

## Some thoughts on watching films

Stories are the stuff of life. They allow us to reflect on all sorts of issues at a safe distance as we engage with the characters, cry with them, laugh with them, get cross with them and generally share their experience. How they deal with the issues they come across may frustrate us, or give us new insights; cause us to laugh or cry; result in us hurling abuse at the screen or willing there to be a happy ending. And through it all we can encounter God in all sorts of unexpected places if we only take time to look.

### Questions to ask yourself

What did you think of the film? What do you like most? Least?

Which incidents made you *think* or *feel* most strongly? How well did you think the film treated those incidents?

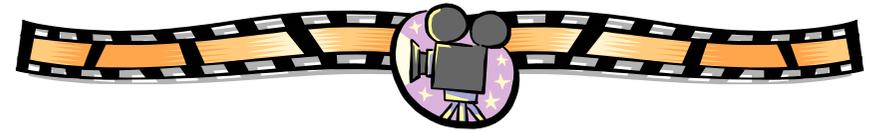
What issues did the film raise for you?

What character(s) do you most identify with and why?

Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values?

### Some facts about the film

- This is the first film since Schindler's List to win Best Picture, Director and Screenplay at the Golden Globes, BAFTAs and the Oscars.
- A.R. Rahman took just 20 days to compose the entire soundtrack.
- This movie almost was released straight to DVD instead of getting a theatrical release.
- The pile of excreta that the young Jamal jumps into was made from a combination of peanut butter and chocolate.
- Approximately 20% of the movie's dialog is in Hindi (with English subtitles).
- The top prize of 20,000,000 Rupees currently equates to about USD\$411,600.
- Director Danny Boyle placed the money to be paid to the 3 lead child actors in a trust that is to be released to them upon their completion of grade school at 16 years of age.
- The production company has arranged for an auto-rikshaw driver to take the kids to school every day until they are 16 years old.
- The actor whose autograph young Jamal gets is Amitabh Bachchan. Bachchan is a very real, and very famous Indian actor, the original host of the Indian version of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire".
- Mercedes-Benz asked that its logos be removed in scenes taking place in the slums. They feared that association with such a poverty-stricken area might taint its image.
- The film is based upon Vikas Swarup's novel "Q & A".
- The opera that Jamal and Salim see at the Taj Mahal is Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridice". It tells how Orpheus, distraught at his wife Euridice's death, travels all the way to the Underworld in an attempt to retrieve her. Jamal's lifelong quest to rescue Latika from the various "underworld" figures who have control of her is an echo of this myth. Furthermore, the first singer to perform the role of Orpheus (in 1762) was a castrato. The film's subplot in which children are kidnapped by Maman and mutilated so that they will be more lucrative beggars and street singers is an echo of this opera's history.



**A chance to watch films together.  
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.  
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

**5th Apr Son of Man  
3rd May WALL-E  
14th Jun Into the Wild  
2nd Aug Slumdog Millionaire  
6th Sep The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas**

**Films start at 5:30pm  
Followed by food, coffee and conversation**

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## Slumdog Millionaire

This recent Oscar winning film interweaves the performance of a Mumbai teenager on the Indian version of *Who wants to be a millionaire?* with a rollercoaster personal story of tragedy and love. In so doing, it raises issues of poverty, our values and lifestyle, the way we look out for each other, and the whole question of destiny.

### **Destiny**

The idea of things happening because “it is written” runs deep in many societies. Things happen because they are meant to be, because that is people’s destiny. At one end, this leads to people believing that there must be a reason behind everything, however good or bad. At the other end of the spectrum are those who fiercely contest such a view and instead believe everything is random, futile and meaningless. Where do you lie on that spectrum? Does God have a plan for each one of us? And, if so, how much can he manipulate things to make it happen? Or is his desire for our lives completely in our own hands?

### **Values**

Our values and what we hope for often shape who we become. Salim and Jamal want very different things out of life and their paths separate as a result. What do you hope for in your own life? How has that affected the choices you have made and how might it affect them in the future? And where does God fit in?

### **Reactions to poverty**

Salim and Jamal struggle to survive. In doing so, they end up manipulating others and stealing from them. How do you react to such behaviour? Does the end justify the means? If so, why? If not, why not? And do you think we have a right to judge anyway?

The promise of millions of rupees and thus an instant way out of life’s problems is what makes programmes like *Millionaire* and things like national lotteries so appealing to many. They play on people’s hopes and dreams for a better life but they result in large amounts of money being given to only a few lucky people. What do you think about that? After all, there are around 1 billion people worldwide living in slums, and half the world’s population own just 1 per cent of the world’s total wealth. What *is* an appropriate response to such need?

### **Paying the price**

#### **\*\*\* Potential Plot Spoiler \*\*\***

Why do you think Salim does what he does? Often wonderful things are done by the most unlikely people—there really is goodness embedded deep within all of us. When have you been taken by surprise by unlikely people doing good things? Are there things or situations where you have a role to play in order to free others from the things which bind them (eg. guilt, poverty, misunderstanding, lack of self worth)? Do you have the courage to do them, whatever the cost?

### **Relating it to the Bible**

Matthew 25:31—46

Throughout the Bible, God is seen as the saviour and rescuer of the poor. But God also asks his followers to be like him and to provide for the poor and needy. Given the realities of poverty around the world, how do we stop ourselves from becoming desensitised?

Mark 10: 17—31

Being a disciple revolves around the choices we make and the things we value most.

Genesis 37:1-8, 42: 1-8

The story of Joseph is one where dreams were fulfilled in unexpected ways.

## Memorable Quotes

**Jamal** When somebody asks me a question, I tell them the answer.

**Jamal** [*seeing the Taj Maha*] Is this heaven?

**Salim** You're not dead Jamal.

**Jamal** What is it? Some hotel?

**Salim** Left a message for you at work.

**Jamal** There was no message.

**Salim** I definitely left a mess...

**Jamal** There was no message! There was no message! \*There was no message\*!

[*Looks down at Salim starting to cry a little*]

**Jamal** I will never forgive you!

**Salim** I know

**Jamal** If it wasn't for Rama and Allah, I'd still have a mother.

**Javed** My enemy's enemy is my friend.

**Jamal** Javed Khan... the gangster from our slum? You work for him?

**Salim** Come on, who else do you think would save us from Maman's guys, huh?

**Jamal** What do you do for him?

**Salim** Anything he asks.

[*pause in conversation, as Salim's phone rings*]

**Salim** He's coming. You need to go now. Take my card.

**Jamal** What for?

**Salim** You think I'm gonna let you out of my sights again, huh? You stay with me now, younger brother. Now, go. My place.

**Jamal** Salim, where is Latika?

**Salim** Still...? She's gone, brother. Long gone.

**Jamal** I love you.

**Latika** So what?

**Latika** You want to do something for me?

**Jamal** Anything.

**Latika** Then forget me!

**Jamal** I'll wait for you at the train station every day at five.

**Kumar** Final question for twenty million rupees, and he's smiling. I guess you know the answer.

**Jamal** Do you believe it, I don't!

**Kumar** You don't? So you take the ten million and walk?

**Jamal** No. I'll play.

**Jamal** I knew you'd be watching.

**Latika** I thought we would meet only in death.

**Jamal** This is our destiny.

**Latika** Kiss me.

**Jamal** Maybe it is written.