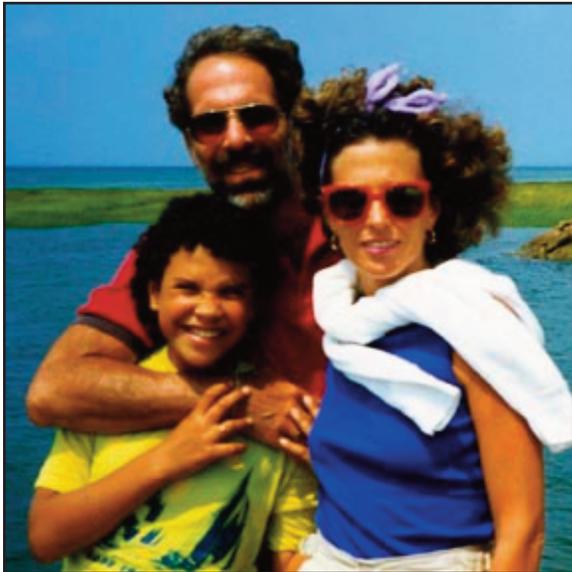


Little White Lie Discussion Guide (Students)



BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM

Introduce the film and engage the students in an activity about identity

Materials

Index cards
 Pens or pencils

Film Description

Little White Lie is a coming-of-age story that portrays the emergence from childhood when identity is defined largely by others—and the transition into adulthood when people claim the right to declare their own identities. Little White Lie manages to be both a particular family's story, but also raises larger questions for all of us. Be'chol Lashon, in collaboration with the filmmaker, has created a few questions that invite dialogue about identity.

Activity

Before showing the film ask the students to:
Write down three words that you would use to define yourself.

After giving the students a few minutes to write down their words, talk about the following "Big Idea" to keep in mind while watching the film.

Big Idea

Identity is fluid and made up of many components, where we come from, what we look like, who is in our family and who is in our community. Sometimes how we see ourselves is how others see us but that is not always the case.

While they watch the film, ask the students to:
Think about what words Lacey might use to define herself.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AFTER THE FILM

Choose one or more questions that best meet your interests and timeframe.

You can begin with a few comments, for example, about how extraordinary it was that Lacey was able to piece together her family history using home videos, archival footage, interviews, and episodes from her own life. She became interested in film in college and started shooting footage before she decided to make this film, so her family members got used to having a camera around.

Activity (continued)

Give the students a couple of minutes to collect their thoughts. Have them:
Write down three words you think Lacey would use to describe her identity.

If time, engage the students in a discussion:
What words did you write down for Lacey about her identity? Are any of those words that you wrote about yourself?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

IDENTITY

The film opens with Lacey Schwartz, the director, narrating, "I come from a long line of New York Jews. I am the great granddaughter of Eastern European immigrants who brought their culture and traditions to Brooklyn." She explains, "I grew up in a world of synagogue, Hebrew school, bar mitzvahs. My family knew who they were...and they defined who I was."

How do you think Lacey defined herself when she was a child? Do you think Lacey feels she fits in with her family? In what ways does Lacey feel different than her family? How did her identity change as she got older and why?

In what ways do you fit in or feel different than your family?

JEWISH IDENTITY

Lacey has been asked if she felt more or less Jewish after her journey of self-discovery, her answer was, "Neither. My Jewish identity was

never in question. What was in question was how to be "Jewish and" ...meaning Jewish and Black. For me, the question is how can I walk into any space and not leave a piece of myself behind."

Why do you think people don't see Lacey as Jewish? Are Lacey's Jewish and African-American identities in conflict? If so, how?

What does Lacey mean by "not leaving a piece of myself behind"?

Has anybody ever made an assumption about you based on the way that you look? How does that make you feel? For example, when you meet people do they know you are Jewish?

Since Jews have lived on every continent in the world for millennia, why are Jews primarily thought of as "white?"

RACE CONSCIOUSNESS

For Lacey, "University was like Race 101, a crash course for a white person in what it means to be Black." She observes, "White people don't spend a whole lot of time thinking about their whiteness. But for Black people, Blackness is everywhere."

What does Lacey mean when she says that "Blackness is everywhere"? Are people of color more likely to think about and discuss race? Why?

Is it possible to "not see race"? Have you ever experienced this? Are white people less likely to talk about race?

Think about how you define yourself. Do you include your race? Why or why not?

OPTIONAL: TALKING ABOUT RACE

Talking about race can be difficult. Research suggests that some white people avoid racial conversations out of fear that they may say something wrong or appear prejudiced. Additionally, some people prefer to see the world as “colorblind”—a vision of a world where everyone is equal and the color of one’s skin does not matter.

What does being “colorblind” mean? Given Lacey’s experience, does it achieve the intended result?

How does being able to express herself freely to her family and friends help her make peace with her identity?