

***Finding Farley* - Study Guide**

About the Film:

In ***Finding Farley***, an invitation from Farley Mowat to his Nova Scotia farm sends Leanne Allison and Karsten Heuer on a journey overland from Calgary to Cape Breton, retracing the iconic writer's literary footsteps. With their two-year old son, Zev, and dog, Willow, they paddle, walk and sail the same paths that Mowat took more than 60 years earlier, encountering wild animals, adventure, doubts, victories and controversy along the way.

About the Filmmakers:

Leanne Allison's first film, ***Being Caribou***, a documentary following the migration of a herd of caribou, won a Gemini Award in 2006. Trained as a wildlife biologist, Karsten Heuer is an award-winning author of books for adults and children. Allison and Heuer's latest film, ***Finding Farley***, was inspired during their journeys with the caribou. For more information about the film, visit necessaryjourneys.ca/findingfarley.

About Farley Mowat:

Farley Mowat is one of Canada's most widely read authors. He has received numerous awards and honours, including being named Knight of Mark Twain (1980), Officer of the Order of Canada (1981) and Author of the Year by the Canadian Booksellers Association (1988). And in 1997 he was featured on the CBC television program *Life and Times*. His books have been translated into more than 20 languages and have sold millions of copies around the world. *Never Cry Wolf* (1963) has been credited with changing the stereotypically negative perception of wolves as vicious killers.

For more information about Mowat, watch ***Ten Million Books: An Introduction to Farley Mowat***, directed by Andy Thomson (1981, 25 min 15 s). The film is available for viewing at <nfb.ca/film/ten_million_books>.

Using *Finding Farley* in the Classroom:

Finding Farley is suitable for students ages 9 to 13, though it should be viewed in shorter chapters for those aged 9 to 13, as the film is 62 min long.

Since it serves to document the journey of a family across Canada and is not about one specific issue, this film presents many interesting learning opportunities for students in the following subject areas:

- Language, English and Canadian Literature

- Geography
- History
- Environmental Studies
- Aboriginal Studies

This film addresses the following topics:

- Storytelling – truth, objectivity, subjectivity, controversy, fiction and non-fiction
- Canadian History – Canadian explorers, literary figures, First Nations people
- Environment – industrialization, fisheries
- Family – family dynamics, relationships, experiences
- Geography – Canada’s landscape, wildlife, habitat, urban and rural communities
- Transportation – canoeing, boating, sailing, driving, flying, travelling by rail
- Communications – letter writing, filmmaking, oral storytelling

Discussion Questions (for ages 9 to 13):

1. Heuer, Allison, Zev and Willow set out on an epic journey across Canada. What motivated them to go on this trip, and what steps did they have to take to prepare for it?
2. Who is Farley Mowat? What did you know about him before watching this film? Did this film change or reinforce your opinion of him?
3. What challenges did Heuer, Allison, Zev and Willow encounter throughout their adventure? Describe the challenges you have stumbled upon on a journey that you have taken with your friends or family – it can be as short as your trip to school or as long as a trek across Canada. How were your challenges similar to or different from the ones encountered in the film?
4. Describe how the family connected with Mowat before and throughout their trip. How does letter writing differ from e-mail communication and text messaging? Is part of a story lost when we communicate through new technologies?
5. How would you choose to travel across Canada, and why? Why do you think the family chose to travel by canoe, car, sailboat and train?
6. Describe the beginning, middle and end of the story. At the beginning of the film, do you know what is going to happen? What did you learn throughout the film?

Suggested Classroom Activities (for ages 9 to 13):

1. As a class, identify the beginning, middle and end of ***Finding Farley***. Then ask each student to brainstorm ideas for their own story about a journey they have taken or would like to take. This story can be inspired by a favourite author, a childhood tale, an experience or their imagination. Ask questions: What will they bring? How will they get there? How will they prepare? What challenges do they

- anticipate? Who will they meet along the way? What will they learn? What do they think will surprise them? Then encourage them to write their story.
2. Create a list, as a class, of the animals that the family encountered on their journey. Encourage students to develop a research project, design a poster or any other visual presentation, or write a fact-based, fictional or subjective non-fictional story about an animal of their choice, including information about the impact of environmental issues on their natural habitat.
 3. Letter writing is a great form of storytelling and a way for people to communicate across long distances. In the film, Heuer and Mowat exchanged letters throughout the journey. In most of his letters, Heuer tried to connect his own experiences to the stories in Mowat's books. Ask students to reflect on how writing letters has changed with new and emerging technologies. Encourage them to write letters to their family members, famous authors, friends or classes overseas, telling stories about their own personal journeys.
 4. In ***Finding Farley***, the family related each location they visited to the settings in one or two of Mowat's books. Using the animated sequences in the film as a guide, encourage students to create a visual representation of the setting in a book of their choice (or one assigned to the class) to indicate where specific events have taken place. This can be in the form of a poster, a multimedia presentation, a brochure or a format of your choice. Ask students to share their findings with others.
 5. Ask students to identify the locations where the family stopped on their journey. Then encourage them to research the various First Nations communities that originally inhabited these areas. What are their traditions, values and history? How have their lives changed over time?

Advanced Discussion Questions (for ages 13 and up):

1. At the beginning of the film, we learn that Mowat is considered a controversial Canadian literary figure. Discuss why. Describe the term "subjective non-fiction" and what it implies. Discuss more recent examples of authors who have been criticized for creating works of subjective non-fiction.
2. What environmental issues did Heuer and Allison identify in the film, and what did you learn about these? Do you think this is a film about environmental issues? Why or why not?
3. Describe the importance of letter writing in the film. How is it used as a filmic device? How would ***Finding Farley*** be different if the letter writing/reading sequences were not included? Reflect on how writing letters has changed with the introduction of new technologies. How has it changed for you?
4. What do you think inspired Heuer and Allison to make this film? Reflect on how you would approach the filmmaking process:
 - a. What or who would you like to make a film about?
 - b. Would you include yourself in the film? If so, how and why?
 - c. Who would be the audience for your film?

- d. What emotions would you like to evoke in your audience?
 - e. What genre of film would you use to tell your story – documentary, docudrama, animation, fiction?
 - f. Describe the beginning, middle and end of your film.
 - g. Would there be a key message in your film? If so, what would it be?
5. In addition to embarking on a physical journey, Heuer and Allison engaged in an emotion-filled personal journey, fuelled by interactions with friends who questioned the legitimacy of Mowat's stories. Reflect and write about an experience that you have had wherein your goals were challenged by those around you. Describe what you learned from it and how it has shaped your character.

Learning Strategies:

Although this film has an environmental focus, it is not about one specific issue. Educators are encouraged to use the *Films for Change* guide to integrate this film as a teaching and learning resource in their classroom. *Films for Change* can assist you in designing inquiries, activities and media production opportunities that will challenge and inspire your students.

To download a PDF copy of *Films for Change* and to watch other films that might be of interest to you and your students, visit <nfb.ca/playlist/films-change/>.