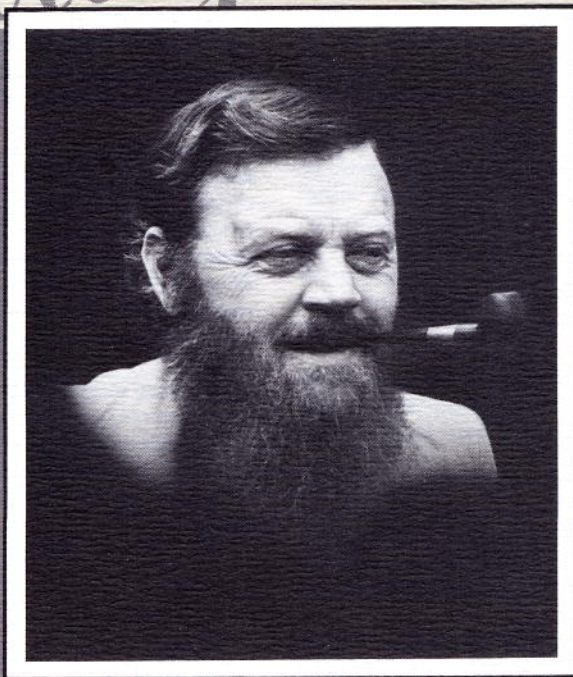


A Study Guide for the Film
TEN MILLION BOOKS:
An Introduction to

Farley Mowat



National
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Film synopsis

Farley Mowat

Farley Mowat is a man of strong opinions. *Ten Million Books: An Introduction to Farley Mowat* traces the causes that have engaged him as a writer and crusader. Mowat describes the personal circumstances and experiences that have influenced him — the death of his beloved dog, the war, his work with the Inuit, his involvement with a Newfoundland community. Family photographs and dramatized excerpts from his writing augment the interviews and narration.

This film, for Junior and Intermediate High School grades, is an adaptation of the original one-hour film, *In Search of Farley Mowat*.

Farley Mowat was born in Belleville, Ontario, in 1921. His father was a librarian with a restless nature, and as a result Farley's family was frequently uprooted. Each move included the collection of wild animals that Farley amassed as he grew older and, of course, Mutt, his dog.

The Second World War interrupted Mowat's studies as a botanist and naturalist. He enlisted in his father's old regiment, the Hastings and Prince Edwards. The war appalled him. To escape from the horror, Farley began to write what would eventually become *The Dog Who Wouldn't Be*.

After the war, Mowat went to the Arctic as a naturalist with the Dominion Wildlife Service to study the Keewatin Barrens. His first published book, *People of the Deer*, a passionate account of this journey, and other books, *The Desperate People* and *Never Cry Wolf*, express his indignation at the plight of a people whose way of life was extinguished by contact with white civilization.

Mowat lived for seven years in the outposts of Newfoundland and wrote vividly about the sea. His study of seafaring Newfoundlanders produced *The Grey Seas Under* and *The Serpent's Coil*. He describes his experiences sailing his own ship in *The Boat Who Wouldn't Float*. *A Whale For The Killing* is Mowat's account of his vain efforts to save a whale trapped in a Newfoundland cove and tormented to death by the local people.

His most recent publication, *And No Birds Sang*, describes his experiences as a Second World War Canadian infantryman fighting in the bloody campaigns of Sicily and Italy. In total he has written twenty-five books which have sold, as the film's title suggests, some ten million copies.

Suggested activities

Before Viewing the Film

- If students have read one or more books by Farley Mowat, have them make notes on what they think he is like, based upon their impressions of him from their reading.
- Have the class discuss the kinds of circumstances or experiences that might make a person want to become a writer. How might a writer feel who did not publish a book for a number of years? What would it be like to be well known?
- If the film is to be shown to students *before* they read Mowat's books, ask them to discuss in small groups such questions as:
 - What would it be like to spend a winter in the Barren Lands?
 - What kind of person would leave the city to live in a Newfoundland outpost?
 - What would you do if a whale was stranded close to where you live, and a number of local people tried to torment it?

After Viewing the Film

- To review the content of the film, have students draw up an outline of the film's development.
- Have students identify the most memorable impression, feeling, quotation, or image in the film and explain their choice.
- Encourage students to write freely in their journals describing a time when they felt singled out. Remind them of the story Farley Mowat tells about being small and needing to impress people with his prowess as a writer.
- Listen again to the theme music of the film. Have students discuss its appropriateness.
- Ask students to remember the opening and closing images and words in the film. Discuss why these images and words might have been chosen.
- Discuss with the class what Farley Mowat means when he describes his writing as "cause-motivated" and "subjective non-fiction." How does Mowat's writing differ from conventional fiction and non-fiction? Have students in groups of three or four list and report to the class the issues they feel are important today. Have them outline some issue-based stories and select one to write up, using the writing of Farley Mowat as a model.
- Have students write about their impressions of Farley Mowat, comparing those based on reading his books with those gained from viewing the film.
- As a class project research the life and career of Farley Mowat, assigning individuals to read his books or to do research. Have students write about and illustrate the various stages of his life as chapters in a biography to be bound and placed in the school library.
- Mowat declares that mankind is "a deeply flawed species." Make this statement the subject of a formal debate in class. Have students on each side find evidence from both Mowat's writing and their own experience to support their position.

Suggestions for further study

- Have students write in the manner of Farley Mowat:
 - A humorous incident about a pet
 - A sincere expression of support for a cause
 - Some dialogue in the dialect of Newfoundlanders or of the Ithalmiut
 - A further adventure of Farley Mowat's boat
- Make comparisons between various works of Farley Mowat. Read aloud from *The Desperate People* or *Owls in the Family* to students studying *Lost in the Barrens* or *The Dog Who Wouldn't Be*.
- Often Mowat uses a central metaphor as a theme in his work such as "the worm that never dies" in *And No Birds Sang*. Have students in small groups research this or other metaphors and prepare written reports to deliver to the class.
- After students have studied one of Farley Mowat's books in detail, allow them class and assignment time to read independently another book of their choice. Instead of assigning questions for students to answer, have students keep a daily journal of their reading. In it they should note their feelings, reactions, anticipations, pleasures, and disappointments. Have students submit their journals instead of a book report.
- Advanced students could be asked to compare Farley Mowat's admiration for primitive people living a simple life with that expressed in the works of other authors such as Thomas Hardy, William Wordsworth, Chateaubriand.

Quotations for discussion

From the film

"I was an outcast. Partly because I was very small.... I always looked much younger than I was, and therefore was exiled from the usual peer group activity."

Farley Mowat

"People never stay anywhere long enough to know who they are in terms of where they are."

Farley Mowat

"Farley always exaggerated. You know that."

Helen Mowat

"Primitive man is to me good man."

Farley Mowat

"I wasn't enraged at the Newfoundlanders.... I was enraged at these people who were of my culture."

Farley Mowat

"The less you write the more dubious you become. When you're writing, you usually feel that... you're O.K."

Farley Mowat

Related films

The Baymen

27:46 col. 106C 0165 100 NFB

This film about the changing culture and values of Newfoundland follows a village family as they try to adapt to the city life.

Relates to: *The Boat Who Wouldn't Float*
A Whale for the Killing

Death of a Legend

49:30 col. 106C 0171 553 NFB

The film studies many false beliefs held about wolves and supports Farley Mowat's findings in *Never Cry Wolf*.

Relates to: *Never Cry Wolf*

The Edge of the Barrens

13:40 col. 106C 0164 006 NFB

A documentary film about the sub-arctic region showing terrain, wildlife and vegetation.

Relates to: *People of the Deer*
The Desperate People
Lost in the Barrens

The Eskimo: Fight for Life

51:06 col. 106C 0170 096 NFB

The film shows the Inuit way of life using footage obtained among the Netsilik Inuit of the Pelly Bay region.

Relates to: *People of the Deer*
The Desperate People
Lost in the Barrens
The Curse of the Viking Grave

Fishermen

21:43 b&w 106B 0159 036 NFB

The film captures the dilemma of the East Coast fishermen who have to decide whether to stick to their own small operation or seek a job working for a commercial fishery.

Relates to: *The Boat Who Wouldn't Float*
A Whale for the Killing

Greenpeace: Voyage to Save the Whales

51:03 col. 106C 0178 040 NFB

This film looks at the whaling industry and its history, and documents the efforts of the Greenpeace Foundation to halt the killing of whales in the Pacific.

Relates to: *A Whale for the Killing*

In Search of Farley Mowat

57:38 col. 106C 0181 008 NFB

This is the original, longer film from which *Ten Million Books* is excerpted. It emphasizes the enigmatic personality of Farley Mowat and attempts to discover which of the many images he projects is the real one.

Road to Ortona

27:46 b&w 106B 0162 037 NFB

This episode from the *Canada at War* series provides a detailed account of the campaign of the Canadian 1st Division and of the bloody battle for the village of Ortona.

Relates to: *And No Birds Sang*

The Sami, Four Lands, One People

23:35 col. 106C 0178 506 NFB

A documentary showing how the 35,000 Sami of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the U.S.S.R., who used to depend on a reindeer-herding economy, are trying to adjust to the northern development which is affecting their way of life.

Relates to: *People of the Deer*
The Desperate People
Lost in the Barrens
The Curse of the Viking Grave

Sea Got in Your Blood

27:56 b&w 106B 0165 118 NFB

A film about the sea, the people who depend upon the sea, and the boats they sail on it.

Relates to: *The Grey Seas Under*
The Serpent's Coil
The Boat Who Wouldn't Float

Related films cont'd

The Whales are Waiting

27:42 col. 106C 0176 016 NFB

The film studies the two sides of the whaling debate, presenting vivid documentary footage of whales both in their wild state and as they are hunted.

Relates to: *A Whale for the Killing*

The White Ship

14:54 col. 106C 0166 039 NFB

This film follows the fortunes of a Portuguese schooner in Newfoundland waters.

Relates to: *The Boat Who Wouldn't Float*
The Grey Seas Under

Wolf Pack

19:58 col. 106C 0174 501 NFB

This film tells the story of a winter-to-winter cycle in the life of a family of Arctic wolves.

Relates to: *Never Cry Wolf*

Bibliography

Books by Farley Mowat

And No Birds Sang

The Black Joke

The Boat Who Wouldn't Float

The Curse of the Viking Grave

The Desperate People

The Dog Who Wouldn't Be

The Grey Seas Under

Lost in the Barrens

Never Cry Wolf

Owls in the Family

People of the Deer

The Serpent's Coil

The Snow Walker (Short Stories)

A Whale for the Killing

For Reference

Davidson, P. (ed.) *The World of Farley Mowat*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980.

Lucas, A. *Farley Mowat* (Canadian Writers Series). Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980.

Myers, J. "Farley Mowat — Last of the Saga Men" in *Canadian Author and Bookman*, Summer 1977.

Other Canadian literature films distributed by the NFB

<i>A.M. Klein: The Poet as Landscape</i>	106C 0178 494	58:00
<i>A Bird in the House</i>	106C 0173 180	49:36
<i>Capital</i>	106C 0181 073	28:40
<i>Darts in the Dark: An Introduction to W.O. Mitchell</i>	106C 0180 173	15:35
<i>Earle Birney: Portrait of a Poet</i>	106C 0181 032	53:09
<i>In Search of Farley Mowat</i>	106C 0181 008	57:38
<i>Jack Hodgins' Island</i>	106C 0181 060	57:00
<i>Lucy Maud Montgomery — The Road to Green Gables</i>	106C 0175 263	86:50
<i>Margaret Laurence: First Lady of Manawaka</i>	106C 0178 390	52:52
<i>Our Kinda Talk: An Introduction to Margaret Laurence</i>	106C 0178 927	23:30
<i>The Poets on Film Series:</i>		
<i>Poets on Film No. 1</i>	106C 0177 144	8:17
<i>Poets on Film No. 2</i>	106C 0177 145	7:55
<i>Poets on Film No. 3</i>	106C 0177 146	6:37
<i>The Street</i>	106C 0176 059	10:12
<i>The Sweater</i>	106C 0180 079	10:21
<i>Volcano — An Inquiry into the Life & Death of Malcolm Lowry</i>	106C 0176 054	99:20
<i>W.O. Mitchell: Novelist in Hiding</i>	106C 0180 022	57:33
<i>Wood Mountain Poems</i>	106C 0178 452	28:06

***Ten Million Books : An Introduction to
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16 mm Color

106C 0181 014

Screening Time: 25 minutes 15 seconds

Produced and distributed by
National Film Board of Canada

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Film Board
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Office
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P.O. Box 6100, Montreal, Quebec H3C 3H5

Printed in Canada