

The Epic Promise:

What Commitment in Film Can Teach Us

Suggested Grades: 5-12. / **Subject:** Any. / **Time:** 1 or more weeks.

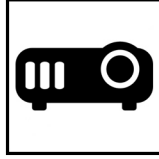
Suggested Materials



DVD/Stream



iPad/Laptop



Projector/Screen



Pencils



Worksheets

Lesson Overview: What can films teach us about the importance of keeping our word? Actively engaging and viewing movies can entertain students and be a valuable tool for character education. By examining characters in a film, it will teach the students about personal values and daily choices that can enrich and better their lives. Students will analyze films utilizing the 7 Elements of the *because I said I would* Philosophy to learn about the importance of a promise.



Goals and Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Identify and explain 7 Elements of the *because I said I would* Philosophy.
2. Understand the *because I said I would* Philosophy and the idea of a promise.
3. Discuss the intersection of 7 Elements of Philosophy and course content.
4. Reflect on the meaning of promises in their own lives.



Anticipatory Set

Ask students what are some of their favorite movies and why those are their favorites. Read the following Alex Sheen quote "You can pretend to care, but you can't pretend to show up." Ask students to define what a promise is. Ask what movies, the quote and promises have in common. Explain that this project involves actively engaging and critically viewing the film you chose in order to learn about making and keeping promises, and the impact it can have in society.



The Task

1. Select a movie prior to the start of the project.
2. Distribute the 7 Elements of the *because I said I would* Philosophy.
3. Discuss 7 Elements of Philosophy with students.
4. Groups define one element and present to class.
5. Introduce film of choice* (See page 7).
6. Ask anticipatory questions and discussion stopping points.
7. Students will work on worksheet while watching the film.
8. Watch the film.
9. Create a project: Poster Project or Visual Essay (See page 5).

Optional homework for each Activity: Ask students to choose one of the 7 Elements of the *because I said I would* Philosophy that is the most important to them and write a journal entry on why they chose that particular element and what it means to their personal life.

Activity 1)



1. Anticipatory Set Journal

Consider the following quote: “People with good intentions make promises. People with good character keep them.” Students will write down their thoughts. Include personal definitions of promise, good intentions and character.



2. Pair and Share

Work in groups and have partners discuss what the quote means to them, and their definitions of a promise. Then, share with the large group.



3. Video Clip

Introduce *because I said I would* and Alex Sheen’s vision. Show this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aA_or2qG-g

Ask students to share reactions to Alex’s story. Then, have them brainstorm what values Alex must possess to create a social movement and nonprofit to better humanity.

Following the brainstorm, divide students into 3-6 groups and give them a card with one of the *because I said I would* Elements on it. In groups, ask students to define the Element in their own words, to explain why this Element might be important to someone like Alex, and to share how this Element might contribute to a better world.

1. Compassion
2. Self-Control
3. Sacrifice
4. Honesty
5. Hope
6. Contemplation
7. Accountability



4. Group Presentations

Each group should share their Element, their definition and their thoughts about its relevance to Alex and the world. Optional: Provide a table for students to fill in as the groups present.

Activity 2)



1. Anticipatory Set

Ask students to share common promises they hear. Then, ask them how often they think promises are kept. (They will most likely say they are not kept very often.) Explore for a few minutes why that might be.



2. Introduce Film

Introduce the film to students indicating that movies are not created just for entertainment, but can also be used to teach a great deal about promises and people of good character. Offer a brief overview of the film and pass out Film Analysis Packet (See page 6).



Ask students to complete the packet as they watch the film. Pause the film throughout to allow for discussion, reflection and overall processing and understanding (See page 8).

3. Video Clip

Show first portion of the film (approximately 15-20 minutes) while stopping periodically to utilize the formative assessment technique.



Activity 3)



1. Anticipatory Set

Ask students to choose a character in the film and share their first impressions on the character's overall traits and values. Using the 7 Elements of the *because I said I would* Philosophy, which of the 7 Elements do the characters either embody or need in the lives? Share ideas out loud.



2. Watch Film

Show the second portion of the film while stopping periodically to utilize the formative assessment technique.



Activity 4)



1. Anticipatory Set

Revisit Journal Entry from Day 1. (“People with good intentions make promises. People with good character keep them.”) After watching the film, explain what you would add, subtract, or revise in your journal entry. Why?



2. Character Comparison

Choose two characters in the film that taught you something about promises. Compare and contrast them with a person you consider a role model using a Venn Diagram. What are their similarities and differences? Consider attitudes, values, decisions, and goals in the assignment.



3. Introduce Project Assessment

Share individual or group assignments. Ask students to begin planning for their poster project or visual essay. (More details are on the next page.) Provide them an assignment overview and rubric adjusted to fit the needs of their course. Consider allowing for presentation time when projects are complete. (Varies based on classroom size.)



Assessment



1. Questions

Why is it important to keep our word to ourselves and others?
What does keeping a promise say about our character?
How can a promise be a powerful force for good in our world?

2. Evaluation

Poster Project (Low Tech): Have students choose a favorite clip from their movie and design a poster illustrating an important moment or decision, the insights they gained from it, and its relationship to the 7 Elements of the *because I said I would* Philosophy.

Visual Essay (Higher Tech): Create a visual essay using Movie Maker or the like, individually or in small groups to illustrate how the film you viewed speaks to the values of *because I said I would*. A visual essay is a visual argument or sharing of insights organized around a thesis; it has a recognizable structure (beginning, middle, end) and relies on supporting details and examples from the film. Unlike a traditional essay, a visual essay does not rely on words alone. Although a visual essay may include words or sounds (narration, poem, story, soundtrack, etc.), it primarily relies on visual images (photographs, drawings, animation, etc.) for its overall effect.



3. Impact

Students will have been given the opportunity to:

Think about the 7 Elements of the *because I said I would* Philosophy. Discuss the idea of making and keeping promises and how the choice to follow through on a promise is a direct reflection of a person's character.

Connect choices in movies to choices in life. Critically evaluate how we continue to strengthen and connect to our school, community and world.

Window Notes: Film Analysis

Name: _____

Date: _____

Describe It: What are the key points related to promises in the movie? (Bullet points are fine)

React to It: How do the situations and choices presented in the movie make you feel? Explain.

Analyze It: What are the problems and concerns presented in the movie? What values do you identify with in the characters?

Solve It: How do you think the problems presented in the movie should be, or have been, addressed?

Resources

Gifted Hands (PG)	Cuba Gooding Jr. stars as real-life neurosurgeon Ben Carson in this biographical drama. The film reveals Carson's inspiring life story as a poor, inner-city youth who overcame great odds to become one of the world's best surgeons, thanks to the love of his determined single mother.
Simon Birch (PG)	Simon Birch was the smallest delivery ever recorded in the history of Gravestown Memorial Hospital. The doctors proclaimed Simon a miracle, and ever since he's been quick to remind anyone who forgets. Simon's certain he's going to be a hero ... he's just not sure how.
Akeelah and the Bee (PG)	Akeelah Anderson is an 11-year-old girl in south Los Angeles, with a love for words. Spelling words is a way for her to connect to her father who was killed when she was six. Akeelah is a bright student, but does not apply herself ... until she learns the power of words in the school's spelling bee.
Antz (PG)	In an anthill with millions of inhabitants, Z 4195 is a worker ant. Feeling insignificant in a conformity system, he accidentally meets beautiful Princess Bala. Princess Bala has a similar problem on the other end of the social scale.
Temple Grandin (PG)	Biopic of Temple Grandin, an autistic woman who overcame the limitations imposed on her by her condition to become a Ph.D. and expert in the field of animal husbandry. She did not speak until age four and had difficulty right through high school, mostly in dealing with people. She is noted for creating her 'hug box', widely recognized today as a way of relieving stress in autistic children, and her humane design for the treatment of cattle in processing plants.
Hotel Rwanda (PG-13)	Tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi peoples in the country of Rwanda led to a civil war. Paul Rusesabagina, the manager of Sabena Hôtel des Mille Collines, is Hutu but his wife, Tatiana, is Tutsi. His marriage is a source of friction with Hutu extremists, most prominently for George, a supplier to the hotel who also is the local leader of Interahamwe, a brutal anti-Tutsi militia in Rwanda. As the political situation in the country deteriorates, Paul must divert the Hutu soldiers, care for the refugees, be a source of strength to his family, and maintain the appearance of a functioning high-class hotel, as the situation becomes more and more violent, with mobs in the streets just outside the gates.

All Movie Suggestions:

PG Glory Road
 PG The Sandlot
 PG Bridge to Terabithia
 PG Goonies
 PG Secretariat
 PG Iron Giant
 PG Up
 PG E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial
 PG Shrek
 PG Rudy
 PG First Do No Harm
 PG Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs

PG Karate Kid
 PG Remember the Titans
 PG Miracle
 PG High Noon
 PG Joe Somebody
 PG The Incredibles
 PG Hoosiers
 PG Soul Surfer
 PG It's a Wonderful Life
 NR King of Hearts
 NR On the Waterfront
 NR Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

NR The Grapes of Wrath
 NR Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
 PG-13 Forrest Gump
 PG-13 The Mighty
 PG-13 School Ties
 PG-13 To Kill a Mockingbird
 PG-13 The Emperor's Club
 PG-13 Pay It Forward
 PG-13 The Lord of the Rings
 PG-13 Invictus
 PG-13 Red Tails
 PG-13 White Squall

Discussion

Question Suggestions:

- Why are words from a friend so powerful?
- How can you reach out to someone in need?
- How can one person make a difference in his or her community?
- How can a positive example influence others?
- What makes it difficult to stand up for others?
- How do you feel when you are treated differently?
- Why is it important to see the world from a different perspective?
- How do people's unique gifts contribute to a common goal?
- Why do we sometimes see differences as scary?
- Which character(s) do you relate to? Why?
- What is resilience and why is it important for success?
- What are the characteristics of a role model?
- Who is a true role model in this film? Why?
- Can you relate to a character in the movie? How or why?
- How has seeing this film helped your understanding of another person's perspective or conflict?
- If your friend had a similar challenge/problem as one of the characters, what advice would you give to help?
- Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation as one of the characters? How did you handle it?
- What advice would you give to a character involved in the conflict? If someone else gave you the same advice would you follow it?
- Which of the 7 Elements of the *because I said I would* Philosophy values are most strongly represented in the movie?
- Based on _____'s character, would he/she be a "good" (name of your school) student based on their actions? Why or why not?

Sample Letter to Parents

September 1, 2016

Dear Parents:

I am writing to share about a new project we are doing in class. We will be exploring the power of our promises and what films can teach us about the importance of keeping our word by critically watching the film. This assignment is connected to the *because I said I would* message (<http://becauseisaidiwould.com/about>). This unit will challenge students to think about film and life through a new lens.

For the next week, our class will be critically examining _____. This movie is rated _____ and covers the following themes:

Theme:

Theme:

Theme:

We look forward to rich discussions at school and hope that you will extend opportunities for reflection and discussion with your child at home.

Your child will be completing either a poster or a visual essay which shares their insights and learning from the film.

As a community, we guide and shape our school culture through our thoughts, words and actions. We look forward to learning what it means to truly be our “better selves”.

Please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns.

We appreciate your support.

Best,

Elements of the *because I said I would* Philosophy

The following seven principles guide the *because I said I would* movement. As a social movement and nonprofit about the importance of a promise, it's important that we state our values and make a sincere attempt to live by them. Released on March 25th, 2016, this text is open for review and feedback from our supporters and thought leaders around the world. This review process will last for one year. Please email us your feedback at contact@becauseisaidiwould.com.

- 1. Compassion:** Through my actions I seek to alleviate suffering, establish peace and build happiness with others and in myself. I recognize that the world is in great need. Because of this need, I am needed. My belief in the importance of a promise is strong; however, I know that doing what is right will always be more important than keeping a promise. Commitment holds me accountable to my compassion; it does not blind me of it.
- 2. Self-Control:** My greatest battle lies within. Control over one's own emotions, desires and actions often defines the success or the failure of a promise. I work to build self-control so that I may better myself and the world around me.
- 3. Sacrifice:** It is an unfortunate reality that the betterment of humanity requires sacrifice. Voluntarily giving away what we cherish, even if for a greater cause, is difficult. I accept that life is not easy. Decisions must be made, and so sacrifices as well.
- 4. Honesty:** I seek to live a life where what I believe, what I say and what I do are all in harmony. I should treat others the same way I think I should be treated. As I work to be honest with others, I cannot forget that I must also be honest with myself. The truth is often both hard to deliver and desperately needed.
- 5. Hope:** I believe that both I and the world around me can get better. I have hope and I wish to be what others have hoped for. I may not be around to see the impact of my promises, but I have faith that my actions were needed then and that they are needed now. I believe in the impact of a single individual. I have hope that others can believe the same.
- 6. Contemplation:** I reserve time to understand the world and attempt to understand my place in it. When I see that my commitment is needed, I remember that promises are not easy to keep. I believe in planning and careful consideration. My words and actions have consequences. I should be patient with both.
- 7. Accountability:** I must be willing to accept personal responsibility for what I have done and what I have failed to do – both in what is good and what is not. Accountability helps me understand that my decisions have consequences. I help hold others accountable, but before I become too upset with the broken promises of others, I remember that I too have weakness.

Acknowledgements

Because I said I would's Character Education Lessons were created by a dedicated committee of educators and counselors in addition to the staff at *because I said I would*. We would like to acknowledge and thank the committee who volunteered their time and expertise to help create the *because I said I would* Character Education Lessons.

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*To use copyrighted films in the classrooms teachers must follow Section (110) (1) of Title 17 of the U.S. Code on Copyright and Conditions. Films must be shown in a nonprofit face to face educational setting, in the classroom for educational purposes only. Please see FAQ regarding use of films in the classroom:

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/copyright.html>



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because
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I would.