

Movie Discussion Guide

THE LOVELY BONES

“The story of a life and everything that came after..”

In 1973, 14-year old Susie Salmon is murdered by her neighbor, serial killer George Harvey. Susie attempts to make contact with her family from the In-Between as they try to deal with the painful aftermath of her death and team with a police detective to find her killer.



T.M. & 2010 © DreamWorks Pictures LLC

THE LOVELY BONES

Programming Suggestions

This discussion guide is designed to facilitate educational programs after viewing the film THE LOVELY BONES. Its purpose is to generate discussion based on social issues found within the movie and for program participants to reflect on themes that may be pertinent to them. Therefore, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to questions in this guide.

The discussion facilitator may choose to utilize one of the following activities as a means of developing discussion:

- Start a discussion group on the book “The Lovely Bones” by Alice Sebold. Talk about how the book conveys the story as compared to the movie. With homework, projects, and other priorities, ask students how much time they will need to read the book; think about meeting several times during the term. Ask all participants to bring with them one or two discussion points based on what they read.
- Invite a faculty member from the Criminology department to give a lecture on catching serial killers. You can also ask them to talk about how law enforcement officers determine whether crimes are part of a serial killer pattern and general safety tips for students.
- Create a bulletin board entitled “The Hereafter” describing how different religions perceive life after death and what they suggest a person do during their time on Earth in order to reach that final resting place.
- Host a “Family Dinner” program. Invite your residents to bring a dish of food and enjoy time with each other. You can discuss life, goals, sports, entertainment or just have fun together!

An important consideration in choosing any facilitation option is that all students have an opportunity to participate. Be aware that many of the topics addressed in the film are not often talked about in public settings. Students who attend the program may have varying degrees of comfort level with the discussion.

ISSUES

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES
DEATH/DYING
PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
VIOLENCE

Discussion Questions:

- At the beginning of the film, Susie remembers as a child one of her favorite toys being a snowglobe with a penguin inside of it. What were some of your favorite toys growing up? Why did you enjoy playing with them?
- The film shows a stack of books that Abigail enjoys reading, some of which include books on cooking, cleaning, and child care; later, Susie is shown reading Seventeen magazine. What kinds of books or magazines do you like to read and why?
- Susie says that she wanted to be a wildlife photographer. To support her interest in photography, her parents buy her a camera and numerous rolls of film. How have your loved ones supported your interests? What role did these photos play later in the movie?
- Susie and a friend are members of a film club in school. What are some clubs or activities that you enjoy participating in?
- When Buckley stops breathing, Susie cannot find her parents, so she takes the car keys and drives him to the hospital. How would you have responded to this situation? What are some important skills for effectively managing a crisis situation?
- While at the mall Lynn talks to Susie about her romantic interest in Ray. How much of your romantic relationships do you share with your loved ones? How do you decide what to share?
- One activity that Susie and Jack liked doing together was putting model ships inside bottles. What are some activities that you enjoy doing with your loved ones?
- Susie's mom forces her to wear a hat that she does not like. How would you have dealt with the situation?
- Ray writes Susie a quote from Othello to let her know he likes her. What are some things you have done to let someone know you are romantically interested in them?
- Before killing Susie, George spends a lot of time planning her murder, including drawing a layout of the neighborhood, building the underground den, and getting the necessary equipment ready. What are some projects that you heavily prepare for? What equipment helps you prepare for those projects?
- On the night Susie is killed, as her absence becomes prolonged, her family gets increasingly worried about her welfare. If you were Jack or Abigail, how would you have responded to Susie's increased absence?
- When Jack and Abigail are told that Susie's hat and a lot of blood were found in the underground den, they cry together. Later on, Jack, overcome with grief, smashes many of the models he and Susie built together. How have you dealt with the loss of a loved one?
- When the police question George about Susie's murder he says to them, "When something like this happens, all you can do is blame yourself." What do you think of that statement?
- Susie describes the feeling of death as life slipping away and leaving her. What do you imagine the process of death will feel like? How are you preparing for it?
- Jack becomes more obsessed with finding Susie's killer as he continuously approaches Len with more suspects and theories on who might have killed her. What are some things that you have become obsessed with? How did you deal with the obsession?
- Len interviews numerous neighbors and looks at lots of evidence as he tries to find Susie's killer. What are the qualities of a good police officer?
- Len tells Jack that Abigail needs his help to get through dealing with Susie's loss, so he invites Lynn to stay with them for a while. Who has helped you through hard times and what have they done to provide you support?
- Lynn teaches Lindsey some of her beauty tricks. What are some important lessons that you have learned from your loved ones?
- Susie describes the joy George got from killing as George feeds off of the moment over and over. Have you ever felt this joy about something? If so, what was it and how did you keep the joy?
- When Len says that he cannot arrest George until he has evidence, Jack decides to take justice into his own hands by taking his son's baseball bat and going after George, but he ends up getting beaten up by another man. Do you believe that citizens should try and take justice into their own hands when they perceive that law enforcement has failed? Why or why not?
- Holly says to Susie of Heaven, "Of course it's beautiful." What do you think of that statement?
- What did you think of the way George died? Do you believe it was fair? Why or why not?
- There are many times throughout the movie that Susie "touches" one of the characters, such as when Buckley says he felt her kiss him on the cheek, her dad reaching to her when putting the candle in the window, and Ruth seeing her in the window and running through her when George disposes of the safe. Have you ever felt someone's spirit? If so, what did it feel like and how did you respond?
- What did you think of Susie's consistent resistance to going fully to Heaven so that she could still, to a certain extent, be with the people in her life impacted by her death? Would you have done the same thing? Why or why not?
- Throughout the movie, the In-Between world is shown as a vibrant, interesting world where almost anything is possible. What do you think life after death is like?

Residence Life Cinema

Phone: (800) 244-6173

Email: mail@reslife.com

