

# MASTER'S THESIS

Using the film *The Help* as a Tool to Promote Intercultural Competence in the Norwegian ESL Classroom

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## Abstract

This thesis seeks to find out to what extent the film *The Help* may be used to promote intercultural competence in the Norwegian ESL classroom. As a result of today's globalization, people with different cultural backgrounds interact more frequently. People experience intercultural contact all over the world. Consequently it is extremely important to have intercultural competence, or in other words, the ability to communicate appropriately with people from different cultures. The theoretical framework includes a model of intercultural competence, advantages of using film as a tool to promote intercultural competence, concepts of intercultural communication, and lastly, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training's view on intercultural competence.

This study is primarily based on a film analysis of *The Help* from an intercultural perspective. The viewer-response approach is used in combination with film as a tool to enable pupils to form their own interpretations of a film and be respectful of others' opinions. The findings show that the film *The Help*, along with the teaching plan that is developed in a way that the components of intercultural competence are taken care of, has promoted the pupils' intercultural competence. The pupils' *attitudes, knowledge, skills and critical cultural awareness* are developed.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

As a result of today's globalization, the world is getting more and more connected. The growth of modern transportation and communication makes it easier to travel abroad, distribute information worldwide, and also to acquire knowledge and information about different cultures, in a very short time. People, groups and countries are bound together, despite national and cultural differences. Globalization influences and presents us with far away cultures. Consequently, people with different cultural backgrounds interact with one another and it is very common to experience intercultural contact all over the world. It is therefore important to be able to show cultural understanding, to have the ability to communicate in culturally appropriate ways and also to value cultural differences.

Acquiring such intercultural competence is a complex matter. Dypedahl, amongst others, argues that acquiring intercultural competence is a lifelong process, but Dypedahl makes a valid point when he claims that the English as Second Language (ESL) classroom can be a great place to start this whole process. With time, when the process develops over years, pupils can end up with high intercultural competence (Dypedahl, 2007, p. 7). The goal is for the pupils to develop the ability to reflect upon intercultural experiences. In order to make this process more manageable, Dypedahl suggests that teachers must provide their pupils with a variety of reflection tools, in order for them to systemize and link intercultural experiences to relevant theories (Dypedahl, 2007, p. 8).

Teachers of the ESL classroom are obliged to promote intercultural competence. Although the English Subject Curriculum does not use the term intercultural competence, the description of the subject area facilitates such an interpretation (Dypedahl & Eschenbach, 2011, p. 211). The main subject area: *culture, society and literature*, states that pupils are to work with and discuss cultural forms of expression, including expository texts and material from different media. It further states that: "This is essential to develop knowledge about, understanding of and respect for the lives and cultures of other people" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013, p. 2). In other words, it focuses on cultural understanding in a broad sense.

There is a variety of teaching tools that can be used to promote pupils' intercultural competence, but in this thesis the emphasis is on film as a tool. Film has become an integrated part of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom and it is a unique and powerful tool that provides pupils with "real" situations. Even though scenes in a film are staged, they can still be used to cover key topics connected to social issues and cultural expressions of different cultures (Björk, Eschenbach & Svenhard, 2014, p. 196). In this thesis, film is used to illustrate and exemplify five intercultural concepts: culture, identity, stereotypes, prejudice and racism. The pupils link and systemize intercultural experiences from film to these terms. Consequently, these intercultural terms create the foundation of tools for reflection.

## 1.2. Research question

As the introduction has shown, it is very useful to have intercultural competence in today's world. People with different cultural backgrounds interact more frequently, and to experience intercultural contact has become very common. In this thesis I explore to what extent film as a tool can help promote intercultural competence in the Norwegian ESL classroom at lower secondary school (9<sup>th</sup> grade). I have chosen the film *The Help* (Taylor, Columbus, Barnathan & Green, 2011), which sheds light on several intercultural concepts.

The research question in this thesis is: **To what extent may the film *The Help* be used to promote intercultural competence in the Norwegian ESL classroom?**

As I have already stated in the introduction, the focus is on the five intercultural concepts: culture, identity, stereotypes, prejudice and racism.

## 1.3. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Following the introduction chapter, is chapter two, which consists of the theoretical framework. This chapter presents a model of intercultural competence that lists four components. Further, it emphasizes the importance of promoting pupils' intercultural competence, before it argues why film can be a great teaching tool when promoting such competence. Concepts of intercultural communication are also presented. Chapter three, method and material, contains

information about the participants of this project, and it presents the method and the material that is used. The study is primarily based on a film analysis of *The Help* from an intercultural perspective, with emphasis on the viewer-response approach. Chapter four presents the teaching project in detail. In addition to this, sequences of *The Help* are analyzed and the viewer-response approach is introduced. The findings and the results of the teaching project are discussed and analyzed in chapter five, before a final conclusion is drawn in chapter six.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Intercultural competence

#### **Concept of culture**

Dypedahl and Eschenbach claim that how one defines and interprets intercultural competence, depends on how one defines the complex, ubiquitous and problematic term *culture* (2011, p. 212). *Culture* has different meanings in different contexts. The concept of culture has changed over time. It has gone from an emphasis on literature, philosophy and arts to culture as a shared way of living (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002, p. 9). Today, culture is often simply described as a way of life. Cambridge Dictionary online describes culture as: “The way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time”. Culture is not innate but something that is learned through one’s social environment. It is transferred from generation to generation, and it changes and evolves over time. As a result, culture is dynamic and never static (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2010, p. 38).

#### **Concept of intercultural competence**

Having defined the term culture, let us now take a closer look at intercultural competence. Defining intercultural competence is a complex task, and there are several ways of defining it. Risager claims that the definition of the concept always is contextually determined (2000, p. 1). Consequently, she argues that it is not possible for the concept to have only one particular definition. Risager further argues that it is a lifelong process to develop intercultural competence. All societies are culturally complex since cultures and people constantly change and evolve (2000, p. 2). Byram et al. (2002, p. 10) define intercultural competence as “[the] ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality”. In other words, to have the ability to communicate appropriately with people from different cultures is important.

When two people communicate, they do so much more than just exchange information. They see the other person as an individual, but also as someone who belongs to a specific social group. This, especially the latter perspective, influences our behavior and



our way of communicating (Byram et al., 2002, p. 9). Our social identity is a part of who we are, and as a result, also a part of how others view us. It is therefore important that the learners of the ESL classroom are able to communicate in culturally and socially appropriate ways, and have knowledge of what is appropriate and what is not (Byram et al., 2002, p. 9). In other words, it is important that they have intercultural competence.

### 2.1.1. The concept of intercultural competence: A model

Byram et al. present a model that lists four components of intercultural competence: *knowledge, skills, attitudes* and *critical cultural awareness*. These components are important to know in order to understand intercultural human relationships (2002, p. 10), and needless to say, all components are important. They describe an intercultural speaker and what this speaker needs to possess to be called an intercultural speaker. Below, the four components of intercultural competence by Byram et al. are presented in the table.

Attitudes	Knowledge	Skills	Critical cultural awareness
<p>“Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own”.</p>	<p>“Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction”.</p>	<p>“Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one’s own”.</p> <p>“Ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction”.</p>	<p>“An ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries”.</p>

**Figure 1.** Components of intercultural competence. (Based on Byram et al., 2002, pp. 12-13).

The first component is intercultural *attitudes*. An intercultural speaker needs to be curious, open and take an interest in other cultures. To have the ability to look at things from an outsider's perspective, be accepting and flexible is very important. One must simply not assume that one's own values, beliefs and behaviors are the only correct ones (Byram et al., 2002, p. 12). Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoin-Gaillard & Philippou argue that everyone should be willing to learn from people who have different cultural perspectives (2014, p. 19). Respecting and valuing other cultures is important, and in addition to this, one must also have tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty.

The second component, *knowledge*, is about having culture general knowledge and culture specific knowledge (Byram et al., 2002, p. 12). Both are important. Culture general knowledge helps one deal with any intercultural encounter, while culture specific knowledge is knowledge about one specific culture. The latter will help one deal with an intercultural encounter with that specific culture. In addition to having knowledge about others, one must also reflect upon and have knowledge about how people are likely to perceive you (Byram et al., 2002, p. 12). To have knowledge, understanding and to be aware of one's own and other people's stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination is also important (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 19).

The third component is *skills*. Since nobody can anticipate all their knowledge needs, it is necessary to obtain the skills that are needed to acquire new knowledge. Byram et al. consider it a skill to integrate new knowledge with what knowledge a person already has. Consequently, an intercultural speaker needs to have skills of discovery and interaction. In addition to this, an intercultural speaker also needs the skills of comparison, interpreting and relating (Byram et al., 2002, p. 13). This includes having the ability to interpret something that is happening within one culture, in addition to having the skills of relating it to one's own culture. These skills are crucial in order to be able to see how misunderstandings may arise, and also to see how to resolve them (Byram et al., 2002, p. 12).

The fourth, and last, component is *critical cultural awareness*. In addition to having the required attitudes, knowledge and skills, an intercultural speaker must also have the ability to critically evaluate one's own culture and values as well as foreign cultures and foreign values. An intercultural speaker must also be aware of how one's own values can influence the views of other people's values (Byram et al., 2002, p. 13). Critical reflection and independent thinking is therefore extremely important. Not only are there multiple cultures and values worldwide, but there are also multiple perspectives. Having presented a model of intercultural competence, let us now take a closer look at the Norwegian curriculum's view on intercultural learning.

### **2.1.2. Intercultural competence in the Norwegian curriculum**

The Norwegian curriculum states that teachers of the EFL classroom are obliged to promote intercultural learning. In the English subject curriculum, it is stated that:

In addition to language learning, the subject of English shall contribute to providing insight into the way people live and different cultures where English is the primary or the official language. [...] Development of communicative language skills and cultural insight can promote greater interaction, understanding and respect between persons with different cultural backgrounds. Thus, language and cultural competence promote the general education perspective and strengthen democratic involvement and co-citizenship

(The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013, p. 1).

Although the term intercultural competence is not used, the description of the English subject curriculum facilitates such an interpretation (Dypedahl & Eschenbach, 2011, p. 211). There are several objectives in the curriculum that refer to, and underline, the importance of intercultural learning. Lund states that "LK-06 refers clearly to the need for students to concern themselves with intercultural issues" (Lund, 2008, p. 4). The curriculum states that pupils are to focus on cultural understanding in a broad sense, and also to cover key topics connected to social issues and other cultural expressions. In addition to this they are to "develop knowledge about, understanding of and respect for the lives and cultures of other people" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006, p. 9).

Pupils of the Norwegian ESL classroom are provided with insight into the way people from different cultures live and express themselves. Since Norway is a multicultural society, people with different cultural backgrounds often meet. Consequently, the core curriculum claims that it is important that the pupils' intercultural competence is developed in school. The concrete learning objectives for this project are presented in the teaching plan table.

When it comes to developing intercultural competence through film as a tool, the curriculum states that pupils are to communicate and converse about own texts inspired by English films. They are also to discuss and elaborate on the way people live and socialize in different countries (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006, p. 9). It also argues that films, amongst other tools, can inspire personal expressions and creativity.

### **2.1.3. Intercultural competence and film**

Films and TV-series are an integrated part of pupils' digital everyday lives. Consequently, learning from film is very often motivating and enjoyable for pupils. Today film is a commonly used teaching tool in the ESL classroom, and so it has been for the last decades. In addition to film being a fun and motivating tool, it has many other advantages. It can be a great tool to use in the classroom when learning about other cultures. In other words, it is a tool that can be used to promote intercultural competence (Björk, Eschenbach & Svenhard, 2014, p. 196). Since films reflect the society they are made in, they may help pupils develop a better understanding and respect for the lives and cultures of other people. Film can easily illustrate how problems and misunderstandings may arise, and also how they can be dealt with (Björk et al., 2014, p. 196). Also, another advantage film has is that it shows non-verbal communication. This is extremely important, especially when focusing on different intercultural concepts. A person's body language can express feelings, thoughts, ideas and emotions. It can also reflect one's personality and support verbal communication. Consequently, non-verbal communication is often more important than verbal communication.

Troung and Tran claim that textbooks are inadequate and inappropriate when developing intercultural competence in the classroom. The amount of cultural

information is too limited and they only expose pupils to visible elements of culture (Troung & Tran, 2014, p. 211). Film, in contrast to textbooks, gives the pupils access to contextualized learning and lets them “live” in a different culture. Film gives pupils a sense of the reality of the target culture (Troung & Tran, 2014, p. 208). According to Holden there are several advantages of using film in the classroom. Firstly, it can be used as a springboard to discuss and reflect upon real-life topics and shared experiences. Secondly, it contributes to the development of critical and analytical skills. Thirdly, it encourages students to interpret, think and respond subjectively (2000, p. 41).

When using film in the classroom, it is not always necessary to show the complete film. Sometimes it can be enough to only watch a couple of sequences (Björk et al., 2014, p. 197). The teacher can choose sequences that illustrate and focus specifically on the given intercultural concept. By doing this, it might be easier for the pupils to know what to focus on. When the pupils are only presented with sequences, it creates much space for subjective interpretation, creativity and critical and analytical thinking. Which method to choose, depends on the teaching aims and the objectives for the lesson. In this teaching project, selected sequences are used as a starting point for the pupils to reflect upon the illustrated incidents and try to develop their understanding of other peoples’ lives and culture.

## **2.2. Concepts of intercultural communication**

### **Stereotypes**

Brislin states that: “stereotypes refer to beliefs about a group of people that give insufficient attention to individual differences among the group’s members” (2000, p. 198). Stereotyping in general can be both positive and negative, but due to broad generalizations it is normally associated with something negative. When someone labels or categorizes a group of people and assumes that every person in that group will think and behave identically, their individual differences are put a side, and this is called stereotyping (Byram et al., 2002, p. 27).

It is very common that stereotypes are subconscious. Human beings have a tendency to naturally categorize things, people and thoughts. It makes it easier for us to remember

when we categorize and “organize things in boxes”. These categories, along with stereotypes, can be viewed as a method for organizing our thoughts (Brislin, 2000, p. 199). Consequently, we are not always aware of the fact that we stereotype others. Even though categorizing others can be quite useful, it can have a negative outcome. When the individual differences are put aside, people tend to overgeneralize the categories. Even when a person is confronted with instances that contradict stereotypes, it is very common for that person to assume that this is just a special case. As a result, stereotypes are often difficult to change.

Stereotypes can be a hinder to true communication between people. When dealing with other cultures, it is important to keep in mind that the values and behavior of a person within one culture may not represent the exact same values and behavior of another person within that particular culture (Samovar et al., 2010, p. 41). Consequently, one should always be cautious when making broad cultural generalizations. There are many factors that contribute to shaping a person. Culture is not the only factor (Samovar et al., 2010, p. 41).

### **Prejudice**

Byram et al. argue that “prejudice occurs when someone pre-judges a particular group or individual based on their own stereotypical assumptions or ignorance” (2002, p. 27). Similarly to stereotypes, prejudices are also based on feelings and not reasons. Prejudice often refers to very negative feelings about others. Koppelman and Goodhart refer to studies completed on this matter, and claim that no studies show that prejudice is a part of human nature. We are not born with prejudice. It is something we learn from others through socialization in our childhood (Koppelman & Goodhart, 2011, p. 24).

Children learn from adults that people have in-groups and out-groups in their lives (Brislin, 2000, p. 209). The former, in-groups, refers to individuals one has positive feelings about and can depend on. They are also considered as being similar to oneself. The latter, out-groups, refers to individuals people keep at a distance and more often have negative feelings about. Since out-groups are viewed as “too different”, they are not that worthy of one’s time (Brislin, 2000, p. 209). Prejudice is negative feelings about out-groups.

The negative attitude, prejudice, may be directed towards either a group, or towards an individual, who is a part of a specific group. When someone develops prejudice against a specific group, negative feelings develop and actions may be taken against other people who are members of this group. Once this turns into negative behavior it is discrimination (Koppelman and Goodhart, 2011, p. 29). Prejudice influences peoples' actions and behavior in a negative way.

### **Racism**

Racism can be looked at as an extension of stereotyping and prejudice. It occurs when people believe that their race is inherently superior to another race (Samovar et al., 2010, p. 238). Some people believe that all members who are born into certain out-groups are inferior in various ways. Due to this, they should not fully benefit from the offerings a society has (Brislin, 2000, p. 214). In other words, some people are denied opportunities because of something they have no control over. Being born to parents from an out-group is something no individual can control. People who believe that certain out-group members are naturally ignorant and therefore should not be granted the same standard of life as others are racists (Brislin, 2000, p. 234). To sum up, when a person or a group of people mistreat others because of their race, color, national origin, religion or sexual preference, they are racists.

Racism can be both conscious and unconscious. A lot of racism is part of an unconscious process. To counter this, it is necessary to develop more awareness of and focus on racism. It is important for every individual to be aware of one's own actions and comments. We need to acknowledge the reality of racism in today's world and develop norms and values that reject racism (Williams, 2004, p. 20).

### **Identity and culture**

Identity plays a central role in communication and culture. Wahl and Scholl describe identity as "the representation of how you view yourself and how others might see you. Almost every word you utter in the presence of others, and virtually every way you express yourself nonverbally, is an expression of your identity" (2014, p. 67). This means that our way of communicating with others is closely linked to a person's

identity (2014, p. 67). Samovar et al. argue that “whether it be your individual, group or cultural identity, your interaction with others offers you insight into who you are, where you belong, and where your loyalties rest” (2010, p. 15). Each and every person has their own unique identity, and this specific identity gives people a sense of belonging. There are many factors that contribute to shaping a person’s identity, one of them being culture.

The culture a person exists in impacts and plays a role in the development of their identity. Culture, which is learned through one’s social environment, consists of values, beliefs and practices of a particular group of people that are transferred from one generation to another (Samovar et al., p. 38). As people grow, they learn about these cultural elements and naturally integrate these into their way of living. Values, beliefs and practices, along with other cultural elements, can therefore affect and contribute to shaping a person’s identity (Wahl & Scholl, 2014, p. 67). To sum up, culture, identity and communication are closely connected to each other. The culture a person is a part of naturally influences their identity.



### 3. Method and material

#### 3.1. Participants

The class participating in this project is a Norwegian Year 9 ESL class that consists of 28 boys and girls between the age of 13 and 14. The majority of the pupils are ethnic Norwegians, but there are also other ethnic backgrounds such as Poland, The Netherlands, The Czech Republic, Iraq and Thailand. Consequently, there is a diversity of cultural and national backgrounds in the class. However, the pupils seem to respect one another, and the learning environment in class is very good. All the pupils are comfortable enough to fully participate in both group and individual activities, but when it comes to participating in full class, there are different viewpoints. While some are very comfortable participating in full class, others are a bit more hesitant, due to various reasons. Consequently, they prefer group work instead. The pupils' language skills vary from very good to poor.

The class is familiar with using film as a teaching tool, but in various degrees due to the fact that they come from different elementary schools. That said, since the pupils started lower secondary school, they have all been equipped with a school tablet each. Consequently, they have, over the last two years, had much experience with watching and creating Explain Everything videos and video clips in general. Film is a popular medium in this class, and it seems as if the pupils find it highly motivating.

#### 3.2. Method

This study is primarily based on a film analysis of *The Help* from an intercultural perspective. Three sequences of *The Help* are selected and given emphasis to, since they illustrate the intercultural concepts that are highlighted in this thesis well. The sequences illustrate how assumptions, stereotypes, prejudice and racism can affect one's behavior towards others, but also how they affect one's own culture and one's own identity. They also illustrate in what way a person's identity can be affected by different cultural elements.

In order for the pupils to be able to analyze the selected sequences in a good way, they are given information about the film's setting, background and plot before the analysis is to take place. It is also important that the pupils have knowledge and understanding of

the film as a whole. The time and place of the story certainly have a huge impact on many of the things that happen in the film. It is for example highly relevant that the pupils are aware of the fact that the story takes place in Jackson, Mississippi, early in the 1960s, when they are to analyze and interpret the sequences. Details about the film follow below.

The aim of this study is to find out to what extent *The Help* can be used to promote intercultural competence in the ESL classroom. With the purpose of doing that, a selection of the written responses from both viewer-response worksheets and a final reflective writing assignment, are presented and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework earlier presented in this thesis.

The sample group, or in other words, the number of participants of this study, is too limited and narrow to represent a whole population. The findings can therefore not be generalized. However, although one cannot generalize the findings of this study, there is a possibility that the study itself may be interesting and inspiring to others. There is a chance that other teachers would like to implement the exact same teaching plan in their Norwegian ELS classroom. If this was to happen, it is important to be aware of the fact that their results may differ slightly from the ones presented here. There are other factors, such as the pupils' language skills, that can affect the results.

### **3.3. Materials**

The teaching plan, which is related to the competence aims in the curriculum, includes a variety of both oral and written leaning activities. Some of the learning activities are to be completed individually, while others in pairs, small groups or in plenary. Short video clips are used to introduce and illustrate new terms. Activities such as whiteboard race and mind-map are used as tools for reflection. The teaching plan is developed in a way that the components of intercultural competence are taken care of. The pupils are provided with a viewer-response worksheet that is to be completed and discussed, after each of the three sequences from *The Help* is shown. These responses, along with the responses to a final reflective writing assignment, are presented and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework, and this study's research question.

## 4. The teaching project

### 4.1. *The Help*

The story takes place in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1963, during the era of Civil Rights Movement. Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan, a 23-year-old white woman, has recently returned from Ole Miss with a college degree, and wants to pursue a career as a journalist. Skeeter is concerned with the racist attitudes towards the maids and wants to write a book from the point of view of the help. She convinces two African-Americans, Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson, to share their personal stories.

Aibileen is a kind-hearted 53-year-old African-American who works as a maid. She has raised seventeen white babies. Minny, who is Aibileen’s best friend, also works as a maid for a white family. They both feel unaccepted and are forced to deal with racial attitudes on a daily basis. Minny’s employer, Miss Hilly Holbrook, who once was close friends with Skeeter, believes in the ideal “separate, but equal”. She is a racist who is in support of racial segregation. Hilly wants the “colored”<sup>1</sup> maids to have their own bathroom, outside, so she has drafted a disease-preventative bill to the Home Health Sanitation Initiative. Hilly believes that “colored” people carry different diseases than white people. Consequently, they cannot share a bathroom.

Towards the ending, Skeeter gets more maids to share their stories, even though they are terrified due to the Jim Crow laws, laws that enforce racial segregation. Skeeter’s publisher wants Skeeter to include her personal story in the book as well, since her family has had a “colored” maid, Constantine, for years. Skeeter learns that her mother, Charlotte, fired their beloved maid Constantine, only to save face during a lunch with the Daughters of America, which is a nativist organization for women. The film is filled with portrayals of stereotypical, prejudicial and racist attitudes and behavior.

### 4.2. Intercultural concepts in *The Help*

*The Help* contains many scenes where intercultural contact occurs. Issues such as racial segregation, injustice, judgement and cultural conflicts are illustrated throughout the

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<sup>1</sup> I am aware of this no longer being appropriate, but since this is the concept used in the film, I use it here.

film. In this section of the thesis, three sequences from the film will be presented. These specific sequences are chosen because they illustrate intercultural concepts such as stereotypes, prejudice, racism and identity.

### **Sequence 1 (14:12 – 17:53)**

#### **Description**

The first sequence takes place in Mississippi, in the home of Elizabeth Leefolt, who is a friend of Skeeter. Many of Elizabeth's white female friends are gathered at her house for a bridge club meeting. Elizabeth and three of her closest friends, including Skeeter, play cards at a table. One of them, Hilly, has to use the bathroom very badly, but refuses to use the guest bathroom in Elizabeth's house. She assumes that Elizabeth's "colored" maid, Aibileen, also uses the guest bathroom and she does not want to share a bathroom with a "colored" person. Hilly is delusional and fears that she might catch an illness that people with dark skin supposedly carry. She does not want to take any risks.

In the shot below (15:00), Elizabeth tries to convince Hilly to use the bathroom, but Hilly has made up her mind. She does not want to. Hilly does not hesitate to make racist comments, even though Elizabeth's "colored" maid, Aibileen, stands right next to them. She does not seem to care about what "colored" people think or how it might affect them.



Figure 1: Hilly refuses to use Elizabeth's bathroom.

Skeeter, one of the other two ladies<sup>2</sup> around the table, is very uncomfortable talking negatively about “colored” people, especially as Aibileen is standing right next to them. Skeeter’s body language signals that she is embarrassed and ashamed. She attempts, several times, to redirect the conversation to avoid the topic, but without any luck. Hilly enthusiastically informs the other three ladies that she has drafted a disease-preventative bill to the Home Health Sanitation Initiative. The disease-preventative bill requires every white home to have a separate bathroom for the “colored” help. Skeeter is disappointed in Hilly. She teases Hilly and says “well, maybe we should just build you a bathroom outside, Hilly”. Hilly is offended. She tells Skeeter not to joke about the “colored” people’s situation, and that she will do anything it takes to protect her children.

When the bridge club is over, Skeeter apologizes to Aibileen in the kitchen. She feels bad about the racist comments Hilly has made earlier. When Skeeter hears Preacher Green’s sermon on the radio, it reminds her of her family’s maid, Constantine, who quit. Skeeter misses Constantine and is positively surprised when Aibileen mentions that she knows Constantine from church. When Skeeter asks Aibileen if she knows why Constantine quit, Aibileen gets very confused.

## **Discussion**

Hilly, and the women at the bridge club meeting, view Aibileen as a member of an out-group only because she is a “colored person”. They speak and think poorly of all “coloreds”. Hilly’s body language, attitude and comments support the fact that she is a racist. As Samovar et al. claim, racism occurs when people believe that their race is inherently superior to another race (2010, p. 238). Hilly truly believes in white privilege, and she prejudices Aibileen based on her own stereotypical assumptions. Not only does Hilly believe that “coloreds” carry different diseases than whites do, she also signals that all “coloreds” have these diseases, Aibileen included. In Hilly’s mindset, individual differences are definitely put aside. She does not know Aibileen personally, nor does she give her the benefit of the doubt.

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<sup>2</sup> I use this expression in order to mirror the time in which the film is set.

## Sequence 2 (33:43 – 38:00)

### Description

Aibileen uses the guest bathroom outside. While sitting there, Elizabeth tells her to hurry up. Elizabeth has to go to a doctor's appointment, and she needs Aibileen to look after her daughter, Mae. While standing outside waiting, Mae gets excited to see Aibileen. She walks closer to the bathroom and says "that's Aibee's bathroom, mama. Hey Aibee". Elizabeth stops her and says "no no no, honey. Promise me you won't go in there. OK?" In the shot below (34:20), Aibileen hurries out of the guest bathroom and lifts up Mae. Elizabeth is quick to leave. When she walks towards her car she comments, "Isn't it nice to have your own, Aibileen?" Aibileen sighs. Mae looks lovingly at Aibileen and says "you're my real mama, Aibee". Aibileen gives Mae a kiss on the cheek, and Mae hugs Aibileen.



Figure 2: Aibileen hurries out of the guest bathroom.

In the shot below (35:48), Skeeter approaches Aibileen at a bus stop. She once again asks Aibileen if she can help her write a book about the point of view of the help. Aibileen is very uncomfortable. The bus takes off, without Aibileen. Skeeter says she wants to interview Aibileen. She knows it is risky, but she wants Aibileen to share her personal story, and adds that a book like this has never been written before.



Figure 3: Skeeter asks Aibileen if she can interview her.

In the shot below (36:42), you can tell that Aibileen is terrified only by thinking about sharing her personal story due to the Jim Crow laws. At this point, she is extremely uncomfortable, and also afraid that someone is going to suspect something since she is talking to a white woman in public. There is nothing that scares her more than the Jim Crow laws. Skeeter hands Aibileen her phone number and offers to drive her home. Aibileen, who is very concerned about the whole conversation says “no, mam”, before she walks off.



Figure 4: Aibileen expresses her worries about the Jim Crow laws.

At the end of the sequence, Skeeter sits outside and reads: *The Laws Governing the Conduct of Nonwhites and other Minorities*. It states, “Any person, printing, publishing

or circulating written matter urging for public acceptance or social equality between whites and Negroes, is subject to imprisonment”. This means that it is illegal for Skeeter to write and publish such a book.

### **Discussion**

The irony of the whole guest bathroom situation is that while Elizabeth firmly believes that white and “colored” people should not share bathrooms, she, herself, has hired a “colored” maid to raise and take care of her white child. Elizabeth refuses to let Mae use the guest bathroom, but, on the other hand, she is fine with Mae spending most of her day with a “colored” person. Even though Elizabeth, and her white friends, are convinced that they believe in the ideal “separate, but equal”, it is clear that they do not view Aibileen, and the other “colored” maids, as equal to themselves. It is clear that they view “colored” people as an out-group. All the maids are often met with racist comments and actions.

Mae is without doubt very fond of Aibileen. She loves her like a mother and does not seem to care about Aibileen’s skin color. As Koppelman and Goodhart (2011, p. 24) claim, prejudice is not something we are born with. It is not a part of human nature. It is something we learn from others through socialization. It seems as if Mae has not been influenced by her parents. That said, she is still at a very young age. As Brislin (2000, p. 209) claims, children learn from adults that people have both in-groups and out-groups in their lives. Consequently, there is a risk that Mae might adopt some of her parents’ attitudes and values, as she grows older.

### **Sequence 3 (1:48:11 – 1:54:33)**

#### **Description**

Aibileen, Minnie and Skeeter sit around a table in Aibileen’s home. The book *The Help* is close to finished. Aibileen and Minnie seem very proud of what they all have accomplished together, and they are excited about the book. The only story that is missing in the book is Skeeter’s personal story. Skeeter heads back home to find out what happened to their maid.



Skeeter approaches her mother, Charlotte, in her bedroom. She wants to talk about their maid, Constantine, who quit. She sits down at the end of her mother's bed and says "what happened?" Charlotte does not want to talk about it and is very hesitant, but Skeeter, who wants answers, demands that she tells her. Charlotte sighs and says "she didn't give me a choice. The Daughters of America had just appointed me state regent. Grace Higginbotham, our esteemed president, came all the way down from Washington D.C., to our house for the ceremony". The film shows a flashback of the story that Charlotte refers to. In the shot below (1:49:56) Grace Higginbotham and the other members of Daughters of America have dinner at Charlotte's house.



Figure 4: Grace Higginbotham is not satisfied with the job Constantine is doing.

Constantine serves food, and does not hear the doorbell when it rings. Grace is shocked that Charlotte's maid does not open the door and looks astonished at Charlotte. Charlotte, who knows that Constantine is old and slow, opens the door herself. Rachel, Constantine's daughter, is at the door. She has come to visit her beloved mother and is extremely excited. Charlotte asks her to go through the back door and wait in the kitchen since she has guests over. She closes the door and goes back to the dinner table. Rachel, who is confused by Charlotte's behavior, bursts through the door and says "I am going to the kitchen, but I am going to see my mama first". Her voice is calm, but firm. The ladies around the table are shocked by Rachel's behavior. Grace stands up and says to Charlotte "you may put up with this kind of nonsense, but I do not". All the women expect Charlotte to handle the situation. They do not tolerate this kind of

behavior. Charlotte therefore ends up telling both Rachel and Constantine to leave her house. Rachel helps her mother out the door. In the shot below (1:52:19), Rachel and Constantine stand outside. They are shocked, disappointed and very confused. They have been close with the family for a long time, and do not understand why they are treated so poorly.



Figure 5: Constantine and Rachel are forced to leave Charlotte’s house.

The film goes back to the conversation with Skeeter and her mother in the bedroom. Skeeter is very confused and does not understand why her mother acted that way when she knows that she loves both Constantine and Rachel. Charlotte says “she was our president. What was I supposed to do?” Skeeter is very upset. Constantine was like a mother to her. Charlotte regretted firing Constantine and sent Skeeter’s brother to Chicago to bring her back home the next day. It was too late. When he got there she had already died. In the shot below (1:54:08), Skeeter is told that Constantine has passed away. She is devastated and says to her mother “you broke her heart”.

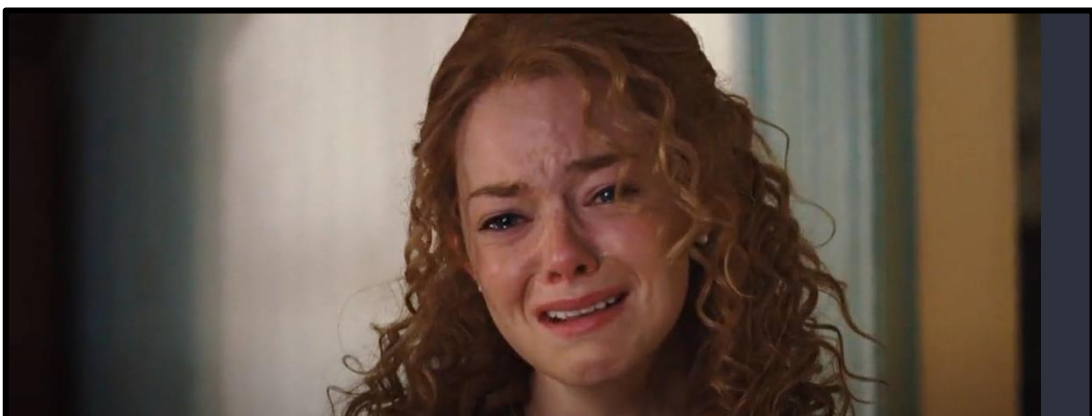


Figure 6: Skeeter is told that her beloved maid, Constantine, recently passed away.

## **Discussion**

Even though Charlotte regrets firing Constantine and apologizes to Skeeter several times, she does not want to take any responsibility for her actions. She tells Skeeter that she is not to blame, and that none of it is her fault. When Charlotte tells Constantine and Rachel to leave her home, her tone and actions are harsh, but her facial expression shows that she finds it difficult to do so. Because of that, she takes one last glance at the ladies around the dinner table, before she finally shuts the door. It is clear that she only fires Constantine because the Daughters of America expect her to do so. In their eyes, Constantine is only a “colored” maid, who does not do her job properly. Constantine is mistreated because of her race and skin color. The Daughters of America do not care about the fact that Constantine and Rachel have been a part of the family for years.

### **4.3. The Viewer-Response Approach**

Teasley and Wilder compare film with literature and claim that film, similarly to literature, can inspire serious thought and discussion. They present the viewer-response approach, which is an approach that derives from the reader-response approach. Strategies that are consistent with the reader-response approach are applied to film. Teasley and Wilder argue that through this approach, they can produce empowered pupils that are able to form their own interpretations of a film and be respectful of others’ opinions (1997, p. 48).

Based on their own experience as students in literature classes and as teachers, Teasley and Wilder claim that the content of a film is not to be treated as a fixed content where interpretations are memorized instead of created. Teachers are not to be the only source of right answers, nor are they to be the final judge on all interpretations (1997, p. 48). A teacher’s personal interpretation and experience of a film is neither the truth nor identical to anyone else’s. As a result of all people having their own experiences, beliefs and ideologies, their responses to a film will differ. The viewer-response approach encourages pupils to respond and express their own ideas and opinions freely. Pupils are to make up their own minds about the film.

Teasley and Wilder explain how to implement the approach as a tool in the classroom. After the pupils have viewed a sequence of a film, they recommend that the pupils take notes on a viewing guide (1997, p. 49). The questions on the viewing guide are open-ended questions. After each sequence of the film, the pupils are to discuss what they have seen (1997, p. 49). The goal is for the pupils to make their own individual interpretations. These interpretations are based on their own personal experiences. Consequently, in a classroom, we end up with multiple understandings and interpretations of the same film. While the teacher is a listener and a facilitator, the pupils are to participate actively in the discussions. If obvious misunderstandings arise the teacher should intervene and clarify these misunderstanding (1997, p. 49).

There are many advantages of using the viewer-response approach. Firstly, viewing a film together in class creates a shared moment that the pupils are able to discuss with each other afterwards. Sharing positive experiences with others and discussing them afterwards, often creates a good atmosphere (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 50). Secondly, the approach requires all the pupils to be active viewers. They all need to take notes individually and share their personal interpretations with each other. In order to do so, everyone must pay close attention to what is going on in the film (1997, p. 50). Consequently, each pupil is an active participant throughout the whole process. Thirdly, and lastly, the approach provides a richer experience of the film. When the teacher lets the pupils make their own connection to the film, multiple interpretations arise and the learning potential increases for everyone. Everyone is naturally more open-minded when there is no correct answer.

Teasley and Wilder argue that the most important tool when using the viewer-response approach in the classroom is the viewing guide. Each sequence or “chunk of the film” that is viewed, should have its own handout page with open-ended questions that are devoted to that specific sequence (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 52). The pupils are to take notes on these viewing guides individually. As soon as a viewing guide is completed, time should be provided for a discussion to take place. Teasley and Wilder recommend that the discussion is to take place before the next sequence of the film is shown (1997, p. 52). The viewing guides that Teasley and Wilder refer to are, in this thesis, called viewer-response worksheets.

As a final activity, Teasley and Wilder suggest a written assignment. This assignment is to be based on the viewing responses of the film. Teasley and Wilder argue that “students produce better writing when they have something to say” and further argue that everyone has plenty to say about films they watch in class (1997, p. 66). Personal essay, analytical essay and imaginative writing are some examples of final activities that they present.

The viewer-response approach forms the basis of the activities in the lessons where sequences of the film *The Help* are shown. Each sequence of the film has its own viewer-response worksheet. As a final activity in the last week, the pupils are presented with a written reflective assignment, where they are to recognize and identify stereotypical, prejudicial and racial attitudes in *The Help*, and also reflect upon in what way these concepts can affect a person’s behavior, culture and identity.

#### 4.4. The teaching plan

Week 1	Lesson 1 (60 min)	Lesson 2 (60 min)
<b>Topic: an overview</b>	<p>Introduction of the project.</p> <p>What is culture?</p> <p>What are the pupils’ cultural traditions?</p> <p>Which aspects of the pupils’ identities are important in defining who they are?</p> <p>In what way is our identity affected by culture?</p>	<p>Focus on three intercultural concepts: stereotyping, prejudice and racism</p> <p>What does “don’t judge a book by its cover” mean?</p> <p>What is typically Norwegian? Do these assumptions apply to all Norwegians?</p> <p>What are the pros and cons of using a label or categories when describing others?</p> <p>How do assumptions affect our behavior towards others?</p>
<b>Methods and materials</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. YouTube:<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6xSyRJqIe8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6xSyRJqIe8</a> Explain briefly what this intercultural project is about.</li> <li>2. Video clip: Introducing the term culture: <a href="https://study.com/academy/lesson/culture-definition-lesson-for-kids.html">https://study.com/academy/lesson/culture-definition-lesson-for-kids.html</a></li> <li>3. In pairs: mind-map about</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Small groups: Present the identity bubble map. Explain in what way your identity is affected by your culture.</li> <li>2. In pairs: make a list of 7-10 things that are typically Norwegian.</li> <li>3. In plenary: Do these assumptions apply to all</li> </ol>

	<p>culture. (Also, everyone writes one example on the whiteboard).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whiteboard race: Write words related to the topic. 4 teams.</li> <li>PP about culture and identity (Appendix B)</li> <li>Group work: share 2-3 of your cultural traditions.</li> <li>Individual work: use the app iThoughts to create an identity bubble map (name in the middle + some aspects of yourself that define who you are)</li> </ol>	<p>Norwegians?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YouTube: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6xSyRJqIe8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6xSyRJqIe8</a></li> <li>Individual work: Write 3 sentences and exemplify how other people may view you; based on your looks, background or ethnicity. (It does not have to be true). Discuss in plenary: how does it make you feel, regardless if it is true or not?</li> <li>In plenary: Present the pupils with several examples of stereotyping.</li> <li>In pairs: Discuss pros and cons of stereotyping.</li> <li>YouTube: Prejudice <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZFMZ6_v2Oo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZFMZ6_v2Oo</a></li> <li>Discuss in small groups: what is prejudice and what is racism?</li> </ol>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define culture and understand the basic components of culture.</li> <li>Find evidence of culture in your life and how this affects your identity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define stereotype, prejudice and racism.</li> <li>Be able to recognize my own and others' stereotypical, prejudicial and racial attitudes.</li> </ul>
<b>Individual homework</b>	<b>After lesson 1:</b> Finish the identity bubble map. Write one paragraph where you explain in what way your identity is affected by your culture.	<b>After lesson 2:</b> Answer questions about stereotyping, prejudice and racism. (Appendix C).

Week 2	Lesson 1 (60 min)	Lesson 2 (60 min)
<b>Topic: an overview</b>	<p>Introducing the Civil Rights Movement</p> <p>What is racial segregation?</p> <p>What does “separate but equal” mean?</p> <p>Consequences of racial segregation</p> <p>Introduction of the film <i>The Help</i></p>	<p>Analyzing a sequence from the film <i>The Help</i> with emphasis on racism.</p> <p>What are some of the challenges Aibileen has to face on a daily basis?</p> <p>In what way is her identity and her feelings affected by this?</p>

<p><b>Methods and materials</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In plenary: Repeat the intercultural concepts from last week + homework.</li> <li>2. In pairs and in plenary: What do you know about the Civil Rights Movement? What is racial segregation?</li> <li>3. Video clip: Civil Rights Movement <a href="https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-origins-of-civil-rights-history-lesson-quiz.html">https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-origins-of-civil-rights-history-lesson-quiz.html</a></li> <li>4. In pairs: Explain what the video was about and give examples of racial segregation.</li> <li>5. Video clip: Racial discrimination <a href="https://study.com/academy/lesson/racial-discrimination-definition-examples.html">https://study.com/academy/lesson/racial-discrimination-definition-examples.html</a></li> <li>6. Individual work: Worksheet about the advertising poster. (Appendix D)</li> <li>7. YouTube: trailer x 2 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0dWCXCjX9o">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0dWCXCjX9o</a></li> <li>8. Worksheet with questions about the trailer and the characters in the film (Appendix E).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In plenary: Summarize homework.</li> <li>2. View the first sequence of <i>The Help</i>.</li> <li>3. Individual work: Viewer-response worksheet 1 (Appendix F).</li> <li>4. In pairs and plenary: Discuss and talk about the key points from the viewer-response worksheet.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be able to identify situations in <i>The Help</i> and events during the Civil Rihts Movement where racial segregation and racism occur.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be able to recognize others' stereotypical, prejudicial and racial attitudes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Individual homework</b></p>	<p>After lesson 1: Answer questions about the film trailer (Appendix E).</p>	<p>After lesson 2: Pick one of the characters from the sequence you watched in class. Explain why you would/ would not like to have him/her as a friend. Write 1-2 paragraphs.</p>

Week 3	Lesson 1 (60 min)	Lesson 2 (60 min)
<b>Topic: an overview</b>	<p>Analyzing a sequence from the film <i>The Help</i>.</p> <p>In what way does racism and racial segregation affect the life of Aibileen?</p> <p>Why do different characters in the film treat Aibileen differently?</p>	<p>Analyzing a sequence from the film <i>The Help</i>.</p> <p>Why does Charlotte fire her maid Constantine when she has been working for the family for years?</p> <p>Why do we care about what others may think of us?</p> <p>Why do we judge people we do not know?</p>
<b>Methods and materials</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In pairs: Share your homework notes with each other.</li> <li>2. View the second sequence of <i>The Help</i>.</li> <li>3. Individual work: Viewer-response worksheet 2 (Appendix G).</li> <li>4. In pairs and plenary: Discuss and talk about the key points from the viewer-response worksheet.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In pairs: Share your homework notes with each other.</li> <li>2. View the third sequence of <i>The Help</i>.</li> <li>3. Individual work: Viewer-response worksheet 3 (Appendix H).</li> <li>4. In pairs and plenary: Discuss and talk about the key points from the viewer-response worksheet.</li> </ol>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize cultural values, practices and attitudes in Jackson, Mississippi, in the 1960s.</li> <li>• Recognize others' stereotypical, prejudicial and racial attitudes towards Aibileen.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize others' stereotypical, prejudicial and racial attitudes towards Constantine and Rachael.</li> <li>• Understand how various cultural elements can affect our identity, feelings and thoughts.</li> </ul>
<b>Individual homework</b>	<p>After lesson 1: Choose one of the characters from the sequence you watched in class. What quality of this character strikes you as good, and why? In what way does the character demonstrate this quality? (1-2 paragraphs)</p>	



<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Lesson 1 (60 min)</b>	<b>Lesson 2 (60 min)</b>
<b>Topic: an overview</b>	Summarize the film and the project.	Summarize the film and the project.
<b>Methods and materials</b>	Individual work: reflective writing about intercultural concepts in the <i>The Help</i> (Appendix I).	Individual work: reflective writing about intercultural concepts in the <i>The Help</i> (Appendix I).
<b>Objectives</b>	Be able to recognize and identify stereotypical, prejudicial and racial attitudes in <i>The Help</i> .	Be able to recognize and identify stereotypical, prejudicial and racial attitudes in <i>The Help</i> .

## **Week 1**

When introducing a new topic in class it is very important to make it interesting since pupils learn more when they are motivated. It is also important to make the pupils reflect upon the knowledge they already possess on the given topic, because pre-existing knowledge affects our understanding of new input and new information. The intercultural project starts off with a touching YouTube video. Several 12-year-old children with different cultural backgrounds present themselves and mention some of the stereotypical, prejudicial and racial attitudes they are met with. The same YouTube video is used in lesson two as well, but this time as warm-up for an individual task where the pupils are to write three sentences and exemplify how other people may view them; based on looks, background and ethnicity. After the introductory video, the intercultural project is briefly presented, in lesson 1.

The first two lessons focus on learning and reflecting upon intercultural concepts such as culture, identity, stereotyping, prejudice and racism. Video clips, retrieved from YouTube and Study.com, are used to introduce and illustrate most of the terms. In addition to using video clips, the teaching plan for week 1 has a variety of teaching strategies and learning activities. The pupils are to create a mind-map in pairs, watch and listen to a PowerPoint presentation, participate in a whiteboard race, share thoughts and relevant input on the given topic with each other in small groups, and lastly, they are to create individual identity bubble maps on their iPads.

## **Week 2**

All the lessons in this teaching plan start off by either a brief recap of key concepts from the previous English lesson, or by letting the pupils share and discuss their completed homework with each other. Consequently, their memory will be jogged. The first lesson of this week focuses on the Civil Rights Movement, racial segregation and racial discrimination. It is important that the pupils understand the content of these terms, since the story of *The Help* takes place in 1963, during the Civil Rights Movement. Towards the ends of the lesson, the film trailer of *The Help* and its advertising poster are presented, and the pupils are to answer relevant questions regarding both of these (see Appendices D and E). While the first lesson focuses on understanding fundamental concepts related to the film, the second lesson focuses on the film itself. In the second lesson, one sequence of *The Help* is shown on the TV screen, in plenary. After viewing the sequence, the pupils work individually with a viewer-response worksheet, before key points are discussed in pairs and in plenary.

## **Week 3**

The lesson structure of the two lessons are similar to each other. In both lessons, the pupils are to view a new sequence of *The Help*. After viewing, a viewer-response worksheet is to be completed individually before key points are discussed in pairs and in plenary. The emphasis is on culture, identity, stereotyping, prejudice and racism. More precisely, the focus is on our own and others' behavior; How do we treat other people? Why do we treat them that way? In what way are they affected by our behavior? Why do we care about what others may think of us? Why do we judge people we do not know?

## **Week 4**

During the final week of this teaching plan, the pupils are presented with a reflective writing assignment to reflect upon the intercultural concepts in *The Help*. They are to answer three questions in writing, individually (Appendix I). The time duration is two hours straight. The two lesson plans of this week are, as a result of this, identical to each other. Since the two English lessons normally are on separate weekdays, there will be a lesson switch with another subject that week in order for the class to be able to write two hours straight. Everyone uses their padlet and a keyboard to complete the assignment.

## 5. Results and discussion

In this chapter, a selection of the pupils' written responses from the three viewer-response worksheets, and the final reflective writing assignment, will be presented and discussed. The structure of this chapter is the same as for the structure of the teaching plan. This means that responses of the viewer-response worksheets will be presented first, in chronological order, and lastly, responses of the reflective writing assignment. Each viewer-response worksheet contains five or six questions, but due to limited space, a selection will be presented. I have selected questions that focus on different components of intercultural competence and/or concepts of intercultural communication. An overview of all the questions can be found in appendices F-H. Written responses to the three questions of the reflective writing assignment will be presented and discussed. The pupils' responses that are presented below are exactly the same as the originals. Grammar and spelling mistakes are not corrected. The answers given to the questions are organized in units. Each unit focuses on one or two concepts of intercultural communication and/or a component of intercultural competence. The units also include examples that illustrate these aspects.

### 5.1. Results and discussion of the viewer-response worksheets

#### 5.1.1. Worksheet 1

Viewer-response worksheet 1 contains 6 questions about the content of sequence one of *The Help*. All the questions are open-ended and require the pupils to think and reflect independently. They must reflect upon how they feel about, think about, and how they interpret, the given situation. They are to explain their personal reactions. In addition to understanding the content of the film, the questions let them critically reflect upon their knowledge of racism, which factors that can affect a person's identity, and lastly, the importance of being able to look at things from other peoples' perspectives.

#### **Question 1: *What is your reaction to the conversations around the lunch table?***

The responses to this question show that the majority of the pupils have knowledge of racism. Here are some examples:

**Hamna:** I felt disgusted by how they were talking badly about people with color. I can't stand that type of behavior. It isn't right to judge someone based on their skin color. And when she said that she had to "protect her children" from the black women, I got very upset.

**Victor:** The way they talked about the changes about the blacks, and that they are not allowed to do everything was pretty disgusting and racist.

**Stine:** It makes me angry that someone can say that about other people just because of their skin color. It made me sad when she said that she would do anything to protect their children against the colored people, and that they were going to get a bathroom only for colored people.

They do not only show that they know what racism is about, they also signal that they do not tolerate it. Victor claims that the conversation around the lunch table, with the racist comments, was disgusting. It is clear that Victor does not support racism, and it may be argued that he viewed the whole conversation as extremely unpleasant and unfair. Victor wants everyone to be treated equally and does not seem to care about the color of someone's skin. The thought of someone not being allowed to do something only because of their skin color makes Victor feel sick. He clearly shows knowledge of racism in his response. Byram claims it is important to have "*knowledge* about concepts and processes in interaction for successful interaction to take place" (1997, p 35). In other words, it is important to have knowledge of a concept such as racism. By acquiring knowledge and understanding of an intercultural concept such as racism, the pupils' culture general knowledge is developed.

Similarly to Victor, Hamna and Stina also show knowledge of the concept racism. They argue that it is not right to judge someone based on their skin color. By stating this, it is possible to argue that they are fond of the expression "don't judge the book by its cover" and that they believe everyone should be treated equally, regardless of how they look and what skin color they are born with. Hamna and Stina both further argue that Hilly's comment about "protecting their children" made them really upset and sad. It seems like the fact that white people assume that "colored" people would harm or be a danger to the children, only because of their dark skin color, made Hamna and Stina extremely unhappy. They do not accept the notion that other people/groups are inferior just because of their belonging to another group. They clearly do not support racism and it is possible to draw the conclusion that they find it unacceptable.

**Question 2: *What do you think are some of Aibileen's daily challenges in life?***

The responses to question 2 show that the majority of the pupils have knowledge of racism. Below are some examples:

**Hamna:** She's treated badly everyday. The house owners treat her like she's worthless and sees her as less worthy. She isn't allowed to go to the bathroom inside. She probably can't eat at the dinner table, and she's used to hearing rude and racist comments.

**Leonard:** I don't think she gets treated like a normal person. She gets discriminated because of her skin color.

**Johannes:** Some of her challenges is to be fine with racism.

They do not only show that they know what racism is about, they also show that they are able to recognize it. All three examples show that the pupils are able to recognize racism as a daily challenge for Aibileen. Similarly to the responses to the question above, these statements demonstrate the *knowledge* component, or more precisely, the culture general knowledge, in Byram's model (1997, p. 35). Johannes argues that "some of Aibileen's challenges is to be fine with racism". By stating this, it seems as if Johannes claims that it is challenging for Aibileen to accept racism and to be able to rise above it. "To be fine with racism" could also mean that it is difficult for Aibileen to not be affected by racism and to not let it define who she is as a person.

Hamna mentions that Aibileen probably is not able to eat dinner at the dinner table because of her skin color. She recognizes that Aibileen is treated differently only because of her dark skin color. When Hamna claims that "the house owners treat her like she is worthless and sees her as less worthy", she argues that Aibileen has no real value to the house owners, and that the house owners view her as a person who is useless, unimportant and good-for-nothing. Aibileen simply means nothing to them. Brislin claims that racism occurs when people are viewed as inferior in various ways only because they are born into certain out-groups (2000, p. 214). Hamna shows knowledge of racism when she sees racism as defining others as "less worthy". Hamna further argues that a daily challenge for Aibileen is to get used to "hearing rude and racist comments". Similarly to Johannes, Hamna also claims that it is challenging for Aibileen to accept the high levels of racism and discrimination that she unwillingly experiences on a daily basis.

Leonard recognizes that Aibileen is discriminated against because of her dark skin color. He further argues that she is not treated like a normal person. It is possible to argue that he tries to express that she is viewed as less valuable. All in all, it may be argued that Leonard claims that Aibileen is treated differently in a negative way only because of her skin color. As Brislin claims, racism occurs when someone is mistreated because of their race, color or national origin (2000, 234). In other words, Leonard is able to show knowledge of the concept racism with his statement.

**Question 3: *How do you think Aibileen feels when the other ladies speak negatively about her?***

The responses to question 3 show that most of the pupils in class are able to recognize factors that can affect a person's identity, by taking the perspective of that person. Here are some examples:

**Leonard:** I think Aibileen feels bad and I think her confidence is bad when she hears that.

**Hamna:** I think she got very hurt by the things the other ladies said. She probably feels bad about herself, and is questioning why she was made the way she is.

**Carl:** I think she is a strong woman that doesn't care so much for one time, but it looks like it happens all the time, so then she probably is affected and feels less worth than them. She seems very unhappy.

Byram et al. argue that the *attitudes* component consists of being able to look at things from an outsider's perspective (2002, p. 12). In order for the pupils to answer this question, they must look at the situation from Aibileen's point of view and consider how she feels when the other women speak negatively about her. As a result, the pupils' attitudes are developed. By taking the perspective of Aibileen, it is clear that Leonard, Hamna and Carl notice that Aibileen is upset and that the comments from the white ladies have a negative impact on her. They put themselves in Aibileen's place and sympathize with her. They are able to change perspectives. Leonard believes that Aibileen's confidence is affected in a negative way.

There are many factors that contribute to shaping and affecting a person's identity. Wahl and Scholl argue that the culture a person exists in impacts and plays a role in the development of their identity (2014, p. 67). Also, our way of communication with

others, is linked to our identity. The white ladies, who make the nasty comments about Aibileen, are clearly impacted by the white middle-class culture in the US in the 1950s and 1960s. Carl states that Aibileen probably “feels less worth than them”. It seems as if he is aware of the racial issues during that period of time since he mentions that “it looks like it happens all the time”. Clearly he can tell that Aibileen is affected by it since he claims that she seems very unhappy. Carl reflects upon how other people’s actions and comments may influence the way we look at ourselves. Hamna also reflects upon how the whole situation may affect Aibileen and her identity. She wonders if Aibileen is questioning why she was made the way she was, presumably referring to her dark skin color.

### 5.1.2. Worksheet 2

Viewer-response worksheet 2 contains 5 open-ended questions about the content of sequence two. In addition to understanding the content of the film, the questions let the pupils critically reflect upon their knowledge of both prejudice and racism. The questions also let the pupils critically evaluate a foreign culture and its values.

**Question 1:** *Explain how the little girl is acting towards Aibileen and why you think she is acting that way.*

The responses to this question show that the majority of the pupils have knowledge of both prejudice and racism, but especially prejudice. Many of the responses in class are very similar to the examples presented here:

**Frida:** She is acting very kindly to Aibileen and treat her with respect. She is so little and does not care about the skin color. She does not know why Aibileen has her own toilet, but she doesn’t ask why. I think she doesn’t know about racism. Nobody has taught it to her. The little girl said that Aibileen is her real mother.

**Morten:** The little girl is acting like there isn’t a difference between white and black people. Everyone is the same. She also says Aibileen is her real mom.

**Julie:** The little girl is acting the way she does, because she isn’t known with the racism community. She has not learned it. And because she spend so much time with Aibileen, she really love her.

Frida and Julie show knowledge of how prejudice and racism develop, when they claim that people are not born with prejudicial and racial attitudes. The two of them emphasize that the little girl, Mae, who still is at a very young age, has not learned those

attitudes through socialization, yet. As Koppelman and Goodhart claim, prejudice is not a part of human nature, but something we learn through socialization in our childhood (2011, p. 24). The answers to this question demonstrate the *knowledge* component in Byram's model (1997, p. 35). To have knowledge of the concept prejudice develops the pupils' culture general knowledge.

Frida and Morten both underline the fact that Mae says she views Aibileen as her real mother. By stating this, it seems like they argue that Mae views Aibileen as a person who loves her unconditionally, and also as a person who truly cares for her. Julie also notices the love Mae has for Aibileen. Clearly, they all can tell that Mae has positive feelings for Aibileen and that she feels like she can depend on her. They all show knowledge of prejudice by noticing that Mae does not view Aibileen as a member of an out-group, but rather of an in-group, even though the two of them have different skin color. It is also clear, in the three statements above, that the pupils believe that Mae thinks that Aibileen is worthy of her time.

### **Question 2: *What do you think Aibileen should do and why?***

In addition to having knowledge of racism, responses to this question show that many of the pupils have the ability to critically evaluate African-American issues in the US in 1950s and 1960s. Below are some examples:

**Mathias:** I think it's very good that Miss Skeeter wanting to interview her because they need a revolution. They can't live like that for ever.

**Stine:** I think she should do the interview so more people can see everything from the blacks perspective, and I think that is a great start of destroying racism. But I understand why she doesn't want to do it. Whites can get mad and ruin everything she has.

Question 2 asks for critical reflection and critical thinking. Byram argues that critical thinking is important and that an intercultural speaker must have the ability to critically evaluate one's own culture and values as well as foreign cultures and foreign values (1997, p. 63). In their responses, Mathias and Stine do not evaluate their own culture and values; however, they do evaluate the racial issues that African-Americans were forced to deal with in the 50s and 60s. Mathias argues that "colored" people need a revolution. He further claims that "they can't live like that forever". It may be argued that he is very unhappy with the racial issues that African-Americans had to deal with



on a daily basis. Stine believes that seeing things from a “colored” person’s perspective can be a great start of a journey where racism finally can be put to an end. It is possible to argue that they both want African-Americans to fight for equality and that the answer to this is to challenge racism. Mathias and Stine argue that the interview is a great idea. The responses show, to varying degrees, their ability to have critical cultural awareness.

Byram further claims that to have *critical cultural awareness* it also to be able to “identify and interpret explicit or implicit values in documents and events in one’s own and other cultures” (1997, p. 63). It may be argued that both Mathias and Stine have been able to identify and interpret values and racial issues in a foreign culture, in order for them to be able to explain and give reasons as to what Aibileen should do. Even though the pupils do not interact with the culture in real life or in real time, they are able to look at things from different perspectives and critically evaluate the given situation, only by viewing staged scenes from a film that reflect the society it is made in.

**Question 3: *Explain Aibileen’s problem and offer her advice on how to solve her problem.***

Similarly to the responses to question 2, these responses show that many of the pupils have ability to critically evaluate African-American issues in the US in 1950s and 1960s. Here are more examples:

**Håkon:** The problem for Aibileen is that she put herself in a big risk and danger is she takes the interview because of the Jim Crow law. I really think Aibileen should do it, because she can make out a big difference for the black people rights. Of course she is taking a huge risk, but if no one tries to make a difference it just will get worse. So she should try it out.

**David:** Aibileens problem is that white and black people can’t do the same thing together. They have to do it seperately. This doesn’t sound half bad considering the circumstances at that time, but in reality they were just being more harassed by the white. She could not drive with Miss Skeeter on the way home because black people and white people have to take different transportation.

**Julie:** I think that she should take the opprotunity but one problem is that Jim Crow laws say that colored people don’t have freedom of speech so people will get mad at Aibileen. It can be dangerous.

With the Jim Crow laws in the back of their minds, Håkon, David and Julie have critically evaluated Aibileen’s problem, which is culturally related, before they offer her advice. The responses show that the pupils associate words such as “problem” and

“danger” with the Jim Crow laws. It is possible to draw the conclusion that they view the Jim Crow laws as unacceptable and dangerous. Håkon argues that if no one tries to make a difference, things might get worse for African-Americans. He encourages Aibileen to fight for her rights and do the interview with Skeeter. Julie agrees with Håkon and argues that Aibileen should take advantage of the opportunity Skeeter offers her. David critically evaluates Aibileen’s situation based on the circumstances during that specific period of time. He does not think Aibileen should drive back home with Skeeter because of the Jim Crow laws. He understands the risks and encourages Aibileen to keep her distance. He evaluates the situation based on the circumstances in Jackson, Mississippi, in the 1960s.

In line with the responses to the question above, the responses show that the pupils are able to identify and interpret values and racial issues in a foreign culture. Byram further argues that in order to have *critical cultural awareness*, it is important to have the ability to “interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges in accordance with explicit criteria, negotiating where necessary a degree of acceptance of those exchanges by drawing upon one’s knowledge, skills and attitudes” (1997, p. 64). Obviously, the pupils have not communicated and interacted with the characters in the film, however, they have, after viewing staged scenes, offered Aibileen advice, in writing, by drawing upon their knowledge, skills and attitudes. By doing so, one can argue that the pupils have, to some degree, mediated in an intercultural exchange, since the film reflects the society it is made in.

### 5.1.3. Worksheet 3

There are 5 open-ended questions in viewer-response worksheet 3 (see Appendix H). The questions, about the content of sequence three, let the pupils critically reflect upon their knowledge of racism and prejudice. The two concepts of intercultural communication are closely linked together in the responses to the two questions, and therefore presented together. The majority of the pupils in class show that they have knowledge of racism and prejudice. Here are some examples:

**Question 1: *What is your reaction to Constantine being fired? What are your thoughts?***

**Jonas:** I think Charlotte made a horrible mistake because Constantine obviously have a near relationship to Charlotte and Skeeter, but she fires her to make a good impression on the president. Usually Charlotte would've let Constantine's daughter visit her, but in this case all the ladies are sitting at the table, watching. The other ladies feels offended by what the "negro" did.

**Malin:** It was very sad because she didn't do anything wrong. Charlotte fired her because she was afraid of what the white people would say if she didn't.

**Hamna:** I felt so sorry for Constantine. I found it so unfair for her to be fired like that. The way she was treated was just disgusting and disrespectful. The fact that the lady fired her just to maintain her "image" is one of the most stupid and selfish choices I've seen.

**Question 2: *Explain why you think Charlotte acts and reacts the way she does.***

**Johannes:** She is unsure of what she should do and the guest makes so much pressure that she make the wrong decision. She wants to impress the organization. The guest judges her, so she feels that she has to fire Constantine. The guest also judges the help and her daughter. She does not like them.

**Louise:** because she doesn't want to get unpopular when she just have gotten to be a member of Daughters of America. The ladies expect her to fire Charlotte because of Jim Crow Laws. White and colored must be separate.

**Karen:** She is scared she won't be a member of the Daughters of America. She kicks Constantine and Rachel out of her house because the other white women do not like how they behave. It is only because they have dark skin color and because of the laws. I don't think they know them personally.

It is clear that the pupils notice that the members of the Daughters of America, especially the president, have negative feelings about both Constantine and Rachel, and that they view them as members of an out-group. The pupils argue that Charlotte fires Constantine due to peer pressure from the members of the organization. Jonas claims that Charlotte "fires her to make a good impression on the president". Malin's response is very similar. She claims that "Charlotte fired her because she was afraid of what the white people would say if she didn't". It is possible to draw the conclusion that Malin claims that Charlotte would be judged by the other women if she did not fire Constantine. Clearly the pupils are able to tell what function prejudice can have.

Words such as "disrespectful", "sad", "unfair", "disgusting" and "horrible mistake" are used to describe how they feel about Constantine getting fired. Hamna claims that it was extremely selfish and stupid of Charlotte to fire Constantine only to "maintain her image". It may be argued that Hamna claims that Charlotte should have acted in support

of Constantine and not treated her poorly. In order for the pupils to be able to explain this scene and to express their opinion about it, they must have some culture specific *knowledge* of the middle-class white culture in the US in the 1950s and 1960s, but also knowledge of the racial issues during that period in time. The pupils also have culture general knowledge since they show knowledge and understanding of the concepts prejudice and racism.

Johannes and Karen argue that Constantine and Rachel are pre-judged based on stereotypical assumptions. It may be argued that Johannes and Karen claim that the white members of the organization categorize everyone who has dark skin color and assume that they all think and behave identitically. These stereotypical assumptions are connected to the racial issues in the US during the 1950s and 1960s because of the segregation laws. Louise claims that Charlotte fires Constantine because of the Jim Crow laws, and the fact that white and “colored” must be separate. Karen reflects upon whether the women of the organization actually know Constantine and Rachel or not. She says “I don’t think they know them personally”. She believes that Constantine and Rachel are mistreated only because they fail to behave in accordance with what the white middle-class expects from “colored” help. The statements from the pupils show that there is a close connection between prejudice and racism, but also stereotyping. Byram claims that it is important to have *knowledge* of “the process of social interaction in one’s interlocutor’s country” (1997, p. 60). The pupils clearly show knowledge about the white ladies’ behaviour, values and beliefs, in the situation around the dinner table when they disrespect Constantine and Rachel.

## **5.2. Results and discussion of the reflective writing assignment**

Excerpts of the written responses to the 3 questions of the reflective writing assignment will be presented and discussed, in chronological order. As earlier stated, Teasley and Wilder recommend a written assignment as a final activity (1997, p. 66). The 3 questions are mostly based on the viewing responses of the film, but also classroom discussions and homework assignments. The questions let the pupils reflect upon, recognize and identify stereotypical, prejudicial and racial attitudes in *The Help*. This is done by linking and systemizing intercultural experiences from the film to the terms: culture, identity, stereotyping, prejudice and racism.

**Question 1: In what way did *The Help* illustrate and help you understand these terms: stereotyping, prejudice and racism? Choose one of them and explain.**

The responses to this question show that all the pupils have knowledge of stereotyping, prejudice or racism. Below are two examples. While Carsten mainly shows knowledge of racism, Imran mainly shows knowledge of stereotyping. In addition to this, both Carsten and Imran are able to illustrate in what way racism and stereotyping are closely connected. Even though the question only requires that the pupils choose one of the terms, many of them were able to illustrate in what way two of the intercultural concepts are closely linked together. Below are two examples.

**Carsten:** The Help showed me how blacks were treated in 1950-1960. Obviously I found the way they were treated very negative, and extremely racist. Just because they had a different skin color they had to use a different bathroom placed outside, compared to the whites cozy inside bathroom. The blacks were looked down on, and most of the women had jobs like being a maid, something the film illustrates very well. The white people treated their maids/blacks in general, as if they were animals or simple slaves, nothing more. They were all put in one “box” and viewed the same. Nobody viewed them as individuals.

**Imran:** The help movie made me understand stereotyping and it means , putting people in different categories, groups, boats and more. I understood that Aibileen was put in another group than the others, and i also think that those who were dark skinned was put together in one. Not everyone in one group is the same. To treat all dark skinned bad because of this and their skin color is not good, and it is called racism.

The statements demonstrate the *knowledge* component in Byram’s model. Both Carsten and Imran show knowledge about “concepts and processes in interaction” (1997, p. 35). Carsten shows knowledge of racism and how “coloreds” were treated in 1950-1960. He claims that they were “looked down on” because of their skin color and that they were treated as “animals or simple slaves, nothing more”. Carsten’s statements show that he has understood that “coloreds” were mistreated only because of their skin color. Further he gives an example that illustrates in what way “coloreds” and white people were treated differently. He compares whites’ and “coloreds” bathrooms and underlines how unfair it is that white people have a “cozy bathroom inside”, while “colored” people had to use a different one placed outside. Carsten is clearly not satisfied with the

separation of “coloreds” from whites. When describing how “coloreds” were treated, he argues that individual differences amongst them were put aside. Everyone was viewed as the same and put in one “box”. By stating this, he argues that all the maids were stereotyped and viewed the same, and that they all experienced racism. Carsten is able to combine the two intercultural terms, racism and stereotyping, in his explanation of racism.

Imran shows knowledge of stereotyping. He explains that stereotyping is “putting people in different categories and groups”. He uses Aibileen to illustrate this, and claims that she “was put in another group”, he argues that she is not in the same group as the white people. He further argues that all dark skinned people are “put together in one”, and that “not everyone in one group is the same”. Imran clearly finds it unfair that individual differences amongst dark skinned people are put aside. He does not think they all should be viewed the same when they obviously all are different individuals. Similarly to Carsten, Imran is able to combine two intercultural terms. When Imran explains that it is wrong to treat all “dark skinned bad because of this and their skin color”, he is able to show knowledge of racism as well, only by adding that “this is called racism” towards the end of the sentence.

**Question 2: *Imagine you are Skeeter. Explain why you want to make a book about the help, and also why this is very risky.***

The responses to question 2 show that the pupils are able to critically reflect upon their knowledge of racism by taking the perspective of Skeeter. All the pupils in class were able to do this, although to varying degrees. Here are some examples.

**Carsten:** As many may know, blacks are treated badly and unfairly. Today I even saw what I like to call my best friend, talk crap about her own maid. What kind of person does that!? I was able to apologize to Aibeleen afterwards, but she seemed to barely care, like she was used to it. I know the dangers of writing this book. One of Aibeleens friends’ car was burnt down, just because of her being remotely close to a place you could vote. The government has even put in place so-called “Jim crows laws”, basically meaning whites and black are separated, but treated “equally”, which is clearly not the case. It’s so apparent. When I tried to interview Aibeleen for things to write in the book, she was scared to even talk to me. Hopefully she will comply later on, because I know the world needs a book like this.

**Malin:** I really want to make this book because I want to show the world that discrimination is a horrible thing to do and it destroys the society. Everyday black people get disrespected by the white people. They do neither have the same rights as we have because of the stupid Jim Crow Laws. I know it's a risk to take because if anyone finds out about it they are going to judge me for wanting to help the black race. That is absolutely not the worst part. Who knows what they're going to do with the black people if they finds out about this. They already treat them horrible. I absolutely not want any of them to die because of me. If I write this book the society may be changed and the black people do not have to think about what the white people says. They could live their own lives as they want to.

**Cecilie:** Lately I have been observing how my friends is treating our help, Aibileen. They treat her like an animal. They doesn't care about her feelings or the way they talk to her. I feel so bad for Aibileen, she doesn't deserve this! I don't want do be a part of this, and that's why I have decided to write a book about equality for the black people. Of course I want Aibileen to be a part of it, so I want to interview her, about the unfairness. I know this make an huge risk for me and Aibileen. Doing this can almost make me a criminal, and I am sure Aibileen can end up in jail. But this can also give Aibileen and all her friends a fresh new start. I really hope Aibileen are willing to take that risk!

To answer this question, the pupils need the *attitudes* of curiosity and openness, but also the willingness to analyze meanings and behaviors from the viewpoint of others (Byram, 1997, p. 34). By pretending to be Skeeter, the pupils have to look beyond their own points of view. They must consider how Skeeter may feel and think about the situation. In other words, they must interpret Skeeter's needs and wants, and reflect upon what her motivation and intentions are for writing the book. The responses showed that the pupils thought that the underlying issue, and the main reason for writing the book, is to fight racism. Carsten writes "I know the world needs a book like this". It seems as if he argues that the society, with all the racial attitudes and unfair treatment of the "colored" people, needs to change. Malin argues that "if I write this book the society may be changed and the black people do not have to think about what the white people say. They could live their own lives as they want to". Malin, similarly to Carsten, argues that things need to change. Malin wants "colored" people not to be under control of other people. She wants everyone to be free. Cecilie argues that a book like this can "give Aibileen and all her friends a fresh new start" and that she wants to fight for "quality for the black people". Clearly they all recognize racism as a major issue that needs to be challenged.

From Skeeter's point of view, the pupils explain how Skeeter experiences racism in her contemporary society. They show willingness to analyze meanings and behaviors from her point of view. Carsten claims that "blacks are treated badly and unfairly" and that "colored" and white people are not treated equally. He clearly recognizes that white people believe that their race is superior and he argues that this is wrong. Malin's statement is quite similar. She argues that "black people get disrespected by the white people" and that they do not have "the same rights as we have because of the stupid Jim Crow Laws". Cecilie explains that Aibileen is treated like an animal and that no one cares about her feelings or the way she is spoken to. By stating that Aibileen is treated like an animal, Cecilie is trying to express that Aibileen is treated extremely poorly, and that she is viewed as someone who has no value or respect. She basically claims that no one truly cares about Aibileen.

The responses also show culture general knowledge of the concept racism when they give reasons as to why it is risky to write the book. Carsten argues that it is very risky because of the Jim Crow laws. He illustrates this by referring to the episode where "Aibileen's friends' car was burnt down, just because of her being remotely close to a place you could vote". Malin and Cecilie emphasize that it is risky for both Skeeter and Aibileen, but mostly for Aibileen. Malin says "who knows what they're going to do with the black people if they find out about this. I absolutely do not want any of them to die because of me". Malin explains the dangers of writing the book by arguing that Aibileen, or someone else, may get killed, only for participating. Cecilie claims that "doing this can almost make me a criminal, and I am sure Aibileen can end up in jail". These examples show that the pupils understand that the laws that enforce racial segregation, the Jim Crow laws, are the main reason for why it is risky for Skeeter to write the book, and for Aibileen to share her personal stories with Skeeter.

***Question 3: Describe and explain why you would/would not like to have lived in the time or place of the story.***

Everyone in class was able to explain why they would/would not like to have lived in the time or place of the story. They all had plenty to say. That said, question 3 is the question where the responses amongst the pupils varied the most. Since there are many different ways of answering this question, the pupils have, naturally, emphasized



different aspects. The majority of the pupils showed knowledge of several intercultural concepts in their explanation, while some only showed knowledge of one. Regardless of this, everyone was able to link the intercultural concept(s) to the time and/or place of the story. Below are two examples that show knowledge of several intercultural concepts. In addition to showing knowledge of several intercultural concepts, they are able to illustrate in what way some of these intercultural concepts are closely connected to each other, and also how they influence a person's identity. The identity aspect will be emphasized in the discussion below.

**Håkon:** My identity is pretty much based on the way I effect others. Making the people around me happy is the best thing I know. And I can't imagine to treat someone different just because of their skin color or religion. It doesn't make any difference what culture a person comes from, if she believes in another religion, or his family have other habits and traditions or whatever country my friend comes from. That doesn't give me a reason to judge them. Living in USA in the 60s, with all the racism, prejudice and stereotyping would make me sick. I don't think I would have tried to make any difference in the community, because I am not a person that does things like that. But I think I would have find it terrible to see how the white people was treating all the black people. I would not have liked to live in the time and place in the story.

**Aayat:** It is horrible how African Americans are being treated. The can't go to the same bus or toilet as the Americans. The laws in America in 1961 is disgusting. Almost every white person prejudices African Americans before they know how they really are. The white people don't respect the culture of the African Americans, and they are stereotyping the African Americans. Stereotype is when you judge a group of people who are different from you based on your own opinions. You put everyone in the same category. It is very weird to se that the white people think they are superior. It is hard for the African Americans show there identity, of how they are different from the other African Americans. If I would go back in time, lived in 1961, and had a high position job in the law. I would live there. When I lived there I would change the law. I would let the African Americans embrace their culture and let them be equal to the white people. The African American could go in the same bus, toilets and live exactly like the Americans.

Håkon argues that he would not have liked to live in the time or place of the story and claims that "living in USA in the 60s, with all the racism, prejudice and stereotyping would make me sick". He argues that he is not the type of person who tries to "make any difference in the community", and that it would be awful to watch "how the white people was treating all the black people". Since Håkon is not able to make a difference himself, because of his personality, he claims that it would be extremely unpleasant for

him to live in that time and place and witness the unfair treatment “colored” people are met with on a daily basis. Håkon further reflects upon in what way communication affects the way we view ourselves. Wahl and Scholl argue that our way of communicating is closely linked to our identity (2014, p. 67). Håkon claims that his identity is based on the way he affects others, and that the best thing he knows is to make people around him happy. Consequently, he claims that he would have difficulties with treating someone differently only because of their skin color or because of other cultural elements. To sum up, Håkon argues that his own identity would be greatly affected in a negative way if he had to live in that time or place.

Samovar et al. argue that “your interaction with others offers you insight into who you are, where you belong, and where your loyalties rest” (2010, p. 15). While Håkon reflects upon in what way stereotyping, prejudice and racism would affect his identity, Aayat is more concerned with how they affect the identity of every “colored person”. Aayat argues that it is difficult for “coloreds” to show their true identity and how they differ from each other, when they are stereotyped by white people. It is possible to draw the conclusion that Aayat feels very strongly that everyone should be able to express themselves and who they are. He claims that it is challenging for “coloreds” to do so, when white people categorize them and overgeneralize. Aayat thinks it is weird that white people judge “African Americans before they know how they really are”. It seems as if Aayat only would live in that time and place if he “had a high position job in the law” and “could change the law”. Unlike Håkon, Aayat would personally like to stand up and make a difference. He would have liked for the “coloreds” to have been able to embrace their culture and for everyone to be treated equally. Aayat describes the Jim Crow laws as “disgusting” and finds it very strange that white people are superior only because they are white. Both Håkon and Aayat show knowledge of, and are able to illustrate, in what way intercultural concepts may influence a person’s identity.

### **5.3. Evaluation and discussion of the results**

The pupils have, throughout this project, linked and systemized intercultural experiences from *The Help* to the five intercultural concepts: culture, identity, stereotypes, prejudice and racism. A selection of the pupils’ written responses from the three viewer-response worksheets, and the final reflective writing assignment, have

been presented above and discussed. Let us now evaluate and discuss the results in relation to this study's research question and its theoretical framework.

Previously in this thesis, in the theoretical framework, a model that lists four components of intercultural competence was presented: *knowledge*, *skills*, *attitudes* and *critical cultural awareness* (Byram et al., 2002, p. 10). By evaluating the pupils' responses in relation to these components, one may investigate to what extent *The Help*, in combination with the viewer-response approach, has promoted the pupils' intercultural competence.

Byram et al. claim that it is important for an intercultural speaker to have intercultural *attitudes*. This means that an intercultural speaker must be curious and open (2002, p. 12). The pupils' *attitudes* have been very positive throughout this project. The majority of the pupils have been very curious, open and taken a huge interest in the cultural conflict between the culture of the middle-class whites and the culture of the "coloreds". It is difficult to measure if these positive attitudes are a result of this project or not. However, there is reason to believe that this project has strengthened their attitudes, especially their attitudes to the intercultural concepts in this project.

Even though the pupils did not interact with people from another culture in real life, they were able to look at things from different perspectives, by viewing staged scenes from a film that reflect the society it is made in. The pupils were asked to change perspectives several times. They were asked to look at a specific situation from the point of view of Aibileen, and also, a couple of times, from Skeeter's point of view. The written responses show that the pupils were able to do this.

Byram et al. distinguish between culture general knowledge and culture specific knowledge in their description of the *knowledge* component (2002, p. 12). The findings in the written responses along with the discussions in class, suggest that the sequences of *The Help* have promoted some culture specific knowledge that encompasses middle-class white culture in the US during the 1950s and 1960s, and also racial issues during the same time period. Further, the findings also suggest that *The Help* has promoted knowledge of stereotyping, prejudice and racism to various degrees. By having knowledge and understanding of these intercultural concepts, the pupils' culture general knowledge has been developed as well. It is worth mentioning that the majority of the class had heard of racism prior to this project. A few of them were also able to define

the term. None of them had heard of stereotyping or prejudice before, but some of them were familiar with the expression “don’t judge the book by its cover”, which is an expression that is closely linked to the meaning of the two concepts. It means that one should not judge others based purely on what is seen on the outside. Lastly, the findings also suggest that the film has promoted the majority of the pupils’ knowledge and understanding of how stereotyping, prejudice and racism may affect our behavior towards others, but also how they may affect one’s own identity.

Byram et al. argue that to have *critical cultural awareness* one needs to be able to critically evaluate one’s own culture and values as well as foreign cultures and foreign values (2002, p. 13). The responses show that some of the pupils were able to demonstrate this ability, to various degrees. Even though the pupils did not critically evaluate their own culture, they were able to show the ability to critically evaluate racial issues in the US in 1950s and 1960s, as well as the white middle-class culture. The pupils had to identify and interpret their values, along with the racial issues in the US, in order to offer Aibileen advice.

The last component, *skills*, is divided into two categories that are closely connected to each other. Byram et al. distinguish between “skills of interpreting and relating” and “skills of discovery and interaction” (2002, p. 13). Byram argues that the first category, skills of interpreting and relating, includes having the ability to identify ethnocentric perspectives, areas of misunderstanding, and lastly, be able to mediate between conflicting interpretations (1997, p. 61). These skills have to some degree been demonstrated by the pupils since they have taken the perspectives of characters in the film, and viewed the situation and culture from their points of view. By doing this the pupils were able to notice in what way misunderstandings and conflicts between the characters arose. They were able to explain their errors and their causes by referring to their knowledge of the intercultural concepts that are emphasized in this thesis. In addition to this, the pupils have identified ethnocentric perspectives. Although they are not familiar with the term ethnocentrism, they have several times recognized and emphasized that the majority of the members of the middle-class white culture in *The Help* believe that they are superior to their “colored” help, only because of their heritage.

The latter category, skills of discovery and interaction, has also, to some degree, been promoted. The skill of discovery does not necessarily have to be a part of social interaction. Byram claims that it is possible to use sources to understand relationships between cultures and societies (1997, p. 63). The pupils have acquired knowledge of the practices, beliefs, values, relationships and behaviours of, and between, the white middle-class people and "colored" people, by using film as a source. The skill of interaction requires real-time communication and interaction with the interlocutor (Byram, 1997, p. 61). Since the pupils have not interacted with the interlocutor in real-time, this skill has not been developed.

## 6. Summary and conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored to what extent the film *The Help* may promote intercultural competence in the Norwegian ESL classroom at lower secondary school (9<sup>th</sup> grade). As a result of the ongoing globalization, people experience intercultural contact all over the world, and we are in frequent and close contact with people from other cultures. To have intercultural competence has never been more important.

Today, teachers of the ESL classroom are obliged to promote intercultural competence. There are several objectives in the Norwegian curriculum that refer to and underline the importance of intercultural learning. In order to promote intercultural competence, I chose to use film as a teaching tool, in combination with the viewer-response approach.

The findings and results of the viewer-response worksheets and the reflective writing assignment are discussed and analyzed in the previous chapter. The results suggest that the sequences of *The Help* have promoted the pupils' *attitudes* of curiosity and openness, as well as their ability to look at things from different perspectives. Further, the findings suggest that the pupils' *critical cultural awareness* is developed, to varying degrees, as they have critically evaluated African-American issues in the US in 1950s and 1960s, as well as the white middle-class culture. The findings suggest that the pupils' *knowledge*, which consists of both culture general knowledge and culture specific knowledge, is promoted. Lastly, the findings suggest that the *skills* of interpreting, relating and discovery are promoted. The pupils have identified ethnocentric perspectives, areas of misunderstanding, and used film as a source to acquire knowledge of relationships between cultures and societies. By developing these components of intercultural competence, it will be easier for the pupils to interact with, and understand, foreign cultures in the future.

The conclusion is that my study shows that the film *The Help*, along with the teaching plan that is developed in a way that the components of intercultural competence are taken care of, has promoted the pupils' intercultural competence.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Consent form

#### Til foreldre/ foresatte i 9X

#### Samtykkeerklæring til masterprosjekt

I fjor høst ble dere informert om at jeg, Anette Morterud, tar videreutdanning i engelsk, via Høgskolen i Østfold. Jeg er nå i slutfasen av studiet og skriver en masteravhandling. Av den grunn vil det i uke 17 – 21 bli gjennomført et undervisningsprosjekt i engelsktimene som jeg skriver om i min masteravhandling. Hele 9. trinn skal gjennomføre prosjektet, men det er kun materiale fra 9X som vil bli brukt som anonymt forskningsmateriale dersom dere foresatte gir tillatelse til det.

#### Om prosjektet

Prosjektet er utformet i henhold til læreplanen og metodikken går ut på å undersøke hvorvidt film kan brukes for å fremme interkulturell kompetanse. Det vil bli fokus på ulike kulturer, identitet, stereotypier, fordommer og rasisme – og det å kunne bidra til et bedre samspill mellom personer fra ulike kulturer og bakgrunn.

Ta kontakt på mail eller tlf. hvis du/dere ønsker mer informasjon.

#### Samtykke

Skjemaet ber om foresattes samtykke til at elevens skriftlige besvarelser og muntlige diskusjoner kan være en del av forskningen så lenge de blir anonymisert og ikke kan spores tilbake til eleven.

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Jeg har lest og forstått samtykkeerklæringen om masterprosjektet og gir min tillatelse:

**Underskrift av deltaker (elev):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Underskrift av foresatt:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dato:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: PowerPoint presentation about culture

### Culture and Identity



### One way of defining culture:

Culture is a “package” of behavior and values that is transferred from one generation to the next.



- Culture is not innate, but something that is learned through one’s social environment.



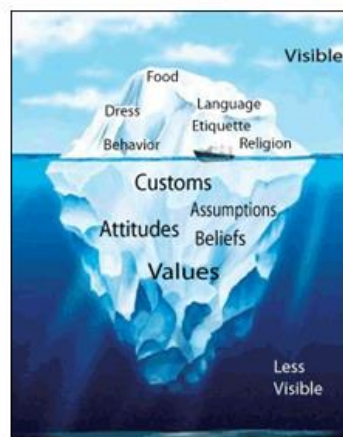
- It is transferred from generation to generation, and it changes and evolves over time.
- Culture is dynamic, and never static.



## Some elements of culture

- Ethnicity
- Language
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Faith and religion
- Traditions
- Rituals
- History
- Daily life
- Symbols
- Norms and beliefs
- Values and morals
- Arts and literature
- Music

## The Iceberg Model



## In what way is our identity affected by culture?

- Culture creates a personal identity («I»)
- Culture creates a collective identity («us»)

- *«The glue that holds our society together»*

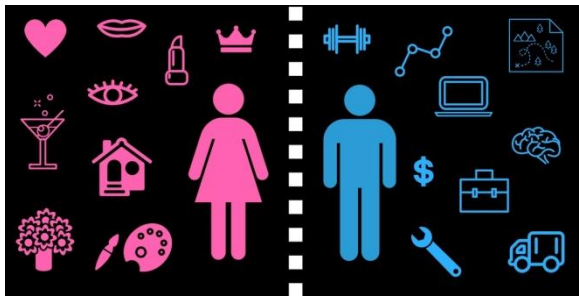


## Appendix C: Homework

### Homework

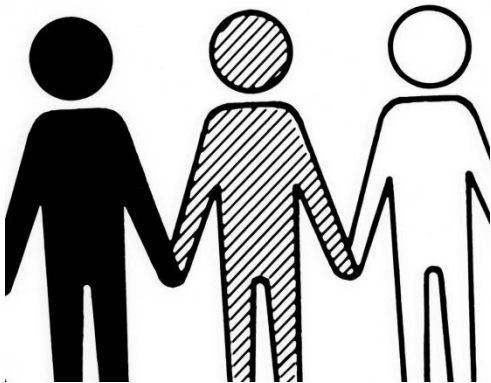
(Hand in on Showbie)

1. What do you think “don’t judge a book by its cover” means?
2. Explain in your own words what stereotyping is and give one example.



<b>African-Americans</b>	<b>Americans</b>
<b>Asian</b>	<b>Muslims</b> <b>Jews</b>
<b>Men</b> <b>Africans</b>	<b>Hindus</b>
<b>Norwegians</b>	<b>Europeans</b> <b>Women</b>

3. Explain in your own words what racism is and give one example.



## Appendix D: Worksheet with questions related to the advertising poster

### *The Help*

1. This is the advertising poster of the film *The Help*. Discuss the following talking points with your partner:
  - Describe what the women to the left in the picture are wearing.
  - What do you think their relationship is like?
  - What is your first impression of the two women on the bench?
  - Why do you think the film is called *The Help*? What do you think it is about?
  - At the top of the advertising poster it says “change begins with a whisper”. How do you interpret this?



### **2. After watching the trailer of *The Help***

(Individual work: in writing)

1. What is your first impression of the trailer? What are your thoughts?
2. What are some of the challenges that are presented?
3. Describe the four pictures below by answering these questions:
  - What is the person in the picture doing?
  - How do you think she is feeling?
  - What do you think has happened?

A



B



C



D

## Appendix E: Worksheet with questions related to the trailer

### Homework

(Hand in on Showbie)

1. Watch the trailer of *The Help* once more on Youtube.
2. Skeeter gets a new job. She writes a book from the point of view of the help.
  - Why do you think she does that?
  - What do you think the book is about?  
Give reasons for your answer.
  - Why do you think it is risky to write that book in Jackson, Mississippi in the 1960s?
  - In the end of the trailer all the maids decide to help write the book. Why do you think they are willing to put themselves in such danger?



## Appendix F: Viewer-response worksheet 1

### Viewer-response worksheet 1

14:12 – 17:53

1. Explain how Miss Hilly is acting during lunch and why you think she is acting that way.
2. What is your reaction to the conversations around the lunch table?



3. How do you think Aibileen feels when the other ladies speak negatively about her?
4. What do you think are some of her daily challenges in life?



5. What is your first impression of Miss Skeeter? How would you describe her?



6. How do you think Miss Skeeter feels about the conversation the ladies had during lunch?





## Appendix G: Viewer-response worksheet 2

### Viewer-response worksheet 2

33:43 – 38.00

1. Explain how the little girl is acting towards Aibileen and why you think she is acting that way?



2. What is your reaction the Miss Skeeter wanting to interview Aibileen?
3. What do you think Aibileen should do and why?
4. Why do you think the lady with the stroller is staring so badly at Skeeter and Aibileen?



5. After the conversation with Miss Skeeter, Aibileen walks home thinking about the Jim Crow laws. Explain Aibileen's problem and offer her advice on how to solve her problem. Write 1-2 paragraphs.



## Appendix H: Viewer-response worksheet 3

### Viewer-response worksheet 3

1.48.16 - 1-54-34



Members of *Daughters of America* (an organization for whites only).



The president of the organization and Skeeter's mother, Charlotte.



Constantine and her daughter, Rachael.



Skeeter. The girl who was raised by her maid, Constantine.

1. What is your reaction to Constantine being fired? What are your thoughts?
2. Why do you think Charlotte sent her son to Chicago to bring Constantine home, when she was the one who fired her?
3. Why do you think Skeeter gets so upset when she finds out that Constantine passed away?
  
4. Explain in detail what happens in this sequence (2 paragraphs)
5. Explain why you think Charlotte acts and reacts the way she does.

## Appendix I: Reflective writing

### Reflective writing

Answer all three questions. Hand in on Showbie in the folder “*Reflective writing*”

1. In what way did *The Help* illustrate and help you understand these terms: stereotyping, prejudice and racism? Choose one of them and explain. Write a paragraph.



2. Imagine you are Skeeter. Write a paragraph where you explain why you want to make a book about the help, and also why this is very risky.



3. Describe and explain why you would/would not like to have lived in the time or place of the story. Write 1-2 paragraphs.