



The Fantastic Three

Education Resource



Government of South Australia



Australian Government



JAMES & DIANA
RAMSAY
FOUNDATION



The Fantastic Three

Education Resource

Film Information, Synopsis and Themes

Cast and Crew

Content Warning Themes

Links to Learning

Visual and Screen Literacy

Before the Film

Introductory Activity

What is Social Realism

Behind-the-Scenes

Have Big Conversations

After the Film

Whole Class and Group Discussion Questions

Role Play

Additional Resources



Film Information, Synopsis and Themes

Country: France, 2023 **Language:** French **Subtitles:** English
Genre: Feature fiction **Runtime:** 95 minutes

Themes

- Relationships
- Family
- Belonging
- Influence of others
- End of innocence
- New experiences, insecurities and the resilience of youth.

Synopsis

Twelve-year-olds Max, Tom and Viv are more than just mates – they are an unbreakable band of friends. Escaping the schoolyard drama of bullies and would-be girlfriends, the boys retreat to the woods to make music, swim and dream of attending a camp that seems painfully out of reach. As the town grapples with economic hardships, with industrial action and the imminent closure of the main employer casting a shadow over everyone, the boys' financial struggles only amplify. Their juvenile attempts to raise funds through a door-to-door bake sale proves insufficient as the deadline for camp payment looms near, so when Max's older brother comes home from jail a risky plan is unleashed as the boys up the ante on ways to make fast cash. With stellar performances throughout, this fresh French drama captivates as it tells a compelling tale of friendship, determination, and the power of youthful dreams.

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Cast

Max – Diego Murgia

Seb – Raphaël Quenard

Vivian – Benjamin Tellier

Anna – Pauline Cher

Christian – Jean-Noël Langlait

Le Conseiller Pénitentiaire/ The Prison Counselor – Philippe Ohrel

Le Vieil Homme/The Old Man – Roger Wolff

Instructeur Laser Game – Mathias JOSEPH

Le Prof De SVT – Lucas Bleger

Employée Cash Converter – Valentina Papic

Crew

Director – Michaël Dichter

Screenplay – Michaël Dichter, Matthias Gavarry, with collaboration of Judith Godinot

Director of Photography – Maxime Cointe

Production design – Lucie Beauvert

Costume Design – Floriane Gaudin

Makeup Design – Laëtitia Hogday

Surveillant/Supervisor – Clément Labopin

Aude – Emmanuelle Bercot

Tom – Jean Devie

Franck – Maxime Bailleul

Corentin – Cyprian Oudin

La Principale / The Principal – Raymonde Gander

Marie – Juliette PETITJEAN

Gendarme/Constable – Loïc Guingand

La Prof d'Anglais/English Teacher – Margaux Lucas

MME Dalbert– Gilles Martine Le Jeune Homme/The Young

Man – Saphir Kaddour

Editing – Sarah Ternat

Sound – Hugo Deguillard, Loïc Pommies, Damien Boitel, Aymeric Dupas

Original Music – Hugo Gonzalez–Pioli

Color Grading – Aline Conan

Post-production – Mélanie Karlin

Production – Rectangle Productions, Les Films Norfolk

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Content Warning Guide

- Occasional coarse language used by more than one character.
- Mention that a person has died or is dead.
- Depiction where one or more characters enact violence in the course of the film.
- Depiction of shaming where one-character publicly shames another character.
- Depiction where a character displays signs or symptoms of depression or anxiety.
- Scene where drugs are mentioned.

Trigger warning

A trigger warning is a warning about specific content that may cause physiological and psychological symptoms for people with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other anxiety disorders.

- Two scenes with bullying
- Scenes where violence is suggested.

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The Fantastic Three education resource has been developed with an awareness of the priorities and strategies of Government, Independent and Catholic schools in South Australia.

The intention of the resource is to provide activities that:

- explore ideas and strategies that might be a barrier to engaging with the film
- spark curiosity
- make connections between past information and/or experiences and new knowledge
- are inclusive of all learners.

Activities connect to the relevant year level, achievement standards, and corresponding content description, and general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum Version 8.4.

General Capabilities

| | |
|--|---|
| Literacy  | Critical and Creative Thinking  |
| Intercultural Understanding  | Personal and Social Capabilities  |



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Health and Physical Education

Year 9 and 10 Content descriptions

Personal, social and community health.

Communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing

Evaluate situations and propose appropriate emotional responses and then reflect on possible outcomes of different responses.

ACPPS093

Achievement standard

Students learn to critically analyse and apply health and physical activity information to devise and implement personalised plans for maintaining healthy and active habits.

Media Arts

Year 9 and 10 Content descriptions

Plan and design media artworks for a range of purposes that challenge the expectations of specific audiences by particular use of production processes. ACAMAM076

Achievement Standard

Students evaluate how social, institutional and ethical issues influence the making and use of media artworks.

History

Year 10 – Content Description

Historical Knowledge and Understanding

Rights and freedoms (1945 – the present)

Students investigate struggles for human rights in depth. This will include how rights and freedoms have been ignored, demanded or achieved in Australia and in the broader world context. ACDSEH023

Achievement Standard

Students refer to key events, the actions of individuals and groups, and beliefs and values to explain patterns of change and continuity over time. They analyse the causes and effects of events and developments and explain their relative importance.

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South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)

Health & Wellbeing

Stage 1

Health and Wellbeing is influenced by diverse social and cultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices. An understanding of the health and wellbeing status of individuals, communities, and global societies incorporates, for example, health determinants and strategies to improve lifestyle decisions.

Stage 2

Health and wellbeing is influenced by diverse social and cultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices. An awareness and analysis of the health and wellbeing status of individuals, communities, and global societies incorporates health determinants, inequities, barriers, and strategies. Students explore principles, frameworks, models, and theories relating to health and wellbeing.

Media Studies

Stage 1

Learning requirements

Students:

1. demonstrate understanding of the ways in which societies are represented by media
2. research and analyse the form, content, context, and intended audiences of media texts.

Stage 2

Learning requirements

Students:

1. analyse the ways in which societies are represented by media
2. analyse their own and others' interactions with media

Modern History

Stage 1 and 2

Students investigate ways in which people, groups, and institutions challenge political structures, social organisation, and economic models to transform societies.

Stage 2

Students investigate the growth of modern nations at a time of rapid global change. They engage in a study of one nation, and of interactions between or among nations.

In their study of one nation, students investigate the social, political, and economic changes that shaped the development of that nation.

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Visual and Screen Literacy

Students today are more connected to media than any previous generation and the screen has become a new kind of page for them to read and make meaning from. Visual or screen literacy are the skills, knowledge and understanding students can build to support them 'read' images. By engaging in discussions different interpretations of the film may emerge. These discussions can form the basis for students to have alternative interpretations.

Being literate in reading films requires students to be able to:

- watch a film and analyse its content, cinematography, and technical aspects
- use the language of creative moving image productions
- understand the content of the film.

Visual/screen literacy knowledge, skills and understanding can be developed by asking students to:

- explain their response to a film by providing evidence to justify their reason/s
- observe what techniques the director uses to tell the story
- think about the reasons the film was made
- identify how colour is used, and how the sets and lighting affect how the story is told.

Martin Scorsese talking about the importance of visual literacy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9OZluYvHic>

Martin Scorsese's message to teachers

"You're training the eye and the heart of the student to look at a film in a different way by asking questions and pointing to different ideas, different concepts, and suggestions. You're training them to think about a story that is told to them in visual terms in a different way and to take it seriously."

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Before the Film

Introductory Activity – Watching Films

Viewing films is a great way for students to access diverse stories and voices and viewing films on a big screen in a cinema provides an opportunity to engage the senses in a way other media cannot. The sight, the sound, and being in a darkened cinema with others is an immersive experience quite different to anything else.

At the cinema – “And when we are in the dark, with many other people, we are especially alert to tiny signals from the audience that will trigger group laughter, screams, or tears. At home, alone, or with a few others, these signals are reduced proportionally.”



<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/may/15/together-in-the-dark-what-we-miss-about-going-to-the-movies>

How do you view films

The following suggested questions are designed to engage students in a conversation with each other about how they access film. The number or types of questions can be modified based on year level.

Step 1 – Divide the class in two. Group A and Group B

Step 2 – Group A:

- receives a copy of interview questions
- interviews a person in Group B and records responses to questions.

Step 3 – Group B:

- receives a copy of interview questions
- interviews a person in Group A and records responses to questions.

Step 4

- Students from Group A get into small groups and students from Group B get into small groups and share and discuss interviews, responses.
 - Were there any similarities or differences.
 - Were there any trends.

Step 5

- Meet as a whole class to discuss interview responses
 - Are there any trends?
 - What responses did they find interesting or surprising.

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Screen Australia

Cinema Audience Attendance Patterns

Australians attending the cinema at least once per year has averaged 67 per cent since 2000

<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/fact-finders/cinema/audiences/attendance-patterns>

Attendance Patterns by Age

Australians between the ages of 14 and 24 are the most like to attend cinemas.

<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/fact-finders/cinema/audiences/attendance-patterns/by-age>

A Trend

A general development or change in a situation or in the way that people are behaving.

Interview One

| GROUP A - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS | |
|---|----------|
| Question | Response |
| Do you usually watch movies at home or at the cinema? | |
| On average, how many films would you watch a week? (Include documentary and fiction films) | |
| What is the longest movie you have ever seen and how long was it? | |
| Do you watch more movies or TV shows? | |
| They are making a movie about your life what actor would you like to play the role of you? Why? | |
| What is your favourite movie? Why? | |
| Have you watched foreign films with subtitles? | |
| What movie would you recommend for your friends to see and why? | |
| How do you choose what films you will watch? | |
| Do you read any information about a movie before you watch it? What type of information - friends, social media or movie reviews? | |

GROUP B - INTERVIEW QUESTION

| Question | Response |
|--|--|
| Do you think films can be educational? Explain | |
| Do you prefer films with an emphasis on humour & entertainment OR films that provoke thought and emotion. Why? | |
| What is the last movie you watched? Where did you watch it? Were you by yourself or with others – friends, family? | |
| What is your favourite feature fiction genre to watch? Why? | Comedy Action/Adventure Horror Drama Romance Musical Science Fiction Thriller |
| Do you watch movies online? When do you watch movies online? | |
| Does social media influence your decision about films you choose to watch? Explain your answer. | |
| Do awards influence your decision to watch a movie? | |
| Do you prefer animated or real life films? Why? | |
| Does the cost of going to the cinema influence if you watch a film at a cinema or online? | |
| What do you think cinemas could do to attract more people to see movies at the cinema? | |

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What is Social Realism

The Fantastic Three is a drama that is filmed in the social realism tradition.

Quick overview of social realism

Social realism is an art form that uses realistic reflections or interpretations of simple, everyday events often focussing on themes such as money, drugs, class, religion, and politics. This approach highlights the truths underlying ordinary lives in contemporary society to uncover the different layers and divisions in society.

Often social realist films were called 'Kitchen Sink Dramas' because of the domestic locations. The characters are ordinary people in ordinary everyday settings, with everyday social issues.

Features & characteristics of social realism films:

- location shooting in everyday settings like, a school, factory and places where the characters live
- wide shot camera angles for the audience to get a good understanding of what's going on,
- lighting is often 'naturalistic'
- mainly uses diegetic sound.
- unknown actors
- balance of humour and seriousness
- erosion of identities
- exploration of wider social issues
- individual stories that chart the protagonist's journey.

Narrative structure:

- protagonist gets caught in a dangerous or life changing situation
- film documents the journey that revolves around finding the equilibrium
- a dangerous or influential anti-hero has strong ties with the protagonist.

Common themes:

- social injustice
- racial injustice
- economic hardship

Australian titles & social realism genre
Australian Screen (an NFSA website) provides a list of Australian titles in the social realism genre

<https://aso.gov.au/titles/genres/social-realism/>

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About the Director

Michaël Dichter is the Director of *The Fantastic Three* is a creative artist with a career that includes writing, directing, and acting.

The Fantastic Three (Les Trois Fantastiques) is Dichter's feature debut and is a continuation of his César-nominated short film *Pollux*.



Credits

Director – *The Fantastic Three* 2023, *Boys Feels: I Love Trouble* 2021, *Pollux* 2018.

Writer – *Pollux* 2019

Actor – *Baby Bump*, 2017. *Wild Life* 2014

Pollux – Michaël Dichter's short film that preceded *The Fantastic Three*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCys2HQU7rU>

Life stories are powerful.

Films provide a narrative model grounded in a person's familiar world that is framed in emotions and images.

Interview with Michaël Dichter – interview is in French

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxOID_Pxuvk&t=84s

Statement of Intent

The following statement of intent from Dichter provides an overview and an insight into the writer's and director's intention and vision for the film. It explains the genesis of the story and the vision and motive behind the film. A director's vision is what gives a film its unique style and personality and is instrumental in communicating the ideas and intentions to the rest of the film crew so that everyone is working toward the same goal.

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Behind-the-Scene Director's Statement

Statement of intent from Michaël Dichter

The Fantastic Three took shape in my mind far from the Ardennes, at the foot of the towers of Bagnolet, where I grew up. It was already the story of a group of friends who thought they'd be together for life, but whose friendship was about to be put to the test.

It was a short film first and migrated to the East of France. Bagnolet had found its twin in social condition: Revin, a small town in the crisis-stricken Ardennes region, wedged between factory after factory that had closed and a gigantic black hill that seemed impassable. Idle families, a feeling of abandonment, a reality very similar to my own.

The setting had changed, but the initial desire remained unchanged: to film this peripheral France and its sinister universe, without being sinister, since it was treated from the point of view of our heroes, these inventive, strong-willed pre-teens.

I met kids who were experiencing what I'd experienced at their age. A sense of isolation, of being left to their own devices, and at the same time, the feeling of belonging to a community: that of a territory. And even if everything around them seems serious, their age allows them to keep a certain distance.

I experienced the story of the short film in my teens. This gang of friends was mine, except for one thing: the character of Max is the only one who came out of my imagination. The others really existed.

When the short began its life at festivals, Max continued to haunt me. I kept asking myself why he was so familiar to me, and why his presence on paper and on set was more sensitive to me than that of the other characters. I knew his fears, his strengths, his past, his father's departure, his distracted mother... I knew his fear and even loathing of solitude, his desire to always be accompanied, to place his friends at the centre of his life, and to hope in vain for his father's return. I knew Max better than anyone else, not because I'd created him, but because we were one. Max was me.

What I missed most as a child and then as a teenager was hope. Hope that my situation would change. That we would once again form a close-knit family that I could count on. It was this hope that I decided to bring to Max's character, through Sébastien, his older brother.

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Statement of intent from Michaël Dichter continued...

But things don't go as planned. When Sébastien gets out of prison and returns home, what at first seemed like a dream quickly turns into a nightmare. For Sébastien has not changed, and the demons of yesteryear resurface, while Max continues to cling to his dream of a reunited family.

I also found the contrast between the enthusiasm of the kids and the town's slow pace in Revin's natural scenery. On the one hand, rich, omnipresent nature (the Ardennes Forest surrounding Revin, the Meuse valley and its banks winding through the town), and on the other, factories closing down and residents gradually abandoning their land.

It was this mix of nature and industry that fascinated me and fuelled my desire to make a film there. Every detail of the landscape is a source of inspiration for me: a soccer pitch at the foot of a nuclear power plant, the railroad that runs around Mont Malgré-tout... And above all Electrolux, which once provided a livelihood for almost 4,000 families and is now nothing but an industrial wasteland in the heart of Revin, on the banks of the Meuse.

I wanted to anchor *Fantastic Three* in a social cinema that delves into the trajectories of teenagers losing their bearings in an adult world that seems to both abandon them and catch up with them. It's a film with a buddy-movie feel, but also and above all an adventure film that veers towards the harsh, tense and bitter film noir in which these children lose their carefree spirit.

The mix of genres seemed essential to me, starting out like a deceptively light buddy film, as in *Stand by Me* (1986, Rob Reiner), and slowly veering towards the dramatic, as in *Northwest* (2013, Michael Noer).

The entire *mise en scène* is geared towards this: the brutal immersion of children in the real world. From wide open spaces to industrial wastelands, from day to night, from shimmering colors to duller atmospheres, from brownies to guns and drugs, from friendship to betrayal, from a childlike Daniel Johnston-style soundtrack to a more oppressive modern score that accompanies the build-up of tension in the film's final act.

This final whirlwind, where there is no longer any question of good or evil, where guilt is stronger than anything else, will mark the explosion of the group and the end of their innocence. And all this, with a question that must ask the viewer: how did we get here?

Fantastic Three is in a certain vein of Belgian or Scandinavian cinema, which is not afraid to mix genres to bring out emotions. My film is lively and carefree, but at the same time, I wanted to find a "truth" by exploring a form of fatality mixed with pessimism. I wanted to make a film that is both a spectacle and a way of exploring the human soul.

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Using creativity to have big conversations.

Read:

- What is Social Realism and
- Statement of intent from Michaël Dichter
- Identify & discuss why they think Michaël Dichter chose the social realism genre to film this story.

Storytelling – An issue of concern

- Each group discuss & identify an issue/event that is of concern for them.
- Select a scene from the story of the issue/event to portray.
- Decide whose perspective will be depicted in the portrayal of the scene.
- Decide the setting for the scene.

Mission Australia's

Youth Survey Report 2022

Issues of concern for young people aged 15–19 Australia:

- the environment (51.0%)
- equity and discrimination (35.9%)
- mental health (33.9%).

<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey/2618-youth-survey-2022-report/file>

Improvising the scene

Improvisation is a feature of social realist films. It is used as a method to draw out a more instinctive and realistic emotional response and get all the stuff no one knew existed.

Ideas for groups to think of when doing their improvisation

1. Observe the ordinary – the clues and messages behind how we think and talk.
2. What would you really struggle with in your scenario/scene.
3. How do the characters fit into the big picture – the connections – between people, ideas & objects.
4. How does the scene communicate the message.

Start improvising the scene (5 – 10mins)

It is important when beginning the improvisation that not all members of group are involved. This will provide a reflection process for the group.

- Two students explore a specific moment between two characters in the scene (one being the character from whom the perspective is being told)
- The students make up the conversation and meaning making as they go – students must be clear about who the character they are in the scene, what they are doing, where they are (the setting) and why they are in that scene.

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Group reflection

The observers provide feedback on the improvisation.

- What they saw and how they thought it went.
- What did the observers discover about the characters or conflict?
- What external forces, ideas, or people shaped this specific situation or conflict?
- Did the protagonist achieve their goal in the scene? If not, what do they think should be incorporated into the scene.
- Are the observers happy with how the scene ends?

Swap over – the observers become the improvisers and repeat the process.

Final improvisation

- Groups decide who will be the main character.
- Incorporates all of the members of the group into the scene.
- Reflect on the dynamics of the scene.
- Discusses any changes.

Individual groups present their scenes to the class

After each group has presented their improvisation to the class they should be asked to stay in character while the teacher/class interviews them. Interview questions should focus on:

- details of the scene
- feelings of the characters
- tensions in the scene.

Debriefing after the improvisation

- Were they able to maintain their concentration from the point of view of their character.
- If they were successful in maintaining their concentration, how did they do this.
- What did they discover about their character in the improvisation process that they found surprising or uncomfortable.

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Questions to stimulate discussion and critical thinking after *The Fantastic Three*.

Whole class discussion questions

- What did you think the message of the film was? Did you agree or disagree with it?
- Was there anything you didn't understand about the film?
- What did you like the most about the film? Why?
- What did you like the least about the film? Why?



Small group discussion questions

About the Film

- What were you thinking as you finished watching the film?
- What part of the story was the most powerful? Why?
- If you had a chance to ask the director of the film a question, what would it be?
- If you had a chance to ask a character in this movie a question, what would it be?
- If you were writing the screen play for this movie, would you have changed the ending? Explain what the ending would be.

About the Characters

- What were the characteristics of the protagonist? Were those characteristics like your own or those of someone you know?
- Select one of the main characters in the film and discuss their personal qualities and how these qualities helped solve the problem or are a part of the message of the film.

Protagonist

The leading character or one of the major characters in a play, film, novel, etc.

Antagonist

The adversary of the hero or protagonist of a drama

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Role Play

Improvise a scene from *The Fantastic Three*

Working in small groups:

Step one

- Select a scene from *The Fantastic Three* and identify the situation.
- Identify the issue

Step two

- Discuss the issue
- Identify what the group wants to achieve in the scene.

Step three

- Assign a character role to each person in the group.
- Is one person the protagonist and the other the antagonist.

Step four

- Improvise the scene.
- Practice the scene using different approaches for handling the situation.
- Discuss how these changes affect the outcome.

Step five

- Groups select the scene they will share with the whole class.

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The Social Cost of Deindustrialisation

Deindustrialisation includes the loss of jobs, homes and health care; which can lead to cuts in public services, increases in crime, decaying local landscapes, increases in suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, family violence and depression, declines in cultural resources, and loss of faith in institutions.

- Elizabeth, South Australia: A city devastated by General Motors Holden – by Zoe Hambides 27 December 2013 <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2013/12/27/eliz-d27.html>
- Factory closure and its indirect impacts on local economy. The Daily Star 21 January 2021 <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/news/factory-closure-and-its-indirect-impacts-local-economy-2031325>
- Youngstown State University – The Social Cost of Deindustrialisation <https://ysu.edu/center-working-class-studies/social-costs-deindustrialization>

Social realism

Social Realism: Art, Nationhood and Politics, by David Forrest, 2013. <https://www.cambridgescholars.com/resources/pdfs/978-1-4438-5151-0-sample.pdf>

British Social Realism at the movies – <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/viewfinder/articles/british-social-realism-at-the-movies/>

Young French film-makers opt for gritty realism, The Guardian Anne Penketh October 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/26/french-film-makers-gritty-realism>

A new wave of French films tackle social problems and taboos – The Economist February 2020 <https://www.economist.com/books-and-arts/2020/02/06/a-new-wave-of-french-films-tackle-social-problems-and-taboos>