



Azza

Twelve-year-old Azza goes to an Islamic all-girls school and wears a headscarf. After the summer, Azza and her best friend Suheda will go to secondary school in Amsterdam, where they will be the only ones wearing the hijab. Azza's father wants her to wear the hijab, while the school administration encourages her to stop wearing it. We follow Azza as she struggles with these different adult messages and makes her own decision.

Recommended for ages 8+

Themes: coming of age; discrimination; cross-cultural understanding; identity; non-conformity; religion

Director(s): Sashia Gubbels | **17 min** | **Documentary** | **2012** | **Country:** The Netherlands | **Language:** Dutch w/ English subtitles



SET THE STAGE | THOUGHT-STARTERS

WORDS TO KNOW

- **Climax:** The turning point of a story. The moment of highest tension and drama.
- **Cultural Relativism:** The view that all beliefs, customs, and ethics are relative to individuals within their own social context. In other words, "right" and "wrong" are culture-specific; what is considered moral in one society may be considered immoral in another, and, since no universal standard of morality exists, no one has the right to judge another society's customs. [from www.gotquestions.org/cultural-relativism.html]
- **Hijab:** The word hijab describes the act of covering up generally, but is often used to describe the headscarves worn by Muslim women. These scarves come in many styles and colors. The type most commonly worn in the West covers the head and neck but leaves the face clear.
- **Metaphor:** A word or phrase that is used to make a comparison between two people, things, animals, or places
- **Symbol:** A thing that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract.
- **Documentary:** A non-fiction film intended to document some aspect of reality, primarily for the purposes of instruction or maintaining a historical record.

For more film terms, refer to the PCFF Film Glossary (pcfri.org/FilmHub).

MAKE CONNECTIONS | ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources complement the film and inspire further discussion or programming.

FILMS:

- **Wadjda** (2013)
A young Saudi Arabian girl rebels against the restrictive rules for women.
- **Through Ellen's Ears** (2012)
An 11-year-old deaf girl must decide where to attend middle school and in the process grapples with larger questions about conformity, cultural identity, and discrimination.
- **Salaam Dunk** (2012)
A documentary about an all women's university basketball team in Iraq.
- *Indicates PCFF festival selection*

LOCAL CONNECTIONS:

- **Islamic School vandalized in Providence:** www.theindy.org/536



Clues and Cues

Pay attention while watching

- Look at the body language of the adults and kids in this film. Are there moments when they say one thing but communicate another thing with their bodies or expressions? Are there moments when you think people are being dishonest?
- There are a few moments when the filmmaker uses slow motion. Why does she use this technique? What does it communicate?

TALK ABOUT IT | DISCUSSION

- Are there ways that you express your home culture in school?
- Do the ways you dress reflect who you are?
- Azza got different messages from the different people in her life about wearing the hijab. Who wanted her to wear the hijab? Who didn't?
- What does the metaphor of the "unwrapped Easter egg" mean?
- What is the symbolism of the hijab for Azza? For Suheda?
- What techniques did the filmmaker use to communicate how Azza and Suheda felt at the open house?
- Rewatch the scene between Azza, Suheda, and the gym teacher at 5:38. How do you think the two girls feel? How does the gym teacher feel? Do you think he is supportive or not? Do you think a hijab is really dangerous for gym class?
- Rewatch the scene in gym class where Azza isn't wearing the hijab: How did the filmmaker communicate visually that this was an important scene? How did she create emotion? [hint: How did the filmmaker use slow motion? What did she focus on?]
- What do you think the "climax" of the film is? Why?
- What do you think the overall message of the film is about wearing a hijab? What do you think the main argument of the film is?
- Do you think all of the people in the film are being honest? Why or why not? What clues does the filmmaker give us? Find some examples.
- Do you think Azza will put the hijab back on when she is an adult like she promised her dad?
- Did you identify with Azza? Why or why not? Do you identify with her more when she is wearing the hijab or when she's not wearing the hijab?
- Do you think Azza took off her headscarf because she was following her own desires or because she wanted to fit in? Was she resisting her father or was she succumbing to peer pressure? Why wouldn't Azza want to wear a headscarf in school?
- Why did the filmmaker end with the scene at the party? What do you think the message of that final scene was?
- How would you describe Azza and Suheda's friendship? How will Azza's decision affect their friendship?

GET CREATIVE | EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



For Activity Reel details, downloadable storyboard template and more, visit the the Film Hub website: www.pcffri.org/FilmHub

- **Writing Prompt [answer one or more of these questions in a paragraph]**
How do you express who you are through your clothing? Look at what you're wearing today. Does it express who you are in some way? Are there ways that you feel different in school from your peers? Have you ever decided not to wear something that you liked because you thought someone would make fun of you? Have your parents refused to let you wear something to school that you wanted to wear? Or forced you to wear something you didn't like? What decision would you have made if you were Azza? Is there a time you stood up to your parents or friends because of something you believed in? Are there traditions that you follow and traditions that you break?
- **Dress Codes and Democracy**
What do you think is an appropriate school dress code? Who should determine what kids should be allowed to wear or not wear? Is clothing an important form of self expression? What is the reasoning behind your school dress code? Is that similar or different to the idea behind the hijab?

Pretend you are going in front of the school administration and create a formal presentation with clear and well-supported recommendations for a new school dress code. After every group presents, the whole class will vote on which proposal they would adopt if they were the adults in power. This ACLU link is a good resource for this activity: www.riaclu.org/know-your-rights/pamphlets/know-your-rights-school-dress-codes
- **Acting Out Point of View**
Divide into groups of 4 and assign each student a character from the movie: Azza, Suheda, Azza's father, the Gym Teacher. Discuss wearing the hijab and veiling from the perspective of your character.
- **Express Yourself!**
Materials: Magazines, glue, scissors or paper and pencil
Draw a picture of yourself dressed in a way that reflects who you are! You can invent the perfect outfit if it doesn't already exist. Then explain underneath why this outfit reflects your identity.

BEYOND THE FILM | RELATED INTERNET LINKS

- In this “Radio Rookies” audio documentary, Norhan Basuni talks about choosing to wear the hijab and the discrimination she faced in the aftermath of September 11th:
www.wnyc.org/story/134006-speaking-for-islam
- A high school soccer team in Colorado donned hijabs to support their Muslim teammate banned from play because of her hijab:
www.bleacherreport.com/articles/1998766-team-wears-hijab-headscarves-in-support-of-muslim-teammate-banned-from-match
- www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/educators/women/lesson1.html
- www.heraldsun.com/news/localnews/x670456888/LIFTING-THE-VEIL
- wunc.org/post/muslim-women-speak-about-veil
- pennstatelaw.psu.edu/WOT/Guide/curriculum_instruction_guide.pdf
- arabsinamerica.unc.edu/identity/veiling/hijab/

