

Ryan

Director: Chris Landreth

Producers: Steven Hoban (Copper Heart), Mark Smith (Copper Heart), Marcy Page (NFB)
A Copper Heart Entertainment production
in co-production with the National Film Board of Canada
In association with Seneca College – Animation Arts Centre

Suggested User's Guide

Grade 11 & Grade 12, CEGEP (Quebec)

THE FILM

A gentleman panhandler. One of the pioneers of Canadian animation. Oscar® nominee. Poor beggar. An artist unable to create. God observing the world. Fallen angel. Arrogant. Shy. Broken. Not destroyed.

Ryan, directed by Chris Landreth, is based on the life of Canadian animator Ryan Larkin. Thirty years ago, at the National Film Board of Canada, Ryan produced some of the most influential animated films of his time. Today, Ryan lives on welfare and panhandles for spare change in downtown Montreal. How could such an artistic genius follow this path?

In **Ryan** we hear the voice of Ryan Larkin and people who have known him, but these voices speak through strange, twisted, broken and disembodied 3D generated characters... people whose appearances are bizarre, humorous or disturbing. Although incredibly realistic and detailed, **Ryan** was created not with the use of rotoscoping or motion capture...but instead from an original, personal, hand animated three-dimensional world which Landreth calls 'psychological realism'.

Themes for discussion

1. Many films are technically superb, while others boast a strong story? Rarely does a film come along that manages to marry technique and story as well as **Ryan**. How do Landreth and his team manage to bridge the gap between animation and documentary while animating a static conversation? What techniques does Landreth use to capture the attention of the audience and maintain audience interest throughout the film?
2. In the filmmaking process the animator and filmmaker make many choices and decisions that determine what the final product will look like and how the audience responds to the film. How does each of the following choices that Landreth made affect the outcome of this film?
 - a. to keep himself in the film as a primary character
 - b. to use colour to represent feelings and emotions
 - c. to create a dire, desperate setting as he has
3. Landreth interviews people who are/were very close to Ryan. How do these interviews help us to understand Ryan and to experience his life?
4. What is Landreth's opinion of Ryan? How is this opinion apparent in the telling of this story?
5. How does Landreth and his team of animators establish the mood and setting of this film?

6. Often times it is interesting to look at the film from someone other than the filmmaker's eyes. Think about how this story would be told differently if told by:
 - a stranger who is not an animator
 - Felicity
 - a colleague of Ryan's
 - Ryan himself
7. Does the audience learn more about Chris or Ryan in this film? Take the time to defend your position.
8. This film introduces us to an artist who has struggled with his own mind and creativity. This is a great fear of many artists. What makes this film universally appealing despite the fact that it focuses solely on animators?
9. All people have scars and most people have stories to tell about how they got them. How does Chris choose to visually represent his own and Ryan's scars? What does this representation evoke in us as viewers?
10. Ryan Larkin is a bright light shrouded by his outward appearance. Does this film encourage the viewer to better understand others regardless of appearance and socio-economic status? How?
11. Why is it important that films like **Ryan** be made? How does this film challenge conventions of thought and of technique? How is this film different from traditional animations? How is it different from other documentaries?
12. *"Over the years, animators working for the National Film Board of Canada have used every technique imaginable to make their films. And many, no one could have imagined before they gave it a try: coloured pencil, paper cut-outs, clay figures, moving pins -- the list of experiments, most of them successful, goes on and on..."*, Leonard Maltin. Does the film **Ryan** confirm Maltin's statement? In what ways?