

Addressing the spiritual needs of the bereaved: films as pedagogical tools

Abordar las necesidades espirituales de los afligidos: el cine como herramienta pedagógica

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LÍNEA TEMÁTICA: Innovación, práctica y transferencia social y educativa, relacionadas con la Pedagogía de la muerte, en centros educativos y cambio curricular

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ABSTRACT: The intense search of the bereaved for meaning in life, both as a need and as part of the overall process that they go through, may lead to spirituality of various forms. Therefore, some people may look for answers in religious teachings or question the efficacy of known/typical religious responses to the problems of death, suffering, loss and pain. Education (both Primary and Secondary) needs to address this dimension of loss and grief, firstly by recognizing the need for new and comprehensive answers during this stressful period of one's life after loss, and secondly by helping pupils/students who might be experiencing loss in their spiritual quests.

Within this context film and cinema may prove valuable, for in a powerful way they raise questions about life after loss, the irreplaceability of the beloved persons who passed way, God's presence, care or benevolence, as well as portray the role of nature and creativity in accepting and expressing grief. Films such as *Lila* and *The Shadow of Blue* by Carlos Lascano, *A Man Called Otto*, *The Tree of Life* and *London River* may be creatively utilized when discussing loss, death and grief, if integrated into various school subjects or in a theme-based interdisciplinary approach to these issues.

My goal will be to demonstrate how some of these films (either certain scenes from them or in their entirety), may be approached during a lesson, through methods that are engaging for students, when addressing the aforementioned issues. Activities such as: a. Asking pupils/students to give a title to a scene which discusses e.g. the denial of loss or the anger for it and then justifying it; b. using a premeditated list of open-ended questions such as "Might this religious response to suffering satisfy most people in the modern world"? after watching a scene that mentions "God's will" are to be introduced in my presentation.

Given that any attempt to discuss death and loss should take into consideration the knowledge that is derived from various disciplines and academic fields, a purposeful study of films like the ones I will introduce, requires collaboration between teachers of various subjects. This is of course a call for a multi-inter-trans-disciplinary study of this issue, that emerges from the very core of these films: death and loss is part physical life, human nature, history and one that is consistently discussed by art, literature and

cinema. Therefore, my presentation will also touch upon how teachers can work together, either when preparing their respective lessons, or planning collaborative teaching into which some of the aforementioned films are integrated.