

Hardwood

Writer/Director: Hubert Davis

Producer: Erin Faith Young, Peter Starr (NFB)

Hardwood Pictures Inc. in Co-Production with the National Film Board Of Canada

Produced with the assistance of the

AL WAXMAN CALLING CARD PROGRAM, an initiative of the ONTARIO MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

Suggested User's Guide

Grade 11 & Grade 12, CEGEP (Quebec)

THE FILM

Hardwood is the touching story of director Hubert Davis, the son of former Harlem Globetrotter Mel Davis, who explores how his father's decisions affected his life.

Now a coach for young basketball players in Vancouver, Mel recalls falling in love at first sight with Hubert's mother, a white woman, at a time when racism made their union impossible, and then his subsequent marriage to a black woman and the birth of their son. Both women in Mel's life, the mothers of his two sons, speak movingly about love and betrayal, and both sons speak of the pain of their absent father and its effect on their mothers.

Elegantly structured into three chapters entitled "love," "recollection" and "redemption," Davis uses personal interviews, archival footage and home movies to delve into his father's past in the hope of finding a new direction for his own life.

Themes for discussion:

1. Davis often talks about how his father *allowed* him to make **Hardwood** because he wanted him to pursue his dreams and goals in life. What do you think was Davis' goal in making **Hardwood**? Was it generous of his father to give his blessing and participate in the film? Why? How do you think the making of **Hardwood** might have affected Davis' life? Why is it important in life to take on projects and challenges like this and follow them through to completion?
2. Originally, **Hardwood** was simply to be a story about Davis' father, the former Harlem Globetrotter, Mel Davis, but along the way, Hubert chose to put himself into the film. Why did he make this choice? How did his decision change the film?
3. Davis' life is deeply affected by his parents' choices. How is he a product of these choices? How do you relate to your own parents' choices, and to your grandparents' choices? What are some of the social and economic realities that brought about their decisions? How do generations influence and guide the lives of one another?
4. Davis is the son of a white mother and an African-American father. What effect does his background have on his understanding of himself and the world around him? What does **Hardwood** reveal about the evolution of Canadian social mores? What are the benefits of Canadian cultural diversity? Why is it important that films like **Hardwood** be made?
5. In **Hardwood**, Davis chooses to use stock footage, home movies and photographs in this film rather than to create dramatizations of the events? Do you find this choice to be effective in his telling of the story?

6. Davis' father played for the Harlem Globetrotters for 18 years. What do you know about the Globetrotters? How long has the team been in existence? What kinds of racial and social barriers did the Globetrotters help to break down for African-Americans?
7. Davis uses basketball as a metaphor for life. What does his story tell us about life, love and family relationships? How do these lessons relate to the sport of basketball?

Think of other metaphors that can be used to represent life. What are some symbols that can be used to represent feelings, emotions or important events? How can metaphors and symbols help you adapt a deeply personal story to make it suitable for a wide audience?

8. A film review is a critical report about a film, usually written for the newspaper, television, radio or a magazine. A review includes a brief synopsis of the film and a written analysis from the writer's perspective that incorporates an opinion and/or judgment about the piece. Write a short review of **Hardwood**. Consider whether you would recommend this film to a friend. If so, how would you recommend the film and what would you say about it? Read a few of the reviews aloud in class and discuss.
9. Create a treatment: A treatment is a written sketch that outlines the plot, characters and actions for the screenplay of a film. It's like a written pitch - something that catches the reader's attention and makes them want to see the film you're describing.
10. Here are some rules for writing a treatment:
 - A treatment can run from one to 25 pages. For this exercise, keep it brief - one to two pages!
 - It should have a list of main characters and their important characteristics.
 - It should identify the type of film you are making - is it a documentary, an animation, a feature film
 - It should have a solid opening that grabs the reader from the start. It has to contain a main character, or protagonist, that the reader can identify with in some way. The protagonist doesn't have to be a hero, but he or she (or it!) has to stand out and pull the reader in.
 - Your story must contain a central conflict or problem around which the action in the story revolves.
 - A treatment should have a climax and an ending that resolve the conflict in some way.

To begin your treatment, think of a personal story you would like to tell. Then, using the information above, write a treatment for a film of your story.

Notes for educators: *As this is a personal assignment, some students may not want to share their treatments. You may want to conduct a pitch session wherein students present to the rest of the class the film they plan to create.*

Smaller pitch sessions and work groups may be established where students could peer edit and evaluate the work of their classmates.

Evaluation: Treatments should be concise, direct and clear. The reader should have a strong sense of what the potential film would look like and its desired outcome. The reader should be able to evaluate the intended audience for this film as well as the filmmaker's perspective.