



RCtv: Celebrating Cross-Cultural Stories

Lesson Plan

Grades 9 - 12

REEL CANADA

RCTv: Celebrating Cross-Cultural Stories

Grades 9 – 12



BREAKAWAY

Comedy/Sports

2011

101 min.

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FOREWORD

Lesson Plan Overview & Objectives

This lesson plan accompanies REEL CANADA's Rctv: Celebrating Cross-Cultural Stories livestream programme for National Canadian Film Day, and is designed to use the film *Breakaway* as a text for instruction in high school courses (grades 9 – 12). The lesson provides activities and resources to accompany a screening of the film and participation in the interactive livestream with the filmmaker.

Teachers will find ideas to:

- engage students in exploring cross-cultural storytelling and cultural identity in Canada.
- implement & assess curriculum expectations for a variety of courses.

Learning Objectives

Students will understand topics and concepts related to storytelling, culture and diversity, will identify connections between these themes and explain their relation to the film, to Canadian identity, society and history, and apply this understanding in reflecting on their own lives and communities in Canada.

Assessment

Students can:

- Contribute to and participate in group discussions respectfully.
- Describe and explain their responses to and interpretations of the film.
- Define and use terms related to the themes of the film and the livestream (e.g., cultural diversity, discrimination, identity, etc.).
- Differentiate between perspectives of various characters in the film.
- Identify and reflect on connections between the film and their own lives.
- Explain and generate ideas about the meaning and importance of culture and multiculturalism in Canada.
- Explain the importance of storytelling and community to cultural, personal and national identities.
- Identify examples of cultures in Canada and describe how interactions between cultures have affected various cultural groups.
- Demonstrate understanding of how their identity as Canadians is related to cultural backgrounds, personal stories and active and responsible citizenship.

Subject Areas

This lesson can be used to address curriculum expectations in a variety of courses including English, social sciences, history, geography, law, world religions, civics and politics, arts, drama, and media. It may be relevant to additional subject areas with or without modifications.

This lesson is also suitable for Sikh Heritage Month in April and Asian Heritage Month in May.

About the Film

Film Synopsis

Rajveer Singh (Vinay Virmani) is struggling to balance the wishes of his traditional Sikh family and his own true passion for hockey. Raj and his friends play only for fun, held back by the prejudice and mockery of other teams as their turban-clad crew steps onto the ice. Enter Coach Dan Winters (Rob Lowe), and soon the Speedy Singhs are competing in a real tournament, while Raj is falling in love with the coach's beautiful sister, Melissa (Camilla Belle).

A cross-cultural story of self-discovery, *Breakaway* is a heartwarming, action-filled comedy, bringing a dash of Bollywood to Canada's favourite sport. With a zany supporting cast, including comedian Russell Peters and a special appearance from Drake, *Breakaway* will have you cheering for its unlikely heroes.

Themes and Concepts

- cultural identity
- rights & freedoms
- acceptance
- determination
- identity
- following dreams
- relationships
- community
- anti-racism
- equality
- culture & multiculturalism
- perseverance
- hockey
- overcoming adversity
- family
- tradition
- justice
- equity
- diversity
- self-discovery
- rivalry
- independence
- sportsmanship & teamwork
- Sikhism

About this Resource

! Before Getting Started

While *Breakaway* is a feel-good film with a positive ending, it does deal with issues such as racism and discrimination. REEL CANADA has developed a detailed list of best practices, guidelines and resources for [discussing sensitive issues in the classroom](#).

Prior to teaching, please consult the [document for teachers](#) and distribute the guidelines and resources [document for students](#), which will help in establishing a foundation for safe, respectful and meaningful discussions on topics such as race, racism, culture, identity and marginalization.

Activities Overview

The lesson contains the following activities:

Pre-Viewing

- **Canadian Culture Wall:** Through reflection questions and generating ideas, students are encouraged to think about the diversity of cultures that exist in Canada, and the roles they play in students' own lives and in shaping historical and contemporary notions of national identity and social milieu in Canada.

Post-Viewing

- **Celebrating Cross-Cultural Stories:** Students can reflect on the characters' attitudes, actions and beliefs in the film and relate these to the themes of culture and cross-cultural stories. Then they can apply the same reflection to the role of culture and cross-cultural celebration in their own lives.
- **Also includes:** Guiding questions, post-viewing quiz and suggested extension activities.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Canadian Culture Wall

- Premise:** Through reflection questions and generating ideas, students are encouraged to think about the diversity of cultures that exist in Canada, and the roles they play in students' own lives and in shaping historical and contemporary notions of national identity and social milieu in Canada.
- Materials:** Space (paper or digital) for writing;
"Culture Quiz" worksheet (PAGE 10)
- Time:** ~65 – 75 minutes

Minds On (20 mins.)

Think-pair-share: Distribute the "Culture Quiz" worksheet (PAGE 10). Students will complete the questions reflecting on culture in relation to their own lives, communities, and in Canada more broadly. They can fill in the first column individually, then pair with a partner to complete the second column. Pairs can join to form small groups to complete the last column. Finally, convene as a class for the remainder of the activity.

Activity & Discussion (30 – 40 mins.)

Briefly go over some of the responses to the worksheet questions. As you do so, create a list or mind map of ideas from the responses, making connections between topics where appropriate.

When students completed the Think-Pair-Share exercise, what did they notice about cultural similarities and differences among students in the class?

Use the guiding questions provided below to shape the conversation.



"Listen and ask the specific needs of the individual rather than making cultural assumptions."

Source: [LGBTQ Intersect](#)

Prompt: Think about ALL the different dimensions that make up culture. Consider if you were to pluck someone from Vancouver, a person from Niagara Falls, an Inuk from the Arctic Circle, a Cree from western Quebec and a Newfoundlander from the north coast of the island, and you were to put them all in a room together. What kinds of things do you think they might have "culturally" in common? What might be aspects of culture that vary? *For example, consider why different regions of the country have various patterns of voting for a specific political party.* How would you get to know and understand these individuals and your own cultural similarities/differences with them?

Alternatively, you can have a representative from the class (or one from each small group) be responsible for writing down responses on the board.

Debrief (10 – 15 mins.)

Explain that students will watch the film *Breakaway*, about a young Sikh Canadian man whose dreams of playing professional hockey clash with his family's expectations.

Watch the film's trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgWEXByZ99E>

Students can make connections between the previous discussion and what they see in the trailer. You have the option of assigning students to complete an exit ticket in the form of a short, written reflection on the prompt below.

Agree or disagree: Every interaction involves some degree of 'cross-cultural' relating because of the complexities of cultural identities we all hold. Depending on your answer, what does that mean for how we might navigate interactions with others?

Modifications and Notes

- You can also use an online platform of your choice to have the whole class create a notes board together.
- The discussion portion could be modified to incorporate a [graffiti wall](#). If you have more time, allow students to include visuals in their responses.

Guiding Questions:

1. What is *culture*? How is it similar to and distinct from *society*?
2. What are some examples of different cultures in Canada? What *kinds* of cultures, and what factors affect these?
3. Is there a uniquely "Canadian culture?" If so, what does it look like? How does one define Canadian cultural identity beyond stereotypes?
For example, hockey is a part of Canadian culture. Why does it resonate and what does it say about Canadians? How can it be exclusionary to tie Canadian identity to hockey?
4. What are some ways culture in Canada distinguishes it from other places? If you have experiences having lived or traveled somewhere else, what surprised you about how Canada's culture was similar or different?
5. What are some problems with defining Canadian culture and cultural identity in a narrow way? How have racism and xenophobia been employed throughout Canadian history in service of cultural identity?
6. What does it mean that Canada is multicultural? What are the advantages and difficulties of being a multicultural nation?
7. What are some examples of different types of cultural organisations, events or groups in Canada?
8. How are the values, beliefs and histories of Canadians' various cultures reflected in practices or behaviours?
9. How can learning about other cultural and religious traditions and practices help to better inform Canadians of the needs and values of others? Why is it important for us to understand why our friends, neighbours, or coworkers are celebrating, fasting, or praying at certain times?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Celebrating Cross-Cultural Stories

Premise: Canada is a nation of many cultures. In fact, Canada was the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy. The people who live and have lived here, those who have always been here and those who have settled here from places all around the world, all come with their own experiences, stories and perspectives. If we think about how many cultures there are in Canada, we can imagine how many more stories there are of the ways Canadians have been shaped by the cultures around them, both those we have brought with us and those we are creating here together.

Students can reflect on the characters' attitudes, actions and beliefs in the film and relate these to the themes of culture and cross-cultural stories. Then they can apply the same reflection to the role of culture and cross-cultural celebration in their own lives.

Materials: Characters list (PAGE 11); Cross-cultural stories worksheet (PAGE 12)

Time: ~35 – 60 minutes

Getting started (5 – 10 mins.)

Invite responses to the film. What do we mean when we refer to “cross-cultural” stories? What kinds of cross-cultural stories can we tell? Students can suggest other examples of such stories they've seen. Did any of these resonate with them? Why? What might be advantages of such stories? What is the benefit of learning about other cultures? What is the benefit of many different cultures having the space and ability to tell their own stories (e.g., representation, feeling seen, empathy & connection, understanding of others & oneself, authenticity & breaking stereotypes, etc.)?

Activity (20 – 25 mins.)

Divide students into small groups. Each group is assigned one of the characters from the film. A list of characters is provided on page 11.

For their assigned character, groups can discuss the ways culture was influential in the character's life. Was the character's cultural background important to them? What aspects of their culture were most significant? How did they feel about their own cultural identity and expression at various points in the story? Were they harassed or discriminated against in relation to their culture? How did they experience 'cross-cultural' interactions as part of their story?

Or, working together, each group creates a 'character profile' of their responses. Alternatively, you could create a “station” for each character and students can move between the stations to discuss different characters.

Debrief & Reflect (10 – 25 mins.)

Conclude by discussing any question(s) of your choice. Use the guiding questions as needed.

Leave students with the reflection worksheet on page 12, which prompts them to briefly explain how *Breakaway* is an example of the theme **Celebrating Cross-Cultural Stories** (with reference to both celebration and culture, specifically), then to describe a situation in their life or community that could fit this theme, and explain similarly.

Alternatively, you can have them suggest an additional story from a media text (other than *Breakaway*) that had an impact on them for the second question. The aspect of ‘celebration’ is open to interpretation, and could include stories about overcoming adversity and finding identity.

Modifications & Notes

- Suggested activities on the following page can be used to extend learning around the film.
- If you would like to have your class submit their reflections as social media posts, be sure to tag us! @CanFilmDay

Use the hashtag #BreakawayRCTv



Guiding Questions:

1. How does *Breakaway* demonstrate different ways Canadians can experience culture? What do you think are some challenges that some Canadians may experience around cultural identity? (For example, how does Rajveer’s story show him struggling to find his place between two different cultures?)
2. How does *Breakaway* show both conflicts and cooperation/celebration across cultures?
3. How do characters’ cultural backgrounds influence their beliefs, attitudes and/or behaviours in different ways? How do these differences affect their interactions with each other?
4. What are some ways we can celebrate and honour cultural diversity in our lives and communities as Canadians?
5. What are some examples of cultural clashes in Canada? What do these clashes reveal about the values, priorities and beliefs of various cultures? How does Canadian law account for cultural differences, the protection of them, and the process for resolving intercultural conflicts?
6. What are some visible symbols that can indicate someone’s cultural affiliation? What is the importance, meaning and/or function of some of these symbols? Remember that some cultural symbols are religious and some (e.g., those associated with sports teams, political parties, etc.) are secular.
7. What are some examples of cultural organisations, groups and institutions at the local, regional and national levels in Canada? What are some ways these organisations are advocating for and/or serving the needs of the community, or engaging in outreach with the broader public?
8. What are some examples of individuals in Canada who have made a significant contribution towards the expression and recognition of their cultural identity?
9. How does the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms encourage or discourage cultural and religious plurality? Historically, how have some religious and/or cultural traditions been seen as more acceptable (or more authentically Canadian) to some people? What is/has been the effect of this on cultural & religious minorities in Canada? (For example, how are the anti-Asian attitudes that Sikhs faced in Canada a century ago reflected today in the man who told Jagmeet Singh that he should cut off his turban to look more Canadian?)
10. What are some major events in Canadian and world history that have affected the experiences of people in Canada based on their cultural, ethnic or religious identities?
11. The film’s tagline is “Love. It’s a team sport.” Unpack this tagline in relation to the themes discussed of celebrating cross-cultural stories. How is this related to the idea of love? How is love (of various kinds) expressed in the film?

Extension Activities

For before or after the previous post-viewing activity.

- **Movie Pitch:** Think of a cross-cultural story that you think would make a good movie. Describe the basic premise, characters, story and themes in a way that might convince a movie producer to fund the film.
- **A Part of Our Culture: Stories that Made Us:** Choose a real historical example of a cross-cultural story from Canadian history. Design a short, filmed version in the style of a “Canadian Heritage Minute.”
- **A Patchwork of Cultures:** Envisioning cultures and stories as individual patches on a quilt, create a visual representation of a cross-cultural story. When presented all together, discuss these stories in terms of the ways we’re “sewn together” as a nation.
- **Media Analysis:** Locate and summarize a cross-cultural story from a news source. Why do you think they chose to tell this particular story? What are the *implied* and *explicit* messages included?
- **Focus on Multiculturalism:** Research and critique the development of Multiculturalism in Canadian policy, law and society. How has multiculturalism (as an idea and an official practice) contributed to what Canada is today?
- **Hockey Culture Compass:** Culture can be understood broadly. For example, hockey is a part of Canadian culture, but there is also an *internal* hockey culture. Explore hockey from different cultural “directions” (i.e., culture of professional players, amateur players, fans, as part of Canadian identity) in small group discussions. What cultural norms or ideas are expressed in each of these directions, how have these changed over time, and what similarities/differences can you identify between the directions?
- **Building Cross-cultural Bridges:** What are some organizations or campaigns trying to promote cross-cultural exchange in Canada or between Canadians and people from elsewhere? (e.g., *Folk Festivals, sister cities, etc.*) Have you participated in anything like this? How can you promote cross-cultural exchange in your own school or community?
- **Sociology & Culture:** Explore various sociological concepts about culture (e.g., ethnocentrism, cultural imperialism, culture shock, cultural relativism, formal and informal norms, values, beliefs, social control, symbols, etc.) and explain any examples of these in *Breakaway* or other stories.
- **Breakaway as a Case Study in Acculturation:** Psychologist John Berry (1992) proposed that individuals in cross-cultural settings (e.g., immigrants and Indigenous people in colonial settings) undergo a process of acculturation in which the degree of acceptance and maintenance of both their native culture and their host culture affects the outcome of their cultural identities. Explore [Berry’s model of acculturation](#), explain each of the outcomes in Berry’s acculturation matrix (e.g., integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization). Using Berry’s model, discuss: How do various characters in *Breakaway* (or other stories) move along the matrix? Which outcome do you think is ‘best’? What factors might influence where someone falls along the matrix?
- **Support Letter:** Write a letter of support to Rajveer or the Speedy Singhs on the issue of human rights, discrimination, cultural acceptance, or the struggle to find cultural identity. Suggest ideas for how the letter reader might find internal or external sources of support, and make connections to your own life.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS & LINKS

Additional Resources

Open Textbooks

- Little, William (2016). [Introduction to Sociology — 2nd Canadian Edition](#). BCcampus OpenText
 - Especially:
[Chapter 3: “Culture”](#)
- Worthy, Lisa, Trisha Lavigne and Fernando Romero (2020). [Culture and Psychology](#). Maricopa Open Digital Press.
 - Especially:
Chapter I: “Culture and Psychology” — [“Berry’s Model of Acculturation”](#)
Chapter XIII: “Living in a multicultural world”

Articles & Web Resources

- [Culture](#). LGBTQ Intersect.
- Harvard University | [The Pluralism Project](#)
- Immigrant and International Women in Science Network. [Adapting to a New Culture: The Canadian Workplace — Feb 2020](#) (1 April 2020). *Note: This article is focused on the workplace environment but has relevant information and a useful “ten strategies for cross-cultural communication” model.*

Encyclopedias

- Jedwab, Jack. [Multiculturalism](#). The Canadian Encyclopedia (27 June 2011).

Movie Poster

LOVE. IT'S A TEAM SPORT.

VINAY VIRMANI RUSSELL PETERS ANUPAM KHER WITH ROB LOWE AND CAMILLA BELLE

BREAKAWAY

GURPREET SINGH SAKINA JAFFREY NOUREEN DEWULF

ALLIANCE FILMS PRESENTS TELEFILM CANADA AN AKSHAY KUMAR PRODUCTION / FIRST TAKE ENTERTAINMENT / DON CARMODY PRODUCTIONS / WHIZZBANG FILMS PRODUCTION "BREAKAWAY" A ROBERT LIEBERMAN FILM
VINAY VIRMANI RUSSELL PETERS ANUPAM KHER GURPREET GHUGGI SAKINA JAFFREY NOUREEN DEWULF WITH ROB LOWE AND CAMILLA BELLE COSTUME DESIGNER DEBRA HANSON EDITOR SUSAN SHIPTON PRODUCTION DESIGNER PHILIP BARKER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY STEVE DANLYUK
COMPOSER PAUL INTSON ORIGINAL SONG BY LUDACRIS & ROB MUSIC DIRECTOR SANDEEP CHOWTA ASSOCIATE PRODUCER PAULINE O'HILLON LINE PRODUCER ANDREA RAFFAGHELLO SCREEN STORY BY VINAY VIRMANI SCREENPLAY BY NOEL S. BAKER AND JEFFREY ALAN SCHECHTER & MATT SIMMONS AND VINAY VIRMANI
PRODUCED BY AJAY VIRMANI FRANK SIRACUSA DON CARMODY EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY AKSHAY KUMAR PAUL GROSS ANDRE ROULEAU RUSSELL PETERS CLAYTON PETERS DIRECTED BY ROBERT LIEBERMAN

COMING SOON

Culture Quiz

Take a moment to reflect on the questions below. Write down your answers and then share them with a classmate.

	Think (your answers)	Pair (your partner's answers)	Share (other classmates' answers)
How would you define "culture"?			
What are some ways culture is a part of your life or your community?			
What are some ways culture is part of Canadian society or history?			
Describe an experience where you learned from another culture.			



Characters in *Breakaway*



Rajveer Singh



Melissa Winters



Sonu Gill



Reena Singh



Dan Winters



Uncle Sammy



Livleen Singh



Darvesh Singh



Gurveer Singh

Celebrating Cross-Cultural Stories

1. Explain how the film *Breakaway* reflects the theme of “celebrating cross-cultural stories.”
Be sure your explanation refers both to celebration and to culture.



2. Describe a situation you have seen or experienced in your own life or community that is an example of “celebrating cross-cultural stories.” Explain how this theme applies to the situation (the same as you did above for *Breakaway*), and what benefits this celebration has to you as an individual or to your broader community.

BREAKAWAY: POST-VIEWING QUIZ | | |-----| | /10 | |-----|

1. Where do Rajveer and his father Darvesh work?

2. What is Melissa Winters studying in school?

3. What is the name of the hockey team Rajveer forms? Why did they pick this name?

4. Who calls Rajveer his “little Punjabi puck bunny”?

5. What is the outcome of the team’s first game after Rajveer is kicked off the team?

6. Why does Rajveer consistently deny that he is on the hockey team when people ask him about it?

7. Why does Rajveer’s brother Gurveer want to cut off his hair?

8. What musical artist is in the club at Sonu’s bachelor party?

9. How does the bachelor party end, and what happens to Rajveer?

10. What problem does the team face regarding the league’s safety policies, and how does Rajveer solve this issue?

BREAKAWAY: POST-VIEWING QUIZ **ANSWERS**

1. Where do Rajveer and his father Darvesh work?
They work at Speedy Singh Transport, the family trucking company owned by Uncle Sammy, Darvesh's brother.
2. What is Melissa Winters studying in school?
Melissa is in law school studying to be a lawyer.
3. What is the name of the hockey team Rajveer forms? Why did they pick this name?
They picked the name "Speedy Singhs" because Rajveer's uncle, owner of Speedy Singh Transport, sponsors the purchase of the jerseys. It also signals their origins as a team of Sikhs, as all Sikh boys are given the last name of Singh.
4. Who calls Rajveer his "little Punjabi puck bunny"?
Sonu, his cousin's fiancé.
5. What is the outcome of the team's first game after Rajveer is kicked off the team?
They win the game.
6. Why does Rajveer consistently deny that he is on the hockey team when people ask him about it?
He denies it because his father has forbidden Rajveer to play.
7. Why does Rajveer's brother Gurveer want to cut off his hair?
Some kids at school are bullying him for his long hair. He has also grown up with an older brother who does not follow the Sikh custom of not cutting one's hair.
8. What musical artist is in the club at Sonu's bachelor party?
Drake
9. How does the bachelor party end, and what happens to Rajveer?
Rajveer and his teammates are arrested and thrown in jail for getting into a fight with players from the Hammerheads team.
10. What problem does the team face regarding the league's safety policies, and how does Rajveer solve this issue?
The league says that cannot play in their turbans because helmets are required for safety, so Rajveer says to have special turban helmets made.