

SKET

TEACHERS' NOTES

This educational resource is designed for students aged 15–19. The activities here take a close look at the film *Sket* and the issues it touches on, and are suitable for use in a school or college to address aspects of the curriculum for PSHE. These materials can also be used in informal education contexts. The Film Education website for *Sket* further complements these materials, offering moving image content from the film alongside activities suitable for Film and Media Studies lessons.

Topics explored here include gang culture, identity and belonging, making choices and keeping safe.

SKET OFFICIAL FILM SYNOPSIS:

Kayla (Aimee Kelly), a young sixteen-year-old, faces the harsh London streets of gangland culture alone. Her mother already dead, her only protector and loving elder sister, Tanya (Katie Foster-Barnes), is one day brutally murdered by violent, misogynist gang leader Trey (Ashley Walters). Swearing vengeance, Kayla joins a girl gang led by the violent, damaged Danielle (Emma Hartley-Miller) who has her own reasons for helping Kayla seek retribution.

BEFORE VIEWING THE FILM

TAKING A FIRST LOOK



Look closely at this poster image for the film and work through these tasks with a partner or in a group:

1. Describe what you see in the image, as though you are telling someone how it looks over the phone, going into as much detail as you can.
2. What does this image suggest about the film, in terms of the:
 - a. characters – their identity as individuals and as a group
 - b. setting
 - c. story
3. How does it suggest these things?
4. How does this poster image fit with the ways girls tend to be shown in film posters, or on magazines, or on TV? Explain your answer, using examples where you can.

STREET CULTURE AND YOUTH VIOLENCE

With a partner or in a group, discuss the following:

- What do you think a gang is? What do you base this on?
- How is a gang different from other kinds of group, for example, a friendship group, followers of a football team, etc.? Think about how individuals within those different groups work together, and what they have to do to be part of that group.
- Can you give some examples of fictional (i.e. not real) gangs you have seen on TV or on films – how are they shown and what do they do?

Different people might have different views on what gangs are and what they do. For example, a police officer or a youth worker who comes into contact with young people and with gangs will have different perspectives on them; also, their opinions might be different from those of a person who has never come into contact with a real gang, but who has seen news items on gangs, or seen them portrayed in films or on TV.

We interviewed Jennifer Blake, a former gang member who now runs a project in south London called Safe 'N Sound, that offers a safe and supporting environment for young people looking to get away from gang life.

“...the word gang is used too loosely and the media is the one to blame for that. A group of people that have gone out and committed a robbery, say, a bank, they are classed as a gang, and so are youths that go around hooded, as well as a group of young people that are simply hanging out. It is a culture for some to move around in a crew and it is a culture for some to dress the way they do today – thuggish.”

- What do you think about what Jennifer says here - do you think that young people are sometimes unfairly associated with 'gang' activity?

Jennifer also says:

“Today on our streets we have a situation where we are seeing a lot of youth violence, where young people especially are acting violent towards each other for status, respect and sheer wickedness. The gangs are

quietly at home raking in the money made by their boys and girls on the ground. They are fighting and killing one another due to territory rivalry ‘...who runs this part of the borough, who’s in control’.”

- How does Jennifer explain the link between gangs and violence? What else does she say that gangs do?
- From what Jennifer says here and from your own impressions, do you think each person in a gang has the same role to play? Explain your answer.

WHAT MAKES A GANG?

This group activity is designed to get you discussing your ideas in more detail.

Cut out the statements on the next page and fold them in half, so you can't see the words. Then, in a group, take a statement each. Unfold it, read it out, and think about your response discussing the different viewpoints:

AGREE

DISAGREE

**DEPENDS
SOMETIMES TRUE AND SOMETIMES NOT**

Work through all the statements in this way.

As you do this, think about which of the statements could also be true of other kinds of groups, e.g. friendship groups, sports clubs and so on.

Members of a gang might be similar in terms of their:

viewpoints and opinions
ways of dressing
ways of speaking
ethnicity
age
income
family background
location – where they live

Being in a gang is about:

fun
protection
violence
crime
respect
strength
control
place, space or territory
belonging

WHAT MAKES A GANG?

Cut out the statements from this page and use them for the 'What makes a gang?' activity.



**Members of a gang might be similar
in terms of their viewpoints and opinions**

**Members of a gang might be similar
in terms of the way they dress**

**Members of a gang might be similar
in terms of the way they speak**

**Members of a gang might be similar
in terms of their ethnicity**

**Members of a gang might be similar
in terms of their age**

**Members of a gang might be similar
in terms of their level of income**

**Members of a gang might be similar
in terms of their family background**

**Members of a gang might be similar
in terms of their location – where they live**

Being in a gang is about fun

Being in a gang is about protection

Being in a gang is about violence

Being in a gang is about crime

Being in a gang is about respect

Being in a gang is about strength

Being in a gang is about control

Being in a gang is about place, space or territory

Being in a gang is about having somewhere to belong

AFTER VIEWING THE FILM

DISCUSSION POINTS

The people who made *Sket* wanted to create something different from other films about life on the streets. The film is described as 'raw', 'gritty', 'gripping' and 'hard-hitting' and although it is not based on a true story, it does raise a number of issues that are relevant to young people. Now that you've watched the film you should think about your reactions to what you have seen.

Work through the points below, and the activities at the end of this booklet, using discussion and group work to explore a range of views.

CHARACTERS

- Which of the characters in the film would you say you could most 'relate' to or understand?
- Which character did you find the most difficult to 'like'? Explain your answer.
- How would you describe the main group of girls in *Sket*?
- What 'identity' does each of the girls have? How would you describe the role of each of them within the group, and the relationships between them?
- Think about the relationships between the girls in the group led by Daze, both before Kayla joins them and after. Why do you think Kayla wants to join them, and what consequences do we see to this decision? Try to think about all the different characters that are affected.
- What problems do the characters have that we:
 - See or hear about, or
 - Are able to guess at?
- In the film, what attitudes towards women and girls do the male characters display? How might we begin to challenge offensive behaviours?
- Can you identify a gang or gangs in the film? What do you see them doing that fits with your idea of a gang? And are there other groups in the film that are not 'gangs' as you understand them now? How would you describe those groups?

CHOICES

“Your actions are a choice that you choose. Your destiny is your choice. A life on the street has a destiny: prison, mental health and death you choose. It is important that when a young person is excited out of youth violence it is important that they are channelled into something where they can still feel in control and feel part of a family.”

- Jennifer Blake, ‘Safe ‘N Sound’

- In the film, the different characters make choices about their actions, some of which lead to difficult consequences for themselves and others. What choices do the characters in the film seem to have about using drugs, having sex and shaping their lifestyle?
- What impact do peer attitudes to drugs and sex have on the characters’ lives?
- Why do you think the filmmakers have presented the lives of these young people in this way?
- In *Sket*, there are a number of incidents where violence is used, often to control a person or a situation. Male and female characters are violent and have violent things done to them. What choices did the characters have about using violence, or having it inflicted on them, and what are the main consequences of violent actions for the characters in the film?

INTERVIEW EXTRACTS AND ACTIVITIES

In a group, read through these extracts from our interview with Jennifer Blake and use them to help you discuss the questions below:

We asked Jennifer: Do girls who are vulnerable to gang culture seem to fit a certain 'profile' or to have common factors in their lives?

She said:

"...girls get involved for many different reasons. Some girls come from a good family background. Some girls that are groomed by other girls are targeted because they appear timid, quiet, easily led and gullible. The other portions are girls that are groomed by boys because of their boisterous character, pretending to show them interest and wannabe girls."

"Boys motivate girls joining youth violence. There are girls that join up with boys for several reasons such as they like someone in the group, they are going out with one of them or being part of them gives them status. Today you do not get girl gangs that operate as a gang. You have girls that move together, party, drink, take drugs and thief together."

How far does what we see in *Sket* seem to match up to Jennifer's descriptions here? Give examples.

We asked Jennifer: After watching *Sket*, what message do you think young people will take away from the film?

She said:

"Think twice about getting involved in groups of people that are gang-affiliated – the film shows how easy family members can get caught up and sometimes get hurt. Drug taking is not a cool thing to do. Street life is not glamorous. It can be very hard to get out of gang life and the abuse that comes with the involvement. The best advice for girls is to learn to love yourselves from within then and only then will you begin to respect yourself not allowing someone to manipulate and abuse you."

The film's director, Nirpal Bhogal, says in the press pack for the film:

"I wanted the final emotion felt by the audience to be one of compassion. I considered this deeply, and purposely wanted the viewer to be repulsed by the gang before moving into their world and becoming more sympathetic. I certainly didn't want to patronise. Drug dealing is shown, but there is no need to discuss it: it is a means to an end for the characters, no more than this. It also helps to illustrate the idea of female empowerment, also central to the film."

- Thinking back to the actions and consequences you saw in the film, what messages did you take away from it? How did you feel after the film finished?

REFLECTING ON THE THEMES

These final tasks get you working in groups using presentation skills and drama strategies to work through your responses to the film and the issues.

ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITY

Work in a pair for this activity. One of you should choose a character from the film and think about the actions they take, and the choices that make their lives difficult and dangerous. You might want to choose:

Kayla

Trey

Shaks

Daze

The other person in the pair takes on the role of a youth worker, encouraging that character to leave behind the dangerous and difficult parts of their life and take back control of their future. Role-play a conversation, thinking about the different points each person might make. Once you've worked through the conversation, switch roles. Finally, share one of your role-plays with the rest of the group.

GROUP PRESENTATION

Based on what you have learned, you now need to put together all the facts into a short presentation for other people your age that gives some ideas about keeping safe. Everyone in the group should take a part in the presentation. Present your ideas in a lively and interesting way, perhaps using some drama techniques – for example you could include a short role-play, a freeze-frame, an angel/devil on the shoulder of a character...it's up to you. Also try to come up with a slogan that will be easy to remember. You could also have one or two people in the group create a flyer to hand out with some key points.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Jennifer Blake of Safe 'N Sound for contributing to this resource.

ABOUT THE SAFE'N'SOUND YOUTH PROJECT, LONDON:

Jennifer Blake was inspired to set up Safe'N'Sound (S'N'S) (formally known as Eternal Life Support Centre) in 2004 as she became increasingly concerned and recognised the rising challenges, social issues, high levels of exclusion and criminal activity amongst young people. As an ex-gang leader herself she is well placed to understand the needs of young people. She has an inspired insight of the types of services that are needed to enable change to take place.

S'N'S is a specialist project designed to address the needs of young people. It provides practical, emotional and psychological support for young people and parents covering a wide range of issues. A key part of their work also involves working directly with the perpetrators of crime. S'N'S's aim is to reduce the high levels of gang, knife and gun crime among young people.

For more information on S'N'S, please contact:

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