

# THE FIRST GRADER

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** This movie is rated PG-13 (for some disturbing, violent content and brief nudity). It can be used in English, social studies, and history classes. It is also recommended for community settings.

**BEFORE VIEWING:** (Choose one or more.)

- Invite students to list five to seven characteristics of a good teacher.
- Have the students, in pairs, list as many synonyms as possible for the word “perseverance.”
- Ask students to describe what freedom looks like in their daily lives.

**DURING VIEWING:** (Choose one.)

- Students will need to divide a paper into two columns. In the left column, students can jot down main events they observe in the movie. After viewing, have students write their reflections or reactions to these events.
- Explain that the movie uses flashbacks to tell part of the story. Tell students to keep this in mind and consider the importance of the flashbacks to the entire movie.

**AFTER VIEWING:** (Choose one or more.)

- Write five factual questions about the movie. Then have pairs of students take turns asking and answering questions.
- Organize students into groups of three or four to create a sentence that states the main idea of the movie. Then have them add three supporting details.
- Invite pairs of students to draw one of the film’s chains of events. Then ask the students to discuss with their partners how the story would have changed if one event had not occurred.
- Ask students to compare Teacher Jane and Maruge. How were they similar, and how were they different? A Venn diagram could be used to show the comparisons. Students should be able to cite examples from the movie to support their viewpoints.
- Discussion questions: As a class or in small groups have students respond to these questions.
  - Should education be free for students? If so, who should pay for it?
  - Do you think Teacher Jane should have allowed Maruge into the primary school? Why or why not?
  - Maruge said, “...if you can’t read or write, you’re no better than a goat.” Discuss how your life would be different if you couldn’t read.
  - Why does Teacher Jane risk so much to help Maruge? How do we as individuals determine what is worth fighting for?
  - Maruge tells the reporters, “The power is in the pen.” What does he mean?
  - Kipruto, the superintendent of schools, tells Maruge, “The past is always present.” List some personal or historical examples to prove this statement.
  - Maruge was teased and mocked by community members for attending school. But he was determined to succeed and ignored the hecklers. Have you ever been teased or harassed? How did you respond?

...CONTINUED ON BACK

- The government offers Maruge compensation as a way to make up for the suffering he endured in the prison camps. Do you agree with that gesture? What else could a government do for individuals that have been so deeply wronged?
- Was there anything that surprised you in the movie?
- What are some historical facts you learned about Kenya from the movie?

**GOING FURTHER:** For deeper study, students may want to work on one of these activities.

- Tell students that when we read text, words create pictures in our minds. Take one scene from the movie and describe in detail the setting and what took place.
- Have students pick one of the main characters in the story: Teacher Jane, Maruge, Alfred, or Kipruto. Acting as reporters, have students write up an interview they conducted with that character, including the questions they asked and the responses given.
- Tell students that a ballad is a type of poem that often tells a story of heroism or suffering, lost love, etc. Ask students to write a ballad about Maruge's life, and challenge them to set it to music.
- Freedom came at a huge price for Maruge. Reflect upon his sacrifices and describe the examples in our world today where groups of people are taking action to bring about a better life for themselves and families.
- Have students use current newspapers to find articles that pertain to human rights. Invite students to share the articles they found and their thoughts about the situation.
- Research the history of Kenya and create a timeline of its key events.
- Divide students into four groups, representing Teacher Jane, Maruge, Kipruto, and the young children. Have each group prepare to debate whether or not Maruge should be allowed to attend school. Conduct debates between each group (Kipruto vs. Teacher Jane, Maruge vs. Kipruto, etc.)



***The First Grader* opens in theaters on **May 13.****  
 To find a theater near you, go to  
[thefirstgrader-movie.com](http://thefirstgrader-movie.com) or [facebook.com/thefirstgrader](https://facebook.com/thefirstgrader).

If you use this guide with your middle and high school students, or in another educational setting (or go see the film yourself), let us know about it! Call us at 202-828-8051, email us at [giantscreen@ngs.org](mailto:giantscreen@ngs.org), or post to Facebook at [facebook.com/thefirstgrader](https://facebook.com/thefirstgrader). We will send you a copy of the film's official poster.

**FOR GROUP SALES INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL THEATER;  
 IF THE FIRST GRADER ISN'T PLAYING IN YOUR TOWN, ASK FOR IT!**



International Reading Association is proud to be the lead promotional partner for *The First Grader*.

