g. England, Australia etc.
- Hindu people worship the God, Brahma, by obeying his teachings.
- Pictures or altars of Brahma are placed publicly in the home.
- Hindus believe that people should be allowed to worship any or no god.
- Hindu people think that British foods are best to eat.
- It is all right to be a homosexual or a lesbian.
- Hindu women should only marry Hindu men.

Discuss the Following

- A description of Jess and her English friend, Jules (Juliette).
Describe the homes both girls live in and the area around their homes.

Who is the person with most authority in Jess’ family?

How are Jules’ parents different from each other?

Which of the four parents do you like the most? Why?

What levels of education have Jess and Jules reached?

In what way/s are you like Jess or Jules?

**EVALUATE THESE STATEMENTS**

**10 is the highest number, 0 is the lowest.**

You put a score from 0 to 10 to show how realistic you think these statements are –

- Parents try to get their thrills out of what their children do or become as adults. 0.0
- Loyalty to your peers is a very important value. 10.0
- Loyalty to your peers is more important than loyalty to your parents. 0.0
- Loyalty to yourself is the most important value of all. 0.0
- It doesn’t pay to be different from your peers. 0.0
- Parents’ ambitions for their children, wreck the lives of those children. 0.0
- Don’t mix with people who are different. 0.0
- You only become mature after you have had sex with someone. 0.0
- There is only one true lover for everyone. 0.0
- Selfishness (putting your interests first) is always wrong. 0.0
- It is ok to lie to and deceive your parents if they want you to do something that you do not want to do. 0.0
- For the sake of peace in family life, it is always better to obey your parents. 0.0
Share your ideas about these scenes from the film.

1. When Jess’ father came to England from Nairobi, he was very good at cricket. Had he stayed in Africa, he might have been skilful enough to play for South Africa internationally. Sadly, English players and spectators made fun of him because he was different and he wore his turban, a religious symbol for Hindu men. He stopped playing cricket because of the insults.

2. Jess played soccer in the park with some of her male Hindu friends. They were all mates. Three of her Hindu girlfriends made suggestions that Jess had a sexual relationship with one of the boys. Jess became justly angry and said, “We are not all sluts like you are!”

Was it right for Jess to say this?

3. Jules said that Joe, the coach, wasn’t her boy-friend, but she got very angry because she thought that Jess had kissed Joe. Was Jules fair to snub Jess?

4. Joe’s accident finished his soccer playing career. His father caused that accident by pushing Joe too hard at practice and making him play after he had hurt his knee. Joe told Jess that his father was a bastard. Jess replied that he shouldn’t call his father such an insulting name. Joe never visited or spoke to his father after the accident.
THE PLOT (Story)

Put the words below in the correct places.
The plot is set in an English town. Jess is the main ______________ and she belongs to an Indian ___________. They practise the Hindu religion and its customs. Jess is about 18 yrs old and she loves to play ______________ -. Her parents want Jess to give up the sport because they think she should be getting ready for marriage by learning to ____________, and do housework. Of course they want her to marry an __________ ____________ man.

Jess has an English girlfriend and her name is ____________. She loves soccer also and helps Jess to play with her team, the ____________. Jules’ father plays soccer in the backyard with Jules, but her mother wants her to get interested in ____________ and pretty ____________.

Unfortunately, Jess has to lie to her parents and deceive them because they ____________ let her play that game. Her sister helps her to keep this secret. Of course, Jess’ parents find out about her lies and there is a lot of ____________.

Again, Jess is forbidden to play and the soccer finals are taking place. She pretends that she has a job, but plays in the final. Her father sees her photo in the ____________ and goes to the match. He realizes that she is a very good player.
Joe, the coach, loves Jess and she is attracted to him. -------------- comes along when they are about to kiss and she becomes very angry with Jess. She won’t --------- to Jess. Finally, they make up. An American soccer official for a women’s league comes to England to find new players with talent. He has university scholarships for two --------- -, if they will study in America and play for his --------. He thinks Jess and Jules have the best skills of all the women he has seen in England.

Jess’ father lets her go to America for the soccer and study scholarship because he knows she’s very good at the game. He was not treated fairly as a ---------- player, when he was young, and he thinks that it is wrong to spoil Jess’ chances and happiness. Joe becomes the -------------- of the American women’s team.

family character cook soccer Indian Jules boys Harriets won’t clothes newspaper Jules trouble team talk teenagers coach cricket

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CHARACTER STUDIES

When you do a character study, you describe a person to another or others. You explain such things as looks, age, attitudes and values, interests, hobbies, sports, family background, clothing, personality traits
like a funny laugh, behaviour, talents and abilities. You tell about the
good things and the not so good.

Here is a short character study of Joe, who is the soccer coach in the film.

**Joe**

Joe came from Ireland to England when he was in his late teenage years.
In the story he was about 27 years old. His father was a football coach
and Joe was extremely talented.

His father was always pushing Joe to train harder and play better. Like
most teenagers, Joe wanted to please his dad and be the best. He had a
knee injury once and his father made little of it. Joe was sent on to the
field to play in a big competition game, and the knee became so damaged
that he had to have a number of operations.
The knee never recovered completely, so he had to give up playing
professional soccer. This broke his heart and he blamed his father. He
became so resentful that he left Ireland and became a barman at a soccer
club in England. Joe tried to get a soccer coaching job, but people had no
faith in him. Then a girls’ team was organized and those in charge let Joe
coach them. No one thought that the “Harriets” would become a very
important team, but they did under Joe’s coaching. In fact, an American
talent spotter came to see them play, and offered two girls a study
scholarship at a big university in America, if they would play for his
team.

Joe fell in love with Jess and they were suited to each other. She tried
hard to get Joe to forgive his father and go back to Ireland and visit him.
At the end of the film Joe admitted that he had been to see his father and
told him that he was coaching a girls’ team in England. In the story Joe
was tall, with a pleasant face, but not really handsome. He was a strict
coach, who made the girls train hard, especially Jess. He stopped her
from over-doing her training when she had a sore foot. Joe was a very
straight talker and he tried to convince Jess’ Indian father that she had
talent and therefore a right to play soccer, even though it was not an
approved game for Hindu teenage girls. He understood Jess’ problems
with her family and was very patient when she came late for training, or
did not train at all. He became angry with her once, when Jess pushed
another girl for hitting her, on the field. Jess was sent off for the rest of
the game. He was always fair to his players and he loved to tease Jules.
Early in the film, Jules told Jess that Joe had lots of girl friends.
In most of the film, Joe wore a track-suit, but once he dressed up for a night out and he looked very smart. He lived in a room at the soccer club and worked hard as barman there. After the Harriet’s won the championship, Joe was given an offer to train the men’s team, but Joe chose to work with the girls. Joe was a kind, understanding and generous person. He respected Jess’ wish not to develop their love affair until her parents were ready to accept the idea of Jess having an Irish boyfriend. At the end of the film we saw him playing county cricket with Jess’ father, and it was obvious they were becoming good friends.

YOUR TURN TO WRITE

Here are some words and phrases that describe the character of Jess. Use them to help you explain what she was like in the film and refer to events in the film.

- was attractive looking
- preferred track-suits to pretty dresses
- respected parents and elders
- was friendly with peers
- was skilful at soccer
- was well liked by friends
- loved Beckham, the soccer player
- defended her rights
- lied and deceived parents
- cared about her family
- was loyal to peers
- was helpful at home
- was intelligent
- was clever
- was hurt, but not resentful
- was forgiving
- liked Jules
- loved Joe
- aged 18 years
- was able to inspire people to do good
EXAMPLE –

Jess was about 18 years old in the film. She was an Indian girl with light brown skin, dark eyes and black hair. She was very attractive looking ….

Choose one of the following characters from the film and describe her or him –
Jess’ mother
Jess’ father
Jules
Jules’ mother
Jules’ father
Which character from the film did you like best? Why?

THEME

A THEME is a topic that occurs again and again in a story. Themes can teach us lessons about life. Think about all the times the Hindu customs, beliefs and behaviour affected Jess and caused her problems with all sorts of unpleasant emotions and decisions. She was educated in England from Prep to Yr. 12, where her peers had the freedom to do anything lawful and reasonable for their age levels. They could choose any career which they were talented enough to carry out. Jess was expected to conform to a role in life that her ancestors had designed for her. She had very little freedom to become what she truly wanted to be.

CULTURE CONFLICT names this theme.

Share ideas on the following –

Joe said, “Jess, parents don’t always do what is best for their children.”

Loyalty to yourself is more important than obedience to your parents.

We all have talents and we are expected to use them for others and ourselves.

Freedom to be ourselves is very important for happiness.

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Another important THEME in this plot is – LIES AND DECEPTION
Jess often told lies to her mother and father about where she had been, where she was going and what she was doing. Jess got her sister to cover for her when she went away to the soccer championship.

**Share the following ideas -**

Jess was 18 years old and her parents had no right to tell her what to do.

Jess was brought into life by Hindu parents, but her life was her own, so she should have been able to choose her sports, interests and career. She only lied and deceived her parents so she could truly be herself.

“WHAT THEY DON’T KNOW WON’T HURT THEM,” is what Tony said to Jess. She lied and deceived her parents so they would not be hurt by her behaviour.

“YOU CAN’T HIDE THE TRUTH,” is another common saying. How did the film prove this statement?

“LIARS CAN’T BE TRUSTED,” so could you ever again trust Jess?

Jess kissed Joe in front of her mother, father and Jules at the airport to indicate that she was not going to hide things from them anymore.

Any religion is bad if it won’t let people do what they feel like!

**TYPES OF FILM SHOTS**

**WIDE SHOTS**

When we studied the TEXT FILES video, we learnt about the different kinds of camera shots and their purposes. The wide shot was to show the film viewers the environment in which the characters lived, worked, played or visited. These camera pictures can tell us about the social levels of the people in the area e.g. poor, middle class, rich. A wide, dark camera shot can help increase the suspense in a spooky scene. A wide shot of an island scene shows a number or variety of animals and things.
A wide camera shot

A TOP-DOWN CAMERA SHOT

This type of picture can indicate depth of a water-fall or gorge, especially if a character is unknowingly heading towards it. How scared that makes the viewers!

TOP-DOWN CAMERA SHOT
A down-up camera shot indicates height. This animal’s cave is safe from predators.

A MOVING-SIDWAYS CAMERA SHOT

This is done by placing the camera on a “dolly” (moving vehicle) and it films the moving characters or things from the side e.g. a game of football, a speeding train, a galloping horse.

Moving shots can be taken from behind or in front of the person, animal or thing moving. It can be filmed from “low to high” and the viewer thinks the moving object is going to run him/her over. The movie-camera is placed on the ground for such a shot and the object goes over it.

In the text boxes below, camera shots are labelled. Describe briefly a scene in each box from, Bend it like Beckham
SYMBOLS

A symbol can be a drawing, sign or an action, which indicates a meaning. Think of the many road or traffic signs illustrated by graphics. The meaning of “shaking hands” by placing our right palm in that of another person’s is to indicate friendship – no weapons. In the olden days swords were held in the right hand, guns also.
At the engagement party, the future bridegroom received food from the father of the bride-to-be. The father was handing over his daughter to another man, to be supported by him for the rest of her life. She then placed food in the mouth of her husband-to-be. That was a symbol of her caring for him.

In Western culture, people who are being married place rings on each other’s fingers, but in the Hindu culture, a gold necklace is placed around the bride’s neck. These are signs/symbols of sharing life-long love.

At the party a mobile phone rang loudly. Four or five elderly Hindu women took their mobiles out of their bags. This was to show that they will listen to modern technology, a product of Western society, but they won’t listen to modern ideas about Western style culture. One woman had just told Jess that she should marry only an Indian man. The types of food and customs at the party were handed down through many generations of Hindus to the present day.

When Joe arrived at the airport before they all left for America, Jess kissed him lovingly in front of Jules and both families. This was a sign that Jess was finished with lies and deceptions. From then on she was going to be herself openly before the whole world.

A referee will hold up different coloured cards at a game of soccer to show that a player has broken the rules of the game. **SEE IF YOU CAN DISCOVER ANY OTHER SYMBOLS IN THE FILM**
When we view a film or stage play we can decide if it was worth watching by asking ourselves some questions about the drama. Here are some ideas to examine how worthwhile *Bend it like Beckham* was for you.

**PLOT**
The story was written and filmed in the years 2000 and 2001. It was aimed at a youthful audience. The main location was a large town or small city in England.
The main characters were teenagers and their parents.

Did this story hold your interest from beginning to end?
Was the plot easy to understand?
Were you entertained by the story?
How involved did you become in the story – were you working out in your mind what would probably happen next?
Was the ending a satisfactory one for you?
At the end of the film, did you want the story to continue?

**CHARACTERS**
Did the actors make the characters in the story become real people?
Were the characters real enough to make you feel different emotions – annoyance, joy, suspense, laughter, embarrassment, things were unfair, disappointment, excitement, tension, sympathy or any other feelings?
How involved did you become with the circumstances of the characters?
For example, were you favouring some and not others?

**LOCATIONS**
Were the various places filmed in the story familiar to you e.g. park, bedrooms, family rooms, soccer fields, shopping centres, etc.
How suitable were these places for the story?
**COSTUMES (CLOTHING) AND EQUIPMENT**

Were the clothes worn by the actors in the various scenes suitable for the occasions?
Did the make-up and hair look natural and appropriate for the characters?
How suitable for this type of film were the “props” used e.g. sporting equipment, vehicles, furniture, decorations etc.

**DIALOGUE (spoken words)**

Did the young people speak the language of teenagers today?
Could you recognize your parents and grandparents in the dialogue of the older characters?
Was the dialogue easy to understand?
Could you hear all the words spoken by the characters? Did some actors speak too quickly?
Music was present in the sound-track. Was it suitable for the actions that were taking place?
Did other sounds seem natural e.g. traffic, crowd noise etc.

**LEARNING**

A good film can teach us new lessons about life. It can make us think about our own dreams, goals, lives, families, society, culture, relationships and behaviours. It can teach us about people from other cultures with their problems and giftedness. Deep down we all want the same things from life. Might this film have something good to say to all of us, about the way we treat those who are different in our Western communities, be they Indian Hindus, Muslims from the Middle East, or Christians from Australia and other lands.

**YOUR TURN TO WRITE**

There are lots of things to think about when you answer all or some of these evaluation questions about the film, *Bend it like Beckham*. Let your answers tell you how worthwhile you think this film is. Share these answers in writing with others.