

Film review: The Help

Anti-racist religious education



RE TODAY AND NATRE WORKING WITH THE FREE CHURCHES GROUP
AND METHODIST SCHOOLS



The Help

Review by: Marie Timberlake

What is this film about?

The film and novel recount the story of a young white woman and aspiring journalist Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan.[3] The story focuses on her relationship with two black maids, Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson, during the Civil Rights Movement in 1963 Jackson, Mississippi. In an attempt to become a legitimate journalist and writer, Skeeter decides to write a book from the point of view of the maids, exposing the racism they are faced with as they work for white families. Black domestic workers in 1960s America were referred to as "the help", hence the title of the journalistic exposé, the novel and the film. (Wikipedia)

What age group and RE topic does it link to?

Key Stage 3 (age rating 12)

What did you love about it?

Relatable and humorous

Gives an interesting viewpoint (the experiences of "The Help")

If you could only show a clip, which clip would you use?

Minnie uses the bathroom scene

Why does this film have great potential for anti-racist RE?

Shows the behaviours of different people within the social structure and highlights the ability to change perspectives.

More recently Viola Davis who stars in the film as Aibileen Clark has spoken about her dissatisfaction with the movie's plot, which largely centered its white characters – something that the film received some criticism for on its release. This is an additional important point for pupils to know about and discuss.

Are there any warnings or issues for particular age groups?

One scene of crude behaviour

Two or three RE activities to set when pupils have seen the film/clip:

1. Book cover for Skeeter's book
2. Newspaper article that recounts the story
3. Read Viola Davis' interview(s) since making "The Help", and other critical reviews of the film and allow pupils to discuss the thoughts shared. This could lead to conversations around white saviourism, 'white-washing' and representation across the film industry.

<https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2018/09/viola-davis-the-help-regret>