

The image is a composite graphic. It features a woman's profile in silhouette, facing right. Inside the silhouette of her head, there is a cityscape with several tall buildings. The background is a mix of light green and white, with faint floral patterns and a dark, stylized graphic element on the left side.

INVISIBLE CITY

TEACHER'S GUIDE

PRODUCED BY INDUSTRY PICTURES/SHINE FILMS IN CO-PRODUCTION
WITH THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA
NFB.CA/INVISIBLECITY



AUDIENCE: Educators and community leaders who connect with

- Youth at risk of dropping out of school and/or becoming part of the gangs-and-guns culture;
- Youth learning about choices and consequences;
- Individuals dealing with displacement, loss of community or relocation;
- Youth dealing with identity issues.

RELEVANT SUBJECTS: Civics, Social Studies, History, English, Urban Studies, Ethics, Politics, Social Justice, Media Arts, Gender Studies

THEMES: Choices, Respect, High-risk activities, Gun violence, Racism, Consequences, Identifying personal strengths, Community, Masculinity, Family

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Grades 7 & 8

Writing

Oral and Visual Communication

Grades 9 – 12

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
<p>Family Studies: Individual and Family Living (HIF10) Open, Grades 9 & 10</p>	<p>Social Challenges: Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare individual and family lifestyles now and in the past, considering the effects of social, cultural, economic, technological and environmental changes; • Analyze the impact of a variety of changes on individuals and on peer and family relationships and lifestyles (e.g., divorce and child-custody arrangements, new technologies). <p>Diversity, Interdependence and Global Connections: Family Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define terms and describe diverse family forms and relationships (e.g., nuclear, blended and single-parent families, foster care, adoption, sibling relationships).

<p>Family Studies: Living and Working with Children (HPW3C)</p>	<p>Children in Society: Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the importance of an individual's personal experience as a child (e.g., development of trust, expectations of having needs met, having strong role models) as an influence on his or her later attitudes and behaviours towards children; • Demonstrate an understanding of how relationships between children and parents may change as both grow older (e.g., reversal of dependency/nurturing roles).
<p>Canadian History and Politics Since 1945 (CHH3E) Grade 11, Workplace Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what a city is and how different types of criteria can be used to define urban regions; • Describe how social, political, cultural, environmental and economic factors, patterns and processes have influenced, and continue to influence, the development of selected cities and urban environments; • Describe how cultural factors (e.g., place names, gender roles, resource use, food preferences, belief systems) affect the characteristics of places; • Describe developments in the Canadian consumer economy since 1945 (e.g., suburbanization, subsidized housing, targeting teenage consumers since the 1950s, shopping malls, personal credit cards, automated services, e-shopping) and their effects on Canadians' lives.

Media Studies (e.g., Analyzing Media and How It Works)

Self and Others (e.g., Relationships, Personal and Social Responsibilities, Communication and Conflict Resolution, Decision Making and Problem Solving, Social Challenges)

Synopsis

THE FILM

The title *Invisible City* is taken from Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man*, in which he asks, "To whom can I be responsible, and why should I be, when you refuse to see me?" This question is central to the film, which follows the lives of two young men growing up in a public housing project that is being torn down and rebuilt around them. Their own struggles echo this rebuilding process, as the two continually try to get on the right path and stay out of the trouble that can come so easily in their neighbourhood.

Coming of age in this environment is confusing and dangerous — and can sometimes involve illegal activities. The stories of Mikey and Kendell are accompanied by those of their mothers, who are both single parents. Also featured is their former teacher Ainsworth Morgan, who continues to act as a father figure to the boys while reflecting on his own place in the community and changing jobs.

Regent Park is Canada's largest housing project. The 70-acre community provides housing for 2,000 families. The Regent Park Revitalization will tear down the existing community over the next 15 years and rebuild it as a mixed development. One of the issues Regent Park residents are dealing with is the loss of community that they will experience as their homes are knocked down and they are displaced.

THE FILMMAKER

Hubert Davis is a Canadian filmmaker who was nominated for an Academy Award for Documentary Short Subject and an Emmy Award for Outstanding Cultural and Artistic Programming for his directorial debut in *Hardwood*, a short documentary exploring the impact his father's decisions had on his life and those of his extended family. Davis was the first Black Canadian to be nominated for an Oscar. His next film, *Aruba*, is a short drama reflecting the disconnection of urban poverty and race from the mainstream. Davis was awarded the Don Haig Award for top emerging Canadian director at the 2007 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

Pre-Viewing Activity

KWL format (what you **K**now, what you **W**ant to know, what you **L**earned)

Two ways to lead a KWL:

- a) Students/participants fill out the first and second columns of the KWL individually. They then share their ideas during a class discussion, and the teacher records them on the master KWL, which will be posted throughout the project. Then, throughout the project and/or at the end of certain activities, the process is repeated for the last column (what you learned).
- b) The teacher/facilitator leads class discussions to brainstorm ideas on filling in the **K** and **W** columns. Then, throughout the project and/or at the end of certain activities, the process is repeated for the last column.

Pre- and Post-Discussion Ideas

Race

- What are the messages about race that are conveyed in the documentary?
- How are these messages represented in the experiences of Mikey and Kendell?
- How do race, gender, age and class combine to influence the experiences of Mikey and Kendell?

Identity

- How are the identities of the participants in the documentary and community linked?
- If asked, how do you think the various documentary participants (teacher, student, mother, etc.) would describe who they are based on how they are presented in the film, and what does your description tell us about each of them?
- What role does identity play in establishing common bonds?

Gender

- What role does gender play in the lives of the participants?
- What influences Kendell and Mikey's relationships with their respective parents?
- What impact do Kendell and Mikey's relationships with their fathers have on their understanding of manhood?

Family

- What are your impressions of the relationship between the young men and their mothers and fathers?
- What are the issues/tensions faced by Kendell and Mikey in relating to their parents, and how are they interrelated?
- How is family represented in the documentary?

Community

- What role does race play in the definition of community as represented in the documentary?
- What impact has the Revitalization Project had on the Regent Park community?
- What does each participant say about the meaningfulness of living in Regent Park?

Socio-economic Class

- What is the role of class in the documentary?
- How does the economic situation of the people in the documentary affect some of their decisions?
- What systems need to be put in place to encourage equal access for all residents in gentrified communities?

Schools

- Schools play a role in the social-emotional development of their students. Define that role and the impact it can have. How is this evident in the documentary?
- Should schools take into account the social identities and community experiences of the students when working with them? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Due to the absence of a local high school in the Regent Park community, Kendell and Mikey travel to other communities for their secondary education. Identify ways in which leaving your own neighbourhood can be beneficial and/or detrimental.

Mentorship

- How would you define a mentor?
- Identify the mentors in your life. How have they impacted your life?
- Describe the characteristics of an effective mentor-mentee relationship.

Post-Viewing Activities

Discuss the following quotes in small groups:

1. *"I didn't want to keep on the wrong path ... in a way it is hard to do. All of my friends, what are they going to think of me? Some of them might think I am soft."* Mikey

What do you think Mikey means by being "soft"? What are the implications of this idea in terms of his community and school life?

2. *"When I was born, it was sworn that I was neva gonna be shit. Had to make moves started selling dime and nicks."* Rap lyrics on Kendell's wall

How do these lyrics reflect how Kendell feels about his life and place in the community? Use evidence from the film as well as your own knowledge or experience to answer.

3. *"I have to wake up every day and need to make sure I keep myself level-headed and not get negative on myself. I had a lot of anger; not really mad at anybody, just mad at myself."* Kendell

One might say that Kendell is turning his anger inward — what are the implications of this? How do you think this anger has affected his life and his relationships?

4. *"Most of my friends, we all said where we going to go, I'm going to do this, we're never going to sell drugs. Now half of them can't say that."* Kendell in Grade 10

What conditions would make it possible for Mikey and Kendell to live up to this commitment?

5. *"Jermaine was a student here and was shot seven times the other day ... when you are a product of the projects, you've been to more funerals than weddings... I see how the cycle continues; his daughter was born a couple of days after he was shot. She will never know him."* Ainsworth Morgan, teacher in Regent Park

What is the cycle Morgan is referring to? What accounts for this cycle, and what effects might it have on young people in this community?

Extensions

Following a screening and discussion of the film, and the completion of the KWL, try one of the following activities with your students:

1. Write a film review of *Invisible City* for publication in a local newspaper. To start, ask students to look at the film section of various publications and to discuss the diverse styles and approaches to reviewing films. Then, identify the publication and the audience your students would like to write the review for. For example, is your audience a young, hip crowd or business people? With the audience in mind, ask students to brainstorm, develop and write a one-page film review. Share your reviews in class, in a student newspaper or class blog.
2. Reflect on how to promote *Invisible City* to others. First, ask students to identify who they think should see the film. Policy-makers? Parents? Teachers? City councillors? Then ask them to identify their key message and what media they will use to get the attention of their audience. Would it be through posters? Billboards? A Web site? A television commercial? Then invite students to plan their promotional piece and, if possible, create it.
3. In *Invisible City*, we are introduced to a variety of programs that are designed to support community members, such as Pathways to Education. In small groups, ask students to identify some of the key issues in their own community (school community or larger community) and the various resources that are available to them as students and as citizens. Are there gaps in the programs that are available? What ideas do they have to improve conditions in their own community? What type of program is really needed? Who do they feel should be responsible for managing these programs? Present their ideas to a local politician or councillor.
4. Mentorship is a major theme in *Invisible City*. Ask students to reflect on mentors in their own lives. Who do they look to for guidance and assistance? What qualities make for a good mentor? What qualities does Morgan model that enable Kendell and Mikey to connect with him? What positive qualities would your students like to model for young people in their school and community? What do they feel they can contribute to others, now and in the future? As a group, create a mentorship “tree” on a bulletin board and ask students to write down positive qualities or statements about mentorship on “leaves.” This display can act as a reminder of the positive impact students can have on the lives of others.

5. The title *Invisible City* tells us a lot about the stories and the people in the film. In what ways is Regent Park, like so many other social housing environments, an invisible city? If Regent Park represents an invisible city, what would represent a “visible city”? Documentary films often strive to expose audiences to “real life” — to demonstrate what happens outside of the mainstream. Ask students to reflect on stories about teens in the mainstream media. What is out there? How are teens perceived? What are their lives like? What do they like to do in their spare time? Invite students to create a chart, comparing and contrasting “real life” as it is portrayed in the media and “real life” as it is portrayed in this film. Ask the following questions:
- a. Why do you think teen lives are portrayed the way they are on television and in the media?
 - b. How do these images of teens make you feel?
 - c. How does your life differ from the lives portrayed on television?
 - d. How did it feel to watch Mikey and Kendell onscreen?
 - e. Do you feel that you can relate to Mikey and Kendell? If so, in what ways?
 - f. What do you think it would be like to have other teens watch you and your life onscreen?

Resources

(Web Sites/Related Films/Articles/Books)

Web Sites

- **Invisible City**: films.nfb.ca/invisible-city
- blogTO interview with the **Invisible City** filmmaker, Hubert Davis: blogto.com/film/2009/02/behind_the_doc_hubert_davis
- TVO on-line panel discussion of **Invisible City** with director Hubert Davis and Ainsworth Morgan: youtube.com
- Catherine Farquharson, the stills photographer for **Invisible City**: documentographer.com
- Toronto's plans for the revitalization of Regent Park: toronto.ca/revitalization/regent_park
- Nelson Mandela Park Public School: schools.tdsb.on.ca/nelsonmandelapark
- Pathways to Education: pathwaystoeducation.ca
- Using Documentaries in the Classroom, a teacher librarian's personal Web site with excellent resources: frankwbaker.com/using_docs_in_the_classroom
- The Association for Media Literacy, an Ontario-based media literacy group dedicated to consultation, professional development, resource development, research and advocacy: aml.ca
- NFB Documentary Lens Behind the Camera: A site to assist teachers in teaching documentary production in their classroom. www3.nfb.ca/objectifdocumentaire/
- Media Awareness Network: A Canadian non-profit media education and internet literacy resource library. media-awareness.ca
- Centre for Media Literacy: A U.S. website that provides several resources for making, understanding, and criticizing media. medialit.org
- The National Film Board of Canada website: On this site is an area with teaching resources and short documentary films that can be used as teaching aids. nfb.ca

Related Films

When We Were Boys, Sarah Goodman, 2009, 81 min

NFB Related Films

9 Months 6 Blocks, Christopher Romeike, 2005, 28 min 38 s

Breakin' In: The Making of a Hip Hop Dancer, Elizabeth St. Philip, 2005, 55 min 16 s (One storyline features a single mother in Regent Park)

Brother 2 Brother, Russell Wyse, 2004, 40 min

Cheating Death, Eric Geringas, 2004, 24 min 29 s

Home Feeling: Struggle for a Community, Jennifer Hodge and Roger McTair, 1983, 57 min 35 s

In the Name of the Mother and the Son, Maryse Legagneur, 2005, 52 min 31 s

Return to Regent Park, Bay Weyman, 1994, 55 min 44 s

Warrior Boyz, Baljit Sangra, 2008, 43 min 38 s

Classroom Resources for Inclusive Curriculum and Instruction

Toronto District School Board: tdsb.on.ca/equity

Youth Support Organizations

Youth Assisting Youth: yay.org
 Kids Help Phone: kidshelpphone.ca
 East Metro Youth Services: emys.on.ca/
 Central Toronto Youth Services: ctys.org
 Leave Out Violence: leaveoutviolence.com
 Delisle Youth Services: delisleyouth.org
 Yorktown Child and Family Centre: yorktownfamilyservices.com
 YouthLink: youthlink.ca

Books and Articles

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Random House, 1952.
 Dei, George J. Sefa et al(1997). *Reconstructing 'Drop-out': A Critical Ethnography of the Dynamics of Black Students' Disengagement From School*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.
 James, Carl E. *Race in Play: Understanding the Socio-Cultural Worlds of Student Athletes*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2005.
 James, Carl E. "You're Doing it for the Students: The Question of Role Modelling" in *Experiencing Difference*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2000.
 Spence, Christopher *Skin I'm In: Racism, Sports and Education*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1999.
 Watson, A., Kehler, M. and Martino, W. "The Problem of Boys' Literacy Underachievement: Raising Some Questions." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, Vol. 53 (2010), pp. 356–361.

FILM CREDITS:

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Teacher's Guide:

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This user's guide is available for download at nfb.ca/guides
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