A CHARACTERS UNITE FILM

THESPACEBETWEEN

A FILM BY TRAVIS FINE IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11

ACADEMY AWARD-WINNER MELISSA LEO



SIUDY GUIDE

characters welcome.





ABOUT THE FILM



The Space Between is part of USA Network's Characters Unite public service campaign dedicated to combating prejudice, discrimination and intolerance while promoting understanding and acceptance.

Lonely flight attendant Montine McLeod (Academy Award®-winner Melissa Leo) and Omar Hassan (Anthony Keyvan), a 10-year-old Pakistani-American boy traveling alone, are on a plane that is grounded in Longview, Texas on the morning of 9/11/01. When Montine learns the boy's father works in the World Trade Center, she decides to drive the boy home to his uncertain future in New York City.

As they journey across America's vast heartland in the hours and days immediately following the terrorist attacks, Montine and Omar help each other discover the importance of tolerance, redemption, acceptance and hope.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER



TRAVIS FINE, DIRECTOR

Travis Fine left a successful acting, writing and directing career after being deeply affected by 9/11. He enrolled in flight school and forged a new path as a screenwriting airline pilot. The concept for **The Space Between** took shape while Travis was in the flight deck of a commercial airliner on autopilot at 36,000 feet.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

"Eight years ago, my daughter told me that we all have invisible wires that connect us to the people that we love...wires that cannot be broken by time, by space, or even by death. As an airline pilot, I often thought about those wires as I flew passengers back and forth across the country. Hurtling along in a metal tube six miles above the earth's surface at just below the speed of sound, a bunch of strangers had entrusted me with their lives. Did we have invisible wires that connected us as well? And then, one night on a flight from St. Louis to Newark, I randomly asked my captain what is was like to be in the air on the morning of September 11th. As he recounted his story and I reflected on my own memories of 9/11, I remembered that for a brief moment in time, the entire world was connected in a shared grief that knew no ethnic, religious or national boundaries. Drifting off to sleep that night, I saw the image of a young boy with scared eyes asking a flight attendant in an empty plane 'Are we in Los Angeles?' As I flew another planeload of strangers from Newark back to St. Louis the next morning, I pulled out a piece of paper and began to scribble notes about two strangers in an airplane forced together by tragedy...and about the invisible wires that connect us all."

- Travis Fine



A CLOSER LOOK

The Space Between uses the story of Montine and Omar as a way to explore much larger issues of intolerance, prejudice and discrimination. We see Omar repeatedly being treated differently because of his ethnicity and religion at various points throughout the film.

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

Prejudice is a preconceived judgment or irrational opinion for or against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics or community.

Discrimination is an action or behavior made in favor of or against someone based on something about them - for example their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, political beliefs, physical or mental disability, etc. – instead of on their merit.

Scene Example:

Along their journey, Montine and Omar stop at a diner. Montine tells the waitress that it is Omar's birthday and the waitress stares at Omar with disgust and says, "So?" She, very reluctantly, walks off to get him a sundae.

Discuss:

- Why do you think the waitress behaves this way?
 What judgment did she make about Omar?
- What other examples of prejudice, intolerance and discrimination did you find revealed throughout the movie?
- What are the dangers of generalizing or stereotyping?

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Religious Tolerance is accepting that others have the right to hold and practice their beliefs, no matter what their religion. The First Amendment supports the right of an individual or group to worship – or not to worship – as they choose.

Scene Example:

When Montine and Omar are traveling on the bus, Omar begins to engage in a Muslim daily ritual prayer. This prompts the driver to pull over and say that Omar can't pray on his bus. Several passengers chime in that they don't want Omar on the bus at all, and one makes a comment suggesting that terrorists are trained young. After they get kicked off the bus, Montine tells Omar to "cool it on the Allah Allah routine."

Discuss:

- Why do you think the passengers on the bus are uncomfortable with Omar's praying? Why is it suggested that he is a terrorist in training? What do you think about Montine's comment?
- Why is it important to respect our religious differences?
- Do you and your friends have similar or different religious beliefs?









A CLOSER LOOK CON'T.

BULLYING

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical or emotional harassment intended to inflict harm. Bullying may seem relatively harmless, but it can easily become much more violent and fosters a climate of intolerance.

Scene Example:

When Omar is hanging out with Montine's niece, Sam, an older kid in the neighborhood begins to pick on Omar. Verbal taunts eventually lead to Omar getting beaten up. At one point, the boy says, "You got a building to blow up?" and calls Omar a "dirty little Arab."

Discuss:

- The boy mistakenly calls Omar an Arab, but he is not an Arab, he is Pakistani. What does this show about how Americans think of Middle Eastern people?
- Have you ever witnessed bullying? How did you respond?
- Have you ever found yourself being mean to someone because they are different from you? Or has anyone ever been mean to you?







CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Following the tragic events of September 11th, Americans from all walks of life, every race, religion and background, came together as one. While the country honors and remembers the lives that were lost 10 years ago, the anniversary of 9/11 is also a reminder of that spirit of unity.

What are ways you would like to see your school, community or the country become more united today? What do you think helped to make Montine and Omar understand each other better? If you were in charge, what steps would you take to bring diverse people together? What big or small actions could you and your friends/classmates take to make a difference?

Write an essay addressing one or more of these questions and share your ideas of how you would help promote more tolerance, respect and acceptance, in the whole country or on the local level in your hometown.



THE FILM IN CONTEXT

Omar is Pakistani-American, which other characters in the film confuse with being an Arab or being a Muslim. What exactly do all these different terms mean?

MUSLIM

Muslim describes a person who follows the religion of Islam, which is the second largest religion in the world. Muslims believe making ritual prayers five times a day is a religious duty. The holy book of Islam is the Quran. Muslim style of dress varies by country. The hat Omar wears is called a "topi," and is common in India and Pakistan. A country whose population is over 50% Muslim can be considered part of the "Muslim World." There are 47 countries in the Muslim World.



THE TOP TEN MUSLIM COUNTRIES ARE:

AFGHANISTAN ALGERIA BANGLADESH EGYPT INDONESIA IRAN NIGERIA PAKISTAN SUDAN TURKEY

PAKISTAN

Pakistan is a country in South Asia. Over 60 languages are spoken in Pakistan, although English is the official language. Ninety-five percent of Pakistani people are Muslim, making it the second largest (after Indonesia) Muslim country. It is an Islamic State, which means that the Quran determines legal rules and regulations. The Pakistani flag has the crescent-moon and five-point star design, which is a traditional Muslim symbol.



ARAB

Arab is an umbrella term that defines people from diverse cultural, ethnic and political backgrounds. The key similarity is the Arabic language. About 300 million people in the world speak Arabic as their first language. While the majority of Arab people are Muslim, not all Muslims are Arab. For example, Omar is Muslim but not Arab. While there are Arab populations in countries throughout the world, including France, Brazil and the United States, the term "Arab World" describes countries with large populations of Arab speakers.

THE TOP TEN ARAB COUNTRIES ARE:

ALGERIA
EGYPT
IRAQ
MOROCCO
SAUDI ARABIA
SOMALIA
SUDAN
SYRIA
TUNISIA
YEMEN



RESOURCE GUIDE

- * 9/11 Memorial: national911memorial.org
 Information on the 9/11 Memorial and Museum.
- * Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights: civilrights.org/religion/

Information about efforts around the country to end religious intolerance from the nation's premier civil and human rights coalition consisting of more than 200 organizations.

- * Children of September 11th: childrenofseptember11.org Resources and information for children dealing with trauma related to 9/11.
- * Tribeca Film Institute: tribecafilminstitue.org
 A year-round nonprofit arts organization founded by
 Robert De Niro, Jane Rosenthal, and Craig Hatkoff in
 the wake of September 11, 2001.

* StopBullying.gov

Information from various government agencies on how kids, teens, young adults, parents, educators and others in the community can prevent orstop bullying.

- * American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee: adc.org
 Resources for combating negative stereotyping of
 Arab-Americans from the largest Arab-American
 Anti-Discrimination civil rights organization in the
 United States.
- * The Space Between: spacebetweenmovie.com
 The official film website.

ABOUT CHARACTERS UNITE

Characters Unite is USA Network's public service campaign to address the social injustices and cultural divides still prevalent in our society. Inspired by USA Network's iconic "Characters Welcome" brand and with the support of leading national nonprofit organizations, the ongoing initiative is dedicated to supporting activities and messaging that combat prejudice and intolerance while promoting understanding and acceptance — on-air, online, and in communities across the country. www.charactersunite.com

ABOUT USA NETWORK

USA Network is the #1 network in all of basic cable and is seen in over 102 million U.S. homes. A division of NBCUniversal, USA is the cable television leader in original series and home to the best in blockbuster theatrical films, acquired television series and entertainment events. The award-winning USA website is located at www.usanetwork.com. Characters Welcome. USA Network is a program service of NBCUniversal Cable a division of NBCUniversal, one of the world's leading media and entertainment companies in the development, production, and marketing of entertainment, news, and information to a global audience.

This study guide was adapted from the guide Tribeca Film Institute originally produced to accompany The Space Between at the **Tribeca Youth Screening Series**, which is a free-of-charge program that brings NYC public middle and high school students and teachers to screenings at Tribeca Cinemas and during the Tribeca Film Festival. Films are chosen for their educational relevance, but also for their cinematic merits. Students are exposed to independent films, filmmakers, and subject matter not typically explored in mainstream Hollywood fare, and teachers are supplied with a film text that can serve as a unique supplement to their humanities curriculum. In order to facilitate further study of films, TFI creates original study guides and supplemental educator materials for each film. Film screenings are followed by a Q&A with the cast and crew from the film.

