



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

**6th May    The Help**  
**10th Jun   A Separation**  
**1st Jul    The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel**  
**2nd Sep   We Need To Talk About Kevin**  
**7th Oct   The First Grader**  
**4th Nov   War Horse**

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

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## 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 only we 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

- ▶ Naomie Harris, who plays the role of Jane Obinchi in the film, is due to appear in the role of Eve in *Skyfall*, the new James Bond film out later this month. She also appeared as Tia Dalma in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* films.
- ▶ Oliver Litondo, who plays the role of Maruge, started his career as a news reader for a Kenyan news station. Having played minor parts in other films, this is his first leading role.
- ▶ The film was mostly shot in a remote Kenyan village with no electricity or running water and used the local school with its 200 schoolchildren, most of whom had never seen a movie or TV show.
- ▶ Director Justin Chadwick also directed the BBC mini-series "Bleak House".
- ▶ The script was written by Ann Peacock, also known for "The Chronicles of Narnia".
- ▶ Maruge finally died in 2009, aged 89.

# Memorable Quotes

**DJ Masha** I am now beginning to believe that one day a Kenyan, a Kenyan, will go to the White House.

**Jane** Mmzee, they meant for children, not adults.

**Kimani** No, I heard it on the radio, with my own ears, they said 'everybody'.

**Jane** Mmzee, why does someone as old as yourself want to go to school?

**Kimani** I want to learn to read.

**Kimani** We chose. We paid.

**Jane** He wanted to come to school, so I let him.

**Official** What do you mean? This is a primary school.

**Jane** Sir, the government said everybody had right to go to school.

**Official** Just because our politicians are stupid, it doesn't mean we have to be as well.

**Kimani** Do you think I'm too old to learn?

**Jane** My father had a saying. He was not an educated man, he was a fisherman, but he said 'you never stop learning until you have soil in your ears'.

**Kimani** I will continue learning, I want to become a vet.

**Jane** *[laughing]* A vet? Maruge, you'll be almost 100 years old.

**Kimani** I will never stop learning until I have soil in my ears.

**Jane** *[addressing her 200 students on her last day]* My mother never went to school, and she said to me, 'You must love education, so that you can do better than me'. I am your mother and I am telling you, you must love education, so that you can do better than me, better than all of the teachers.

**Kimani** I fought for you to get our land back from the British. When I was a boy there was no money for education. I worked on a white man's farm. Then came the fight for freedom.

**Official** An old man like him does not belong in a classroom full of children.

**Jane** He fought the British. He was imprisoned in the camps.

**Jane** Maruge is such a hard worker. He is a great role model for the children.

**Man 1** Eighty-four years old and going back to school! How old are you?

**Man 2** Fifty-five.

**Man 1** Fifty-five. You are a toddler!

# The First Grader

Set in a mountain village in Kenya, *The First Grader* tells the true story of Kimani N'gan'ga Maruge, an 84-year-old Kenyan, who goes to extraordinary lengths to get an education. A Mau Mau veteran who suffered incredible torture at the hands of British colonialists, Maruge's sense of purpose as an octogenarian comes from the long-denied desire for an education. Maruge staked his youth, and the lives of his young family, on the Mau Mau uprising in the 1950s, and lost them both. When, in his later years, Maruge hears on the radio about the free education the Kenyan government offers to 'everyone', he resolves to make the most of it and shows up at the local village school. He sincerely believes it is his right, and he is determined to get the education that has been out of financial reach ever since he was a child.

## Primary education for all

One of the millennium goals adopted by the UN was to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Although tremendous strides have been taken, this is now unlikely to be met. Nonetheless, the latest figures show enrolment in primary education in the developing world to have reached 89%. Sadly, this means there are still 69 million school-age children out of school, almost half of these in sub-Saharan Africa and more than a quarter in Southern Asia.

It is said that a good education is the key to a fulfilling life and being able to realise your dreams. How much do we take it for granted?

## The value of the elderly

Some of the dismissive attitudes towards the old man are familiar. We often see them in our own society. In a culture which is fearful of ageing and death, do we prefer to keep the old out of sight and out of mind? Do we fail to appreciate their dignity and value? Maruge doesn't think his age is a barrier to a worthwhile life. Regardless of his years, he recognises that there is always more to learn and discover. As we get older, we may be tempted to feel that we no longer have a purpose. But Maruge demonstrates that this isn't the case. An old proverb describes grey hair as "a crown of glory", suggesting that age and experience are positive things that we should celebrate. The gospel continually reminds us that everyone is of worth and of value. In your experience, how much do we, as a society, hold on to that truth? And how well do we do within our own church communities?