

# School Guide:

## **BUDDHISM, BHUTAN AND ME**



### **ABOUT THIS GUIDE**

This BYkids School Guide is designed to help teachers expand students' use of this film from passive watching to active, deeply personalized learning. Included are three sample Pathways, each driven by an essential question to challenge students. Use the Pathway questions to start discussions in small groups or with the whole class. We've also added Discussion Starters and Suggested Projects, but we encourage you and your students to follow your own pathways and create your own projects.

BYkids wants our films to be part of compelling, project-based, collaborative learning experiences that are cross-curricular, link cultures and countries by themes we all share, and spur students to develop the personal, social and emotional competencies they need to become global citizens while mastering necessary college and career readiness skills. Most of all, we want students to value their own stories while learning from the stories of others around the world. We encourage you to share the creativity and knowledge that flourish in your classroom as you and your students expand on these BYkids suggestions and create your own learning units. We'd love it if you would share your discoveries and ideas with us at **BYkids.org!**

**BYkids**  
THEIR WORLD THEIR FILMS

Funding provided by



## **ABOUT THE FILM**

Because Rinzin Jurmey loves its rituals and traditions, he chose to join a monastery and dedicate his life to Buddhism at age 11. Now 18, he moves easily between his mountain village and the big city, embracing tradition and pop culture, religion and hip-hop, prayer and video games.

Tradition and progress ebb and flow in Bhutan, a small landlocked country in the Himalayas between India and China, with a population (748,931) similar to Seattle and Denver. Bhutan is rich in biodiversity, with more than 360 varieties of orchids, 650 species of birds and the endangered snow leopard and red panda. Bhutan is 60 percent preserved forest and the country's largest export is hydroelectricity.

Isolated by geography, Bhutan had also opted to close itself off from the world culturally. Tourism was banned until 1974, and television and the internet were banned until 1999. Historically a kingdom with a monarch, Bhutan implemented a democracy at the edict of King Jigme Singye Wangchuck and held its first elections in 2008. Buddhism was introduced into the country in the seventh century and remains woven throughout its culture.

Uniquely, Bhutan does not measure the country's value in Western economic terms but in happiness: Gross National Happiness. Paradoxically, even with the serenity of Buddhism, a beautiful and largely unspoiled countryside, and the deliberate choices and implementation of democracy and land and energy conservation mandated in its constitution, the country self-ranks 95 in the world for happiness.

Bhutan's population is young, with 60 percent under age 30, and eager to see what the world looks like on social media, to learn about Western dress and activities like break dancing, video games and pop culture. As tradition grounds the Bhutanese, the siren call of social media pulls them forward. The country debates how to maintain tradition and embrace modernity.

Rinzin illustrates Bhutan's duality as we move with him between a mountain village, love of prayer and ritual, and urban life, break dancing and video games.

## **ABOUT RINZIN'S MENTORS**

Cat Papadimitriou is a filmmaker born and based in New York City. Her first narrative feature, *Nia on Vacation*, won the Orpheus Award for best picture at the London Greek Film Festival in 2020, and she is currently in development on her second feature. Cat has been an integral part of the production team of past BYkids films, including *My Beautiful Nicaragua* and *Fire in Our Hearts*. She looks forward to many more.

*"That this film is set in a Buddhist country with someone like Rinzin makes it unlike any other film I have been a part of, and I'm so excited to share it with the world."*

**Cat Papadimitriou**

Chris Rizzo is a New York–based film editor who has contributed to a variety of long-form and commercial projects. Chris has worked with directors including Alex Gibney, Martin Granger and Earle Sebastian, to name a few. Chris joined Final Cut New York in 2016, and has edited campaigns for Comcast, HBO, Subaru and Amazon RED. Additionally, he was an editor on *Stray Dolls*, a narrative feature from director Sonejuhi Sinha. He lives in the Bronx with his wife and daughter.

*"Documenting Rinzin's spiritual discovery has been a deeply moving and rewarding experience."*

**Chris Rizzo**

## **ABOUT BYkids**

**We create understanding through storytelling.**

BYkids produces documentary films by kids, and partners with public television and educators to inspire conversations around global issues of human dignity and social justice. Films BYkids share the stories of kids who confront immigration, bullying, juvenile justice, climate change and child marriage. We reach kids in classrooms with teaching materials that promote empathy and understanding and make what could be foreign issues personal, relevant and actionable. Join us at [BYkids.org](http://BYkids.org) to see and support stories that build a global citizenry.

# THE GUIDE

## PATHWAY 1

### WHAT IS HAPPINESS? IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIVING TO BE HAPPY, AND BEING HAPPY TO BE ALIVE?

Rinzin Jurmey chose to become a Buddhist monk, a quiet life compared to that of his friends in the city. That choice makes him happy.

#### From the Film

*“I was 11 when I knew I was going to become a monk. . . . Since I was a kid, I dreamed of becoming a Buddhist scholar or teacher after completing my studies in the monastery. And if I couldn’t do that, I’d become a Buddhist traditional medicine doctor.”*

~ Rinzin Jurmey

#### Discussion Starters

- Does personal happiness come from inside or outside a person? Or both?
- How can studying and learning bring happiness?
- Working to obtain knowledge and understanding seems to make Rinzin happy. Why might that bring happiness?

#### Suggested Projects

- In your journal, with a small group, or with your class, make a list of factors, values and cultural norms that you and your group agree can bring happiness. Create a poster, presentation, podcast or video to share your Happiness Playlist (or choose your own title) by having each member of the group or class tell about one happiness must-have. Share your happiness presentation with other classes or the school.
- Rinzin seems happy to be alive and to learn about life. Is that how everyone views life and happiness? To find out, prepare a survey in your grade or school. You might ask if there are material things that are needed for happiness, as well as friends, family, religion and activities. To get a better idea of how strongly people who respond feel, you might ask students to rate items on a scale, say 0 to 10, with 0 meaning “makes me unhappy” and 10 meaning “makes me really happy.” That way, you can compute average and median response ratings and graph the data. You may also want to allow for students to write in items that make them stressed/unhappy and rate those, too. Be sure to respect students’ privacy by not including their names on their responses, but you may want to ask about gender identification or grade so that you can compare response differences based on those factors or others that you think might be important.
- Present your results from your Happiness Survey to the school or your class. Invite everyone to select one item that they see as important for happiness and create a drawing, artwork, or other creative expression of what it means to be happy to be alive. Incorporate those creative expressions along with the results of your survey in a special Happiness Night at your school.

## THE GUIDE (continued)

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### PATHWAY 2

#### HOW CAN YOU BALANCE CULTURAL, NATIONAL AND PERSONAL VALUES? HOW ARE DIVERSITY, RESPECT AND TOLERANCE PART OF THE BALANCE?

Rinzin chose to be a Buddhist monk. His friends in town chose to be dancers. The traditions of Buddhism are a part of Bhutanese culture, and Bhutan is also part of the modern world.

#### From the Film

*“Buddhism talks about . . . (that) we cannot have the good without the bad. We cannot have tradition without modernity, because if you’re not progressing, how do you know what’s our tradition and the other way around?”*

~ Siok Sian Pek-Dorji

Executive Director, Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy

#### Discussion Starters

- What are the cultural values in your school, town, country? What are some good traditions? What are some good modern ones? Are there some you would like to change?
- What are the values you learn from traditions—of your family, religion, or friends? Why are traditions rooted in your culture important to remember, practice and share with others?
- What are the national values you see in your country? Are there some that come from traditions that you feel need to change? Some that are traditions that should not be lost?

#### Suggested Projects

- Set up a debate about what is good about traditions in your school, town or country, and what should be modernized. Remember that a debate is respectful, presents arguments and thoughts logically and rationally, is not personal or angry, and that the point is to help both sides learn different perspectives and viewpoints regardless of the “side” they take in the debate itself.

As a class, first clarify the topic to debate. You may find help from a teacher or mentor here. Then randomly assign each student to one team or the other. In your team, identify the research and logical thought you will present. Write it out and choose which students will speak. Usually in a debate, each team member who speaks is prepared to present a different angle or aspect of the question as your team builds a case. Each team member should get exactly the same amount of time to speak.

When the debate is over, you may want to debrief as a class and identify what you learned from the other team, what you had not considered, and what points were most persuasive. Be respectful and express gratitude to all contributors.

- In Bhutan, folklore is important. In all cultures, myth and folk stories are important. Why? With a small group or your class, write a new folk story or myth to present a theme or value that is important in your culture. It can have both good and bad aspects, be a struggle of superheroes, and so on. But center it around your group's theme that shows a side of the U.S., your town or state, or other area's culture that you see as important to explore. Create a skit or video and share it with your class or school. You might want to have a panel discussion about it afterward.
- Dance is important to Rinzin's friends. They say that dancing allows them to share their feelings, pain and happiness, and guide them by sharing their stories. That makes them strong. How can dance, art, or performance make you strong?

Sponsor a night of *The Arts Make Us Strong* at your school. Prepare to have artwork displayed in classrooms that are turned into galleries, music created by students, videos, dance performances, and any other forms of creative expression. Decide on how to articulate your school's take on how the arts make us strong in words and communications that would invite the community to attend.

If you want, you could sell tickets or works of art to raise money for a school trip or contribution to a charity. Contact your local newspaper and radio station and use social media to make it a memorable and meaningful event.

## THE GUIDE (continued)

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### PATHWAY 3

#### DOES FOCUSING ON SIMPLE TRUTHS AND ACTS GIVE GREAT PERSONAL REWARDS? HOW OR HOW NOT?

The cultural and spiritual values of Buddhism are reflected strongly in Bhutan's culture and in its constitution and education in schools.

#### From the Film

*"You know, we're not all that special, but the truth is [that] the special things in Bhutan are so simple. Right? It's just a quiet walk. So we are at the precipice. It all depends on which path we take."*

~ Siok Sian Pek-Dorji

Executive Director, Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy

#### Discussion Starters

- There are many ways that Rinzin and others see as making Bhutan special. Is Bhutan really so different?
- Are there good and bad aspects to what Rinzin calls "modern media"? How can you decide what is "good" entertainment and what is "bad" entertainment?
- What are some ways that can help people to de-stress?

#### Suggested Projects

- With your class or group, plan a BYkids film night at your school and invite the community. Prepare a panel discussion of your group's or class's views on ways to help de-stress. Some of you may agree with viewpoints in the film and some may disagree. Point out that your discussion is to identify and respect diverse views.

You may want to start with a list of guidelines for the evening, such as: *All views are respected; A goal is to identify what helps lower stress; Our school is respectful of all people; We are here to be serious, not sarcastic;* and any others you agree on.

- In small groups, identify social media or other types of media that magnify and induce stress, and some that help lower stress. For each group, find 2 or 3 examples of each. Then record a video or podcast, make a poster, or create another type of presentation to express why your group sees these examples as stressful and harmful and others as helpful.

As a class, make a playlist of the helpful, de-stressing examples and post it in your school on a bulletin board. Remember to be respectful of all views and of the privacy of others.

- In Bhutan, students start their school days with mindfulness meditation. Meditation can be spiritual, related to a religion such as Buddhism, or not. Research mindfulness

meditation to learn about its positive, helpful effects in lowering stress. You may want to research it in small groups from different views, for example, exploring Buddhist meditation, mindfulness practices that are not connected to a religion or culture, and mindfulness related to medical practices.

After each group summarizes their findings, analyze as a class how the approaches are different and similar. Form your own opinion about trying mindfulness meditation to lower stress, and present those to the class. Be respectful of all opinions.



## **COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS**

Dear Educator,

You and your students, in defining the creative and collaborative details of each Pathway and Project, will implement many different standards not limited to any one content area but focused on critical and rigorous, evidence-based thinking. Below are provided some College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards that appear in the majority of state PK–12 curriculum standards in ELA and Math, and in the Next Gen Science Standards, but you and your students will go beyond those limited standards. Also identified are Social Emotional Competency areas identified by CASEL, a charitable organization that has helped to lead the way in defining and evaluating social emotional learning. We hope you will share your experiences and ideas at [BYkids.org](http://BYkids.org).

### **PATHWAY 1**

#### **CCSS ELA College & Career Readiness Anchor Standards**

CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes and analyze their development.

CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact.

CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content in diverse media and formats.

CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a work, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

CCRA.W.2 Write informative/explanatory text to examine and convey complex ideas.

CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCRA.W.7 Conduct research based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject.

CCRA.W.10 Write routinely for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing your own clearly and persuasively.

CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence so that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCRA.SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

CCRA.SL.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks.

#### **CCSS Standards of Mathematical Practice**

MP2 Reason abstractly and quantitatively.

MP4 Model with mathematics.

MP5 Use appropriate tools strategically.

MP6 Attend to precision.

MP7 Look for and make use of structure.

MP8 Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

### **NEXT GEN SCIENCE STANDARDS, SCIENTIFIC and ENGINEERING PRACTICES**

SEP 1 Ask questions and define problems

SEP 2 Develop and use models

SEP 3 Planning and carrying out investigations

SEP 4 Analyze and interpret data.

SEP 5 Use mathematics and computational thinking.

SEP 8 Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information.

### **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING CORE COMPETENCE AREAS (CASEL.ORG)**

#### SELF-AWARENESS:

Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets

Identifying one's emotions

Demonstrating honesty and integrity

Linking feelings, values, and thoughts

Experiencing self-efficacy

Developing interests and a sense of purpose

#### SOCIAL-AWARENESS:

Taking others' perspectives

Recognizing strengths in others

Demonstrating empathy and compassion

Showing concern for the feelings of others

Understanding and expressing gratitude

#### SELF-MANAGEMENT:

Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation

Setting personal and collective goals

Using planning and organizational skills

Showing the courage to take initiative

Demonstrating personal and collective agency

#### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:

Communicating effectively

Developing positive relationships

Demonstrating cultural competency  
Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving  
Resolving conflicts constructively  
Showing leadership in groups

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING:

Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness  
Learning to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, facts  
Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being  
Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts

**PATHWAY 2**

**CCSS ELA College & Career Readiness Anchor Standards**

- CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact.
- CCRA.R.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes content and style.
- CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content in diverse media and formats.
- CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- CCRA.W.2 Write informative/explanatory text to examine and convey complex ideas.
- CCRA.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events.
- CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCRA.W.7 Conduct research based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject.
- CCRA.W.10 Write routinely for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing your own clearly and persuasively.
- CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- CCRA.SL.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
- CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence so that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCRA.SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
- CCRA.SL.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks.

### **CCSS Standards of Mathematical Practice**

- MP2 Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
- MP3 Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- MP4 Model with mathematics.
- MP5 Use appropriate tools strategically.
- MP6 Attend to precision.
- MP7 Look for and make use of structure.
- MP8 Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

### **NEXT GEN SCIENCE STANDARDS, SCIENTIFIC and ENGINEERING PRACTICES**

- SEP 1 Ask questions and define problems
- SEP 2 Develop and use models
- SEP 3 Planning and carrying out investigations
- SEP 4 Analyze and interpret data.
- SEP 5 Use mathematics and computational thinking.
- SEP 7 Engage in argument from evidence.
- SEP 8 Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information.

### **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING CORE COMPETENCE AREAS (CASEL.ORG)**

#### SELF-AWARENESS:

- Integrating personal and social identities
- Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets
- Identifying one's emotions
- Demonstrating honesty and integrity
- Linking feelings, values, and thoughts
- Examining prejudices and biases
- Experiencing self-efficacy
- Having a growth mindset
- Developing interests and a sense of purpose

#### SOCIAL AWARENESS:

- Taking others' perspectives
- Recognizing strengths in others
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones
- Understanding the influences of organizations/systems on behavior

### SELF-MANAGEMENT:

- Managing one's emotions
- Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation
- Setting personal and collective goals
- Using planning and organizational skills
- Showing the courage to take initiative
- Demonstrating personal and collective agency

### RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:

- Communicating effectively
- Developing positive relationships
- Demonstrating cultural competency
- Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving
- Resolving conflicts constructively
- Showing leadership in groups
- Seeking or offering support and help when needed

### RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING:

- Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness
- Identifying solutions for personal and social problems
- Learning to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, facts
- Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside & outside of school
- Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being
- Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts

## **PATHWAY 3**

### **CCSS ELA College & Career Readiness Anchor Standards**

- CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes and analyze their development.
- CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact.
- CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content in diverse media and formats.
- CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a work, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCRA.W.6 Use technology to produce and publish writing and to interact and

collaborate with others.

CCRA.W.7 Conduct research based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject.

CCRA.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess and credibility and accuracy of each, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

CCRA.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing your own clearly and persuasively.

CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence so that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCRA.SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

CCRA.SL.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks.

### **CCSS Standards of Mathematical Practice**

MP3 Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.

MP7 Look for and make use of structure.

MP8 Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

### **NEXT GEN SCIENCE STANDARDS, SCIENTIFIC and ENGINEERING PRACTICES**

SEP 7 Engage in argument from evidence.

SEP 8 Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information.

### **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING CORE COMPETENCE AREAS (CASEL.ORG)**

#### SELF-AWARENESS:

Integrating personal and social identities

Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets

Identifying one's emotions

Linking feelings, values, and thoughts

Examining prejudices and biases

Experiencing self-efficacy

Having a growth mindset

#### SOCIAL-AWARENESS:

Taking others' perspectives

Recognizing strengths in others

Demonstrating empathy and compassion

Showing concern for the feelings of others  
Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones  
Recognizing situational demands and opportunities

SELF-MANAGEMENT:

Managing one's emotions  
Identifying and using stress-management strategies  
Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation  
Setting personal and collective goals  
Using planning and organizational skills  
Showing the courage to take initiative  
Demonstrating personal and collective agency

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:

Communicating effectively  
Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving  
Resolving conflicts constructively  
Resisting negative social pressure  
Showing leadership in groups  
Seeking or offering support and help when needed

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING:

Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness  
Identifying solutions for personal and social problems  
Learning to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, facts  
Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions  
Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside & outside of school  
Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being