

HEAD OVER HEELS & SOAR

EXPLORATION GUIDE

1

Making an animated film is a highly collaborative and time-consuming endeavor. The stop motion process for Tim Reckart (director of *Head Over Heels*) involved creating a detailed miniature set, then physically manipulating objects in small increments in between individually photographed frames. It took 15 months to create his 10-minute film. The computer-generated imagery (CGI) in *Soar* was a collaborative effort of over 100 students and industry professionals working together with Director Alyce Tzue for two years to create her 5-minute film.

We live in a culture that often emphasizes individuality over collaboration. We also value speed and convenience above a time-consuming process that results in a relatively small outcome. Are there any applications to your own life from the filmmaking process the two directors described and the obvious pride and joy each of them articulated when talking about their exquisite films?

2

Soar begins with an aspiring engineer who watches as yet another one of her well-crafted blueprints for success ends up in a failed launch. Shortly thereafter a magnificent tiny aviator in his flying machine experiences a crash landing that puts him at risk of being separated from his community and family. Initially these two strangers treat one another with suspicion and fear. Then both of them gradually realize that their ability to succeed might depend upon each of them learning to improvise and work together to find a creative solution to their challenges.

Think about your experiences in the last year. How have your hopes and dreams come crashing down on you? How have you felt cut off from your family and community? When you experience failure and disappointment how easy is it for you to improvise and find the resilience to hope and dream again? Are you wired to prefer working by yourself to tackle challenges or are you energized working together with a diverse team of individuals? What does the radiant star in the beautiful night sky represent for you in the concluding scene?

3

In the Q&A for *Head Over Heels*, the director describes how the movie was inspired by a personal experience of learning to appreciate the differences in another person when you don't even agree which way is up. That component of a relationship is not easy, but that doesn't mean that it's not possible. Love is more than a feeling, love takes work and effort, the choice to go out of your way to do something for somebody. Love involves sacrifice.

Our culture (and many of the films we watch) focus a lot of attention on "falling in love," but not nearly as much attention on what happens in a relationship after that. *Head Over Heels* beautifully recreates the initial 'magic' in the relationship of the couple in this film, but then also illustrates the daily annoyances and dramatic differences in worldview that threaten to drive this couple apart. What insights did you pick up from this film for significant relationships in your life?

4

Both of these films have no dialogue and yet each still tells a compelling and layered narrative story. The directors discussed how they chose this approach for both practical and artistic reasons to serve the vision for each of their films. The absence of dialogue is one of the reasons why animated films are universally popular because they transcend language and culture.

We are living in a time when words, language and cultural differences are often divisive and alienating. Both of these films showed the different perspectives of the two main characters, but then each film found a way to bridge these differences by bringing those characters together without the use of dialogue or words. What insights did you take from this approach for circumstances in your own life where differences are divisive rather than enriching?