

THE FAITH PROJECT

The Faith Project intimately observes the rituals of seven young Canadians from different faith traditions. Each of the project's subjects allowed the creative team access to their personal practice and expressions of faith. The user's experience is enriched by the website and app's capacity to expand on these practices within a Canadian context. And while shuttling between the project's short portraits, one observes striking commonalities between different traditions. These articulate, busy young Canadians weave faith into their daily lives not as an obligation but as something that is essential to their identity and place in the world. This immersive experience will captivate and enlighten people of all faiths, and perhaps provide a deeper understanding to those seeking their own personal form of spiritual expression.

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THE FAITH PROJECT IN THE CLASSROOM

ABOUT THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD (NFB)

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) creates groundbreaking [interactive works](#), social-issue documentaries and auteur animation. The NFB has produced over 13,000 productions and won over 5,000 awards, including 9 Canadian Screen Awards, 7 Webbys, 12 Oscars and more than 90 Genies. To access acclaimed NFB content, visit [NFB.ca](#) or download its [apps](#) for smartphones, tablets and connected TV.

ABOUT NFB CAMPUS

The National Film Board of Canada has been a trusted educational resource for over seven decades. Today, thousands of NFB titles in every form and genre—from documentary to animation, feature film to interactive—are instantly available online. Educators who subscribe to CAMPUS can explore more than 3,000 productions: documentaries, animations, feature films and interactive titles. CAMPUS guides, playlists, learning bundles and sharing features allow educators to better tailor their lesson plans to meet their students' needs.

Activate your CAMPUS subscription [here](#).

ABOUT THE CANADIAN RACE RELATIONS FOUNDATION (CRRF)

The Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF) is Canada's leading agency dedicated to the elimination of racism and the promotion of harmonious race relations in the country. Created 25 years ago as part of the historic Japanese Canadian Redress Agreement, the Foundation's governing legislation was proclaimed in 1996, and its doors opened in 1997. Its mission is to provide independent, outspoken national leadership, to inform national policies and public conversations, and to act as a resource and facilitator to advance Canadian identity in the pursuit of positive race relations, equity, fairness, social harmony and dignity for all Canadians.

[crr.ca/en](#)

ABOUT INTERFAITH & BELONGING: A CIVIC EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

Funded by the Department of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Canada, the Interfaith and Belonging initiative is intended to facilitate a national dialogue on interfaith cooperation and communication, promote civic education and engagement, and provide the necessary tools to strengthen belonging. It effectually constructs a national framework for dialogue between and among groups of different ethnocultural and faith-based communities and helps to strengthen their participatory role in Canadian society. Through active participation and engagement of communities, the project promotes Canadian democratic values, diversity, and traditions, and works with communities in understanding our rights and responsibilities and how best to encourage a deeper sense of belonging to Canada.

[ib-ia.ca](#)



ABOUT *THE FAITH PROJECT*

The Faith Project is an interactive tablet documentary featuring evocative short films about prayer in the modern world. In short documentary stories, young Canadians share the rituals that define their spiritual lives. We go inside the hearts of seven major faiths to inner, personal landscapes that are sacred yet surprisingly accessible. We listen in on the private thoughts and conflicting emotions that swirl in the minds of everyday practitioners.

We go past dogma and enter the uniquely Canadian spaces where prayer survives despite distraction, time and temptations. Each film is presented in an epic visual style, and is meant to be meaningful and authentic to the practitioners of that faith—as if they themselves made a film that captured their experience.

Despite living in a pluralistic society, we so rarely see—and feel—each other's sacred moments with such intimacy. Through these films, viewers will gain an intuitive understanding of what it means to be a young person of faith—Aboriginal, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh—in Canada today.

ABOUT THE STUDY GUIDE AND LEARNING BUNDLES

This Study Guide has been designed to support teachers in their use of *The Faith Project* in classrooms across Canada. The guide enables educators to incorporate the app into their lesson plans to address prescribed learning outcomes for students aged 14 and older.

An inquiry-based tool intended to facilitate group discussions, reflections on media literacy, and lesson planning, the guide includes a fact sheet for each of the seven faith traditions covered and a list of online references. These quick guides contain preliminary information on demographics, history, places of worship, sacred scriptures, and basic principles.

CAMPUS subscribers can also make use of *The Faith Project* Learning Bundles, which provide exclusive access to a video of a classroom discussion and explore themes such as spirituality, beliefs, knowledge, the secular world, practising faith in Canada and working together. The video discussion includes extra interview footage with all seven *Faith Project* participants and further investigates each faith and personal approaches to spiritual rituals in 21st-century Canada.

Activate your CAMPUS subscription [here](#) to begin exploring the Learning Bundles.

RECOMMENDED SUBJECT AREAS

The Faith Project can be integrated into the curriculum in the following subject areas at the secondary and post-secondary levels:

- Social Studies
- Humanities
- World Religions
- Comparative Civilizations
- Diversity and Pluralism
- World Issues
- Aboriginal Studies
- Religion, Values and Spirituality
- Diversity and Cohesion
- Global Politics and History
- Personal Development
- Ethics and Religion

USING *THE FAITH PROJECT* IN CLASS

1) *Collective Viewing*: Educators can engage students in collective viewing of the films featured in the app and then facilitate large-group discussion and learning experiences together. To use *The Faith Project* in the classroom for collective viewing, educators will require the following audiovisual equipment:

- Laptop or computer
- Speakers
- Digital projector
- Screen or blank surface for viewing
- Access to the Internet

2) *Individual Viewing*: Educators can design assignments in which students view the films individually and then engage in shared or individual learning experiences. For individual viewings of *The Faith Project*, students will require access to one of the following devices:

- Laptop or computer
- Tablet
- Access to the Internet

DEVELOPING MEDIA LITERACY SKILLS THROUGH *THE FAITH PROJECT*

OBJECTIVE:

Engage classrooms critically and meaningfully with media depicting personal experiences of faith and culture.

What Is Media Literacy?

Media literacy is the ability to consciously and critically analyze, evaluate and create messages in various media forms, including film, advertising, news, television, social media content and online resources. Media-literate individuals can understand the complexity of media communication and can use these messages to make informed judgments and decisions in daily life.

The Faith Project aims to provide educators with tools to explore varying representations of faith and faith communities in the media. Educators can use the films in this app within a wider repertoire of media perspectives in order to show diverse expressions of faith in the contemporary context. Using *The Faith Project* as a springboard, educators are encouraged to practise media literacy skills with students in order to explore the ways in which media can have both a positive and negative impact.

Critical Media Literacy Questions to Consider Before Viewing The Faith Project:

1. What is the NFB? What is different or unique about the Canadian context? Explain.
2. In the *Faith Project* films, who is the subject? What story do they share in the film? Why do you think this individual agreed to share their story?
3. How has this story been shared? Describe the medium and the unique perspectives captured by the filmmaker.
4. Why do you think the filmmaker has selected these perspectives?
5. What are the opportunities and limitations of sharing a story through the medium of interactive documentary?
6. What are some of the images that stand out to you from this interactive documentary? Why do you think the filmmaker included these images?
7. What do you think has been left out of the interactive documentary? Explain.
8. Why do you think the NFB produced this interactive documentary? What purpose does it serve?
9. What questions do you have for the subject of the interactive documentary? For the filmmaker? For the NFB?
10. How is religion portrayed in the media? How are particular faith communities portrayed in the media?
11. What are some of the motivations that drive the media in their portrayal of faith and/or faith communities?



SPARKING DISCUSSION IN CLASS

OBJECTIVES:

- Broaden classroom conversations around faith, ritual and sacred space through exposure to personal narratives from various world religions.
- Provide educators and students with tools to explore diverse expressions of faith as individual, communal, and experiential.

Educators can frame class discussion using an overarching inquiry question such as, *How do we understand personal expressions of faith within communities?* The inquiry question can integrate other curriculum concepts of the school year. Educators can then use pre-, during, and post-viewing activities to enhance student engagement with the interactive documentary.

Pre-viewing

Before watching *The Faith Project*, students can be prompted to think about what they already know or assume about the faith community and/or ritual featured in the interactive documentary. How have these assumptions been formed? What questions do students have? Here, educators can make explicit links with the previous topic of study and with the skills associated with media literacy.

During Viewing

Educators can provide students with a space to write their initial perceptions and impressions of the interactive documentary (including but not limited to thoughts, feelings, memories, images, sounds, and questions). The placemat below is an example of such a space:

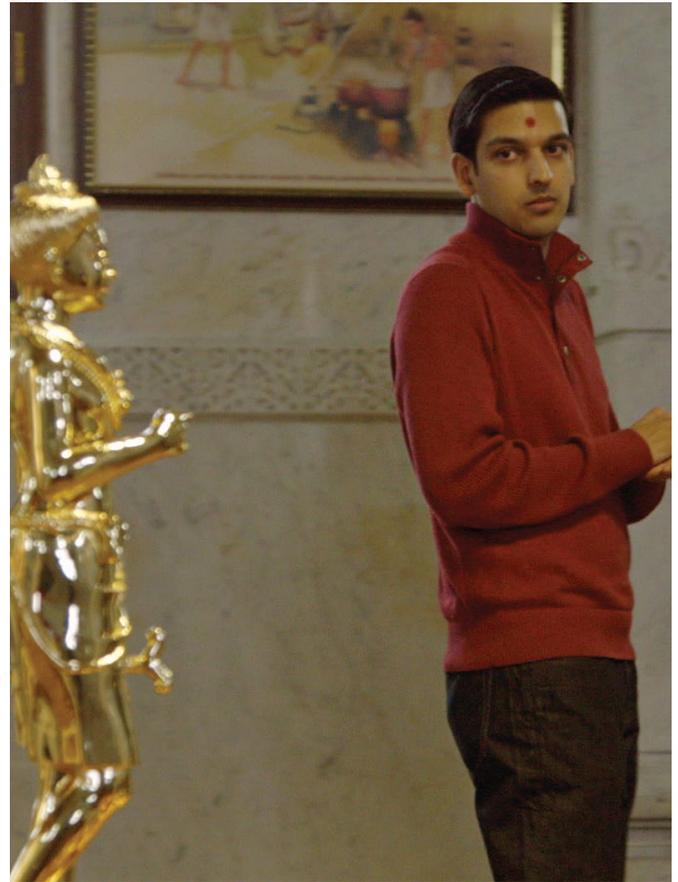
I SEE...	I FEEL...
I REMEMBER...	I THINK...

I WONDER...

Post-viewing

Remind students of the class inquiry question (e.g.: *How do we understand personal expressions of faith within communities?*) and begin classroom discussion with sharing of the initial impressions noted on the placemat. Educators can gradually increase the complexity of questioning by following this sequence below:

1. What stands out for you in the interactive documentary? What images stayed with you? What surprised you?
2. What is a ritual? Are rituals always faith-based? What are some examples of rituals from our own daily lives?
3. Describe the rituals featured in the interactive documentary—what do they consist of? Are they individual or communal? Where did the rituals take place?
4. Can you identify any religious or cultural symbols in this film? Describe these.
5. Why are rituals important for individuals and for communities?
6. What did you learn about the individual engaging in the ritual?
7. What did you learn about this faith community that you didn't already know?
8. Does this interactive documentary shift your perspective on faith in any way? Explain.
9. Is it important for us to understand the rituals of different faith communities? Explain.
10. What questions do you have about the content of this interactive documentary? Where can we look for possible responses and more information?



ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH *THE FAITH PROJECT*

Educators are encouraged to peruse the materials below and modify them as necessary. Activities are built around the following “lenses” for understanding faith: guided inquiry, critical-creative reflection, pluralism, media literacy, transformative and collaborative learning, and self-expression.

All the activities require the specified equipment for viewing (collective or individual). Additional materials are also listed.

ACTIVITY 1: IDENTIFYING OUR COMMON VALUES

OBJECTIVE:

To create a space of respect, compassion and curiosity for engagement with personal and often sensitive or controversial issues related to faith and faith communities.

Possible Inquiry Question: *What values can we share when we learn about diverse faith communities?*

Sequencing: Before viewing the interactive documentary

Additional Materials:

- Flipchart and markers

Activity Description:

1. Facilitate a classroom discussion in which one or two students record ideas on a flipchart so that all students can view the points being made and contribute.
2. Begin by asking the class to define the term “value”: use definitions from a variety of sources and come up with a shared definition.
3. Together, discuss the values that will frame classroom engagement with *The Faith Project*.
 - a. What is important to us as a class when we learn about faith communities that we may or may not belong to? For example: honesty, critical thought, compassion, curiosity, and open-mindedness.
 - b. What do we want our classroom discussion and learning experiences to look like? Feel like? For example: comfort, full participation, and listening to multiple perspectives.
4. As each student shares, ensure that ideas are captured on the flipchart. Encourage students to think and speak in terms of shared values—what is important to all of us?
5. Highlight for students that in creating this list, we are agreeing to live by these values to the best of our ability, and we will hold each other accountable to this.
6. Post the flipchart of Common Values in the classroom or on a class blog, where it can be referenced easily.



ACTIVITY 2: EXPLORING RITUAL

OBJECTIVE:

To broaden our understanding of ritual as a process of connection with spirit, a process of self-expression, and of constructing meaning.

Possible Inquiry Question: *How do I understand rituals in the world around me?*

Sequencing: Interactive documentary viewing included in the activity

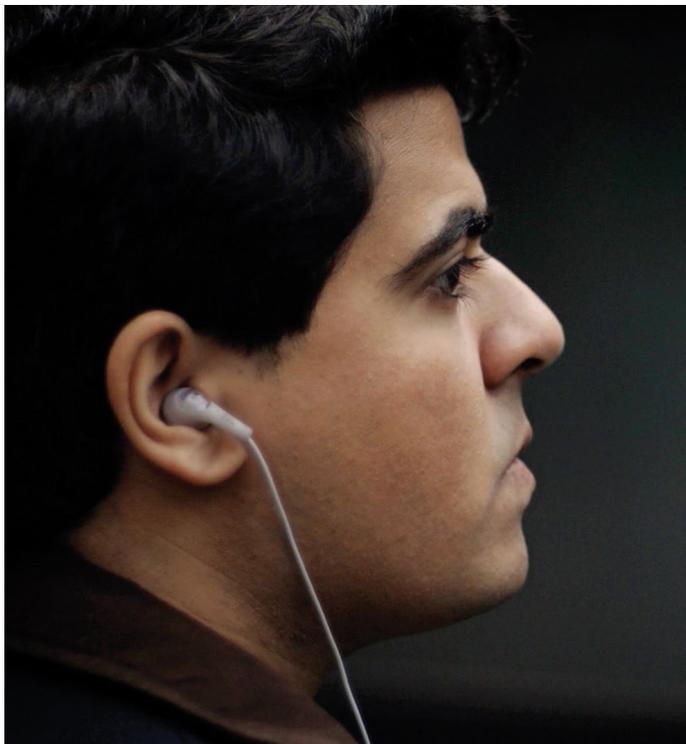
Additional Materials:

- Whiteboard and whiteboard markers
- Notepaper and pencils/pens

Activity Description:

1. Educators can build upon the discussion questions related to ritual (see the section on “Sparkling Discussion in Class”) and pose the question, *What is a ritual?* Students can think individually, discuss thoughts with their neighbour, and then share responses with the class.
2. Pre-viewing: Together, explore the concept of a ritual and the role a ritual plays in different communities. Students can share examples from their own experiences, depending on their comfort level.
3. Facilitate two viewings of one of the **Faith Project** interactive documentary films. To prepare for the viewings, students can create a T-chart or table. They can label the columns as seen here:

MY DESCRIPTION	WORDS/PHRASES FROM THE FILM



During viewing: First, play a clip of the interactive documentary without audio and have the students describe what they see in the first column. Next, play the clip with audio and have students write down phrases and words spoken by subjects in the film in the second column.

4. Post-viewing: Students can look at the two descriptions and compare them:
 - a. What are their similarities? What are their differences? Circle words that occur in both columns.
 - b. Why might the two descriptions be similar/different?
 - c. How does the subject of the clip make this ritual personal?
 - d. For the subject of the clip, what is important about this ritual?
 - e. Is this ritual a form of self-expression? Explain.
 - f. What does this ritual mean to the person who is performing it?
 - g. What do you learn about the subject and their faith community through this ritual?
 - h. Do you see any connection with any other faith communities?
 - i. Do you see any connection with yourself and what you value in life?

ACTIVITY 3: EXPLORING SYMBOLS IN FAITH AND CULTURE

OBJECTIVE:

To explore the use of symbols in faith and culture and to identify personal symbols that carry meaning.

Possible Inquiry Question: *What is a symbol and why are symbols powerful? What are some examples of symbols in my life?*

Sequencing: Before or after watching the interactive documentary

Additional Materials:

- Symbolic images (photographs, images in PowerPoint, etc.)
- Definitions of the word “symbol”
- Flipchart and markers
- Art supplies

Activity Description:

1. Show students 5–10 images of commonly understood symbols that are part of the cultural context. Examples can represent significant people, concepts or events. Encourage students to share associations for each image. For example, a lion can symbolize courage or bravery, a flag can symbolize patriotism, and a heart can symbolize love or care.
2. Discuss the concept of a symbol:
 - a. What is a symbol?
 - b. Why are symbols powerful?
 - c. Why are symbols important in faith communities?
 - d. Identify 2–3 symbols that stand out to you from the **Faith Project** interactive documentary. (This can be a “during viewing” question, if you plan to watch the interactive documentary as part of this activity.)
 - e. What do these symbols represent?
 - f. Are symbols personal or communal? Explain.
 - g. Can symbols be shared among people of different faith backgrounds? Explain.
3. Discuss some examples from faith communities and highlight the personal and communal nature of symbols.
 - a. Light and water are two symbols that can be researched and analyzed in class.
4. In groups of four, students can brainstorm ideas that are personal and communal for them in order to practise creating a symbol. You can ask:
 - a. What are some significant people, concepts or events for your group? What is important to everyone in the group?

5. As a group, students pick one of their ideas and create a symbol to represent this idea. Students can create a visual to share with the class and write a rationale for the association between the idea and the symbol.
6. Students can begin presentations by asking their peers to predict what the image symbolizes. Once the group shares their rationale, the class can discuss the group’s idea and explore the viability of alternative ideas.
7. To summarize, the class can highlight the power of symbols in eliciting multiple interpretations and connect this back to symbolism in faith communities. Faith is individual and communal, as we see from the narratives shared in the film: symbols are powerful because they can unify people, and they can allow for personal construction of meaning.

ACTIVITY 4: EXPLORING SACRED SPACES

OBJECTIVE:

To explore our relationship with sacred space and to investigate how spaces shape who we are as human beings.

Possible Inquiry Question: *What are sacred spaces and how do spaces impact us?*

Sequencing: Interactive documentary viewing included in activity

Additional Materials:

- Whiteboard and whiteboard markers
- Large paper, art supplies and pencils for blueprint activity
- Notepaper and pens for reflection

Activity Description:

1. List some common or familiar spaces on small slips of paper (e.g., classroom, movie theatre, soccer field, beach). Students can volunteer to silently role-play how they would act in that space, and the class can guess the name of the space.
2. Together, discuss spaces and our actions within a space: How did you know where that person was? What actions helped you guess?

3. Discuss the concept of a space:
 - a. What is a space?
 - b. What gives a space meaning?
 - c. How do we use spaces?
 - d. What is a sacred space?
 - e. How do we define the word sacred? What makes a space sacred?
 Note: If students have access to Internet/research tools, they can find many perspectives on “sacred space” to compare and contrast. For example, students can look at the difference between a library in a university and a prayer room in an airport. How are these spaces sacred? Educators can lengthen this component of the activity to include the creation of a shared definition of sacred space.
4. View one of the *Faith Project* films through the lens of sacred space. A suggested prompt would be: Describe the sacred space shown in this film.
5. Post-viewing: Students can work in pairs or groups to discuss their ideas about this example of sacred space:
 - a. What important objects are included in the space?
 - b. What is the lighting like?
 - c. Is this space private or public?
 - d. How is the space used? What actions and interactions are taking place here?
 - e. What makes this space sacred for the individual(s) in the film?
 - f. Why do you think the individual(s) chose this space for their ritual practice?
 - g. On the whiteboard, write the statement “Sacred spaces are religious spaces.” Engage students with this statement through debate-style discussion. Is this statement always true?
6. Individually, students can explore the personal impact of spaces. Students can create a visual blueprint of a physical space (such as their home, school, dance studio, gym) that is special to them.
 - a. Students can label the areas/parts of the space according to the function they fulfill and the values they represent. For example:
 Dance Studio
 - i. The reception area of a dance studio is where people enter the studio, are greeted by a welcoming individual, inquire about the facility/schedule and sign up for class. This space can represent the values of organization, hospitality, and information.
 - ii. The studio area functions as a space for dancers to practise their art, perfect their movements, learn from others and express their passion for dance. This space can represent the values of creativity, physical health, music, technique, and practice.
 - iii. The changing room functions as a storage area for personal belongings, a meeting space for dancers, and a way to prepare oneself for dance class. This space can represent the values of preparedness, focus, physical possessions, and building relationships.
7. As a class, explore the space depicted in the interactive documentary:
 - a. Why is this space important to this individual? What values does it represent for this individual? Educators can connect this inquiry to the classroom guidelines, a classroom charter, and/or the shared values of the class. For example, “Our classroom represents the value of learning for me—this is where I come to understand things that happen in the world around me.”
 - b. How does the individual impact the sacred space? What does the individual bring into the space?
 - c. How does the sacred space in the film impact the individual?
8. Students can conclude by creating a written reflection:
 - a. What is the meaning of sacred space in your own life?
 - b. Do you have a space that you consider sacred in your life? Explain the impact this space has on you.



ACTIVITY 5: EXPLORING MY IDENTITY THROUGH FILM

OBJECTIVE:

To provide students with an opportunity to synthesize their learning based on **The Faith Project** and to share dimensions of their own identity through the medium of film.

Possible Inquiry Question: *If you could share a dimension of your identity through the medium of film, what would you record? How and why would you record it?*

Sequencing: After deeply engaging with the interactive documentary through activities/discussions

Additional Materials:

- Large-sized paper
- Markers, pens and art supplies
- Recording equipment if available (camera, smartphone, etc.)

Activity Description:

Students can begin by revisiting one of the **Faith Project** films and identifying the dimensions of the interactive documentary through the lens of media literacy (source, subject of clips, choice of space, story being shared and choice of details, motivation to share the story, method of filming, etc.). See the section in this guide on “Developing Media Literacy Skills Through **The Faith Project**.”

1. Students can then begin to create their own film idea based on the inquiry question:
 - a. What experience would you want to share with others?
 - b. Why would you want to share this experience?
 - c. What would you want your audience to know about you through this film?
 - d. Is your story filmed in a space that is sacred to you? Explain.
 - e. How would you make your audience feel like they are present in the experience? What techniques would you use to film this experience?
 - f. What questions would you want your audience to ask you?
 - g. What would you title your film? Explain.
2. Once students have brainstormed, they can create a storyboard (template included in the study guide) on large paper that shows a simple sequence of at least three “frames” for their film idea. Each frame can have a caption that would be read out as a voiceover during the film. These voiceovers can be based on the responses from Step 1.
3. Students can then share their storyboards with the class. If equipment is available, students can work in groups of two or three to film their personal experiences for collective viewing. Classmates can then use media literacy questions to critically engage with and understand the work of their peers.

RELATED FILMS AND INTERACTIVE PROJECTS FROM THE NFB

Circle of the Sun, 1960, 29:40

The Hutterites, 1964, 27:56

These Are My People..., 1969, 13:18

The People of the Book, 1973, 28:05

Afterlife, 1978, 7:12

The Followers, 1981, 78:58

Behind the Veil: Nuns, 1984, 130:04

Discussion in Bioethics: The Courage of One's Convictions, 1985, 14:59

A Song for Tibet, 1991, 56:41

Scared Sacred, 2004, 104:53

Me and the Mosque, 2005, 52:45

Mystical Brain, 2006, 52:15

The Trap, 2007, 19:25

For the Cause, 2011, 52:56

Exile, 2012, 97:16

Holy Mountain, 2010 – NFB Interactive Web Documentary, holymountain.nfb.ca/#/holymountain

Similkameen Crossroads, 2013 - NFB Interactive Photo Essay, crossroads.nfb.ca/#/crossroads

CREDITS

The Faith Project Study Guide and the Quick Guide Faith Fact Sheets were written by Noorin Fazal. Noorin—a teacher, mentor and researcher—is passionate about interfaith and intercultural education. Noorin is actively involved in the development of cross-cultural curriculum. Her scholarly work focuses on virtue ethics pedagogy (“What does it mean to be human?”) and the teaching and learning processes of media literacy. For the 2013-2014 academic year, Noorin launched a secondary religious education program in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, the first of its kind in East Africa. Currently, Noorin is based in Toronto.

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STORYBOARD

ACTIONS

