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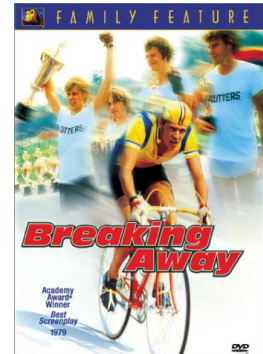
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LESSON PLANS BASED ON MOVIES & FILM CLIPS!

[Search TWM](#)[What's New](#)[Advertise](#)[Terms of Use](#)**LEARNING GUIDE TO:****BREAKING AWAY**

SUBJECTS — Sports/Bicycle Racing; U.S./ 1945 - 1991 & Indiana;
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING — Coming of Age; Parenting; Friendship;
MORAL-ETHICAL EMPHASIS — Trustworthiness.

Age: 12+; MPAA Rating -- PG; Comedy; 1979; 100 minutes; Color; Available from Amazon.com.



Description: This is a charming presentation of the first year after high school graduation experienced by four boys from Bloomington, Indiana. At loose ends, they are struggling to decide what to do with the rest of their lives. Dave, the primary character, wins a racing bicycle, begins to win competitive races, and fancies himself an Italian bicycle racer.

Benefits of the Movie: "Breaking Away" is a classic sports film with the underdog trying to prevail against a powerful and favored opponent. But it also addresses serious issues with warmth and humor. These include: the difficulty that boys from limited backgrounds have in deciding what to do after high school; going to college and leaving your friends behind; the feelings of inferiority often experienced by local kids in a college town; youthful obsessions; parents' attempts to adjust to a child's youthful obsessions; cheating in sports competitions; idols with feet of clay; and a man's attempt to be a good father despite great differences between him and his son.

Possible Problems: MODERATE. There is a substantial amount of profanity in this film. There is one fight between the townies and the college kids. No one is badly hurt. Dave engages in a friendly but dangerous race with a large truck, attaining speeds of 60 mph in the back draft of the truck.

Parenting Points: Ask and lead your children through answers to the [Quick Discussion Question](#) and some of the [Social-Emotional Learning Discussion Questions](#).

**LEARNING GUIDE MENU**[Benefits of the Movie](#)[Possible Problems](#)[Parenting Points](#)[Selected Awards & Cast](#)[Helpful Background](#)

Discussion Questions:

[Subjects \(Curriculum Topics\)](#)[Social-Emotional Learning](#)[Moral-Ethical Emphasis](#)[\(Character Counts\)](#)[Bridges to Reading](#)[Links to the Internet](#)[Assignments, Projects & Activities](#)[Bibliography](#)

WORKSHEETS: TWM offers the following worksheets to keep students' minds on the movie and direct them to the lessons that can be learned from the film.

[Film Study Worksheet for ELA Classes](#) and

[Worksheet for Cinematic and Theatrical Elements and Their Effects](#).

Teachers can modify the movie worksheets to fit the needs of each class. See also TWM's [Movies as Literature Homework Project](#).

Selected Awards, Cast and Director:

Selected Awards: *1979 Academy Awards*: Best Original Screenplay; *1980 Golden Globe Awards*: Best Film-Musical/Comedy; *1979 National Board of Review Awards*: Ten Best Films of the Year, Best Supporting Actor (Dooley); *1979 National Society of Film Critics Awards*: Best Film, Best Screenplay; *1979 Writers Guild of America Awards*: Best Original Screenplay; *1979 Academy Awards Nominations*: Best Picture, Best Director (Yates), Best Supporting Actress (Barrie), Best Original Score.

Featured Actors: Dennis Christopher, Dennis Quaid, Daniel Stern, Jackie Earle Haley, Barbara Barrie, Paul Dooley, Amy Wright.

Director: Peter Yates.

Helpful Background:

In the 1950s and 1960s, many grocery stores gave customers trading stamps with every purchase. The stamps could be saved up, pasted into books, and then redeemed for merchandise such as appliances.

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Discussion Questions:

1. See [Discussion Questions for Use With any Film that is a Work of Fiction](#).
2. What was the significance of the passport to Dave's mother?

Social-Emotional Learning Discussion Questions:

COMING OF AGE

1. Why was Dave at first hesitant to go to college? *Suggested Response: There were a number of reasons. It was new territory. It doesn't appear that his father went to college and so Dave didn't have models of success. But the reason that relates to the theme of the film is that it meant the break up of his group of high school friends.*
2. Dave considered himself a "Cutter" despite the fact that his father was a used car salesman and Dave had never worked in a quarry. What did this have to do with Dave being an adolescent? *Suggested Response: Dave was a "Cutter" because that meant that he was from the town and not from the college. His friends considered themselves "Cutters" and Dave wanted to be identified with them.*
3. Remember when Dave said he was proud to be a "Cutter," and his father replied, "You're not a Cutter." Both of them were right and both of them were wrong, but in what ways? *Suggested Response: Dave's father was right that no one in their family had been employed in the quarries. Dave was right in that the name "Cutter" had come to mean someone from the town rather than from the college.*
4. What did Dave's obsession with all things Italian have to do with the themes of this film? *Suggested Response: Dave's obsession with all things Italian exemplifies the fact that in adolescence you are choosing who you want to be and that the entire world is open to you; it was also rebellion against the cramped and dull lives of his parents.*

QUICK DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why was it so important to Mike for the group of four friends to stay together?

Suggested Response: He genuinely liked his friends and wanted them to stay together. He was also probably feeling insecure about what life would bring him in the future and about whether the group would split up.

Give us your feedback! Was the *Guide* helpful? If so, which sections were most helpful? Do you have any suggestions for improvement? [Email us!](#)

Select questions that are appropriate for your students.

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Reminder to Teachers: Obtain all required permissions from your school administration before showing any film.

Teachers who want parental permission to show this movie can use TWM's [Movie Permission Slip](#).

5. Describe how the following incidents relate to the underlying themes in the film: (1) Dave's impersonation of an Italian when he met the attractive college girl; and (2) the fact that the Italian bicycle racers cheated Dave in the race. *Suggested Response:* (1) Dave felt that being a townie (a "Cutter") wouldn't get him very far with the girl but also he was exploring just who he could be; adolescence is a time when a child is choosing who he wants to be; Dave was choosing to be Italian; (2) the fact that the Italian racers cheated in the race and made Dave crash his bike showed that becoming Italian was not who Dave really was meant to be; he had to be something closer to his upbringing and his friends.

BUILDING VOCABULARY: townie and "town and gown."

PARENTING

6. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Dave's parents as they are shown in the film. *Suggested Response:* They were loving and caring but didn't have a clue to what was going on with Dave. But this is true of many parents of adolescents and somehow parents and kids get through it. We fully believe that Dave will have a loving relationship with his parents after he matures.

Are you concerned that time will be wasted if you are absent from class? Worry no more . . . Check out TeachWithMovies' [Set-Up-the-Sub](#).

7. What was the significance of the fact that Dave's father sold used cars? In what way, if any, was this a metaphor for a more important concept that the screenwriter wanted to portray? *Suggested Response:* It was a symbol for the poverty of his family's existence.

[Click here](#) for TWM's lesson plans to introduce cinematic and theatrical technique.

FRIENDSHIP

8. Name four acts of friendship that you observed in this film.

9. When the college kids beat up Cyril after he helped Dave serenade Kathy, why couldn't Cyril and Dave tell their friends what they had been doing or that they had taken the college entrance examination? Does this tell us anything about the circumstances of their friendship? *Suggested Response:* They couldn't tell their friends because it meant that they were leaving their friends behind and going their own way.

Moral-Ethical Emphasis Discussion Questions (Character Counts)

[Discussion Questions Relating to Ethical Issues](#) will facilitate the use of this film to teach ethical principles and critical viewing. Additional questions are set out below.

Teachwithmovies.com is a [Character Counts](#) "Six Pillars Partner" and uses [The Six Pillars of Character](#) to organize ethical principles.

FAIRNESS

(Play by the rules; Take turns and share; Be open-minded; listen to others; Don't take advantage of others; Don't blame others carelessly)

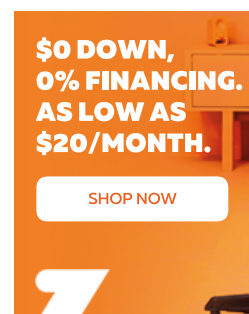
Character Counts and the Six Pillars of Character are marks of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics.

1. After the Italian team cheated in the bicycle race, was Dave right when he said, "Everybody cheats"? *Suggested Response:* No. Not everyone cheats. In fact, we submit that the vast majority don't cheat.

Bridges to Reading: None.

Links to the Internet:

- None.



Assignments, Projects and Activities: [Assignments, Projects, and Activities for Use With any Film that is a Work of Fiction](#)

Bibliography: None.

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