

306-027

June 1987

A 4-H/CRD Film Discussion Guide

THE BOY WHO LIKED DEER

The audience learns of the emotional cost of vengeful destruction. The film combats juvenile vandalism by encouraging children to internalize the feeling of loss suffered by the victims of property destruction.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

- Junior and senior high school students

OBJECTIVES

- To dramatize that vandalism is not confined to poor communities, but is also prevalent in affluent areas and is connected to affluence and high technical development.
- To develop value clarification in young people.
- To explore how displaced or unexpressed emotions can result in emotional phenomena such as vandalism and juvenile delinquency.
- To show the difficulties of dealing with peer pressure and the kinds of behavior that result when people do not have strong inner value systems.

SYNOPSIS

The story centers around Jason, a member of an affluent family which resides in an upscale suburban town. Jason and his friends seem to have little to do besides letting air out of tires in parking lots and phoning in false alarms. Jason, however, is very fond of the deer at a local park. He helps the warden at feeding time. Furthermore, he is very pleased when he's told he can be a summer volunteer there.

Jason is less enthusiastic at school, however. He is chastised by his English teacher, Mr. Mason, for not turning in an assignment and almost falls asleep when Mr. Mason begins a poetry lesson. With great pride, the teacher shows the class an autographed book of poetry he owns.

Days later, things worsen for Jason in school and he is informed that he must attend summer school. He will not be able to work in the deer park. Infuriated, Jason and his friends go off on a vandalism spree. As the other boys head to the deer park, Jason hangs back but is eventually encouraged to join them. They rip open bags of deer feed and do not notice that rat poison is mixing in the feed. Eventually, the young vandals make their way toward the school. There they rip up books and papers in Mr. Mason's class. Hiding when the teacher comes in, Jason watches as Mr. Mason sees that his poetry book is destroyed. The boy notices and is moved by the older man's expression of pain.

The experience in Mr. Mason's classroom is a first step in Jason's understanding of what the loss of something precious can mean to a person. This is dramatically reinforced the next time he visits the deer park. The warden tells him that the deer have died because vandals put poison in their food. Knowing that the warden will never know it was his fault, Jason is left with bitter self-recrimination — the hardest punishment to bear. As Mr. Mason did, Jason cries over the loss of something he loved.

LD
5655
A762
no. 306-
027
VPI
Spec

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you understand the vandalism of Jason and his friends? Have you ever committed similar acts? What would be your reaction to hearing your friends tell of similar acts?
2. In what ways has modern technology increased people's propensity to regard property with indifference or contempt?
3. The U.S. Office of Education estimates that the cost of damage by vandals to public schools in the nation runs as high as 500 million dollars yearly. Are people aware of the problem in your community? What can community leaders and parents do?
4. Boredom and anger seem to be two emotions that Jason is expressing both through vandalism and his behavior in school. Do you, noting the affluence of Jason's home and community, sympathize with him? What is boredom?
5. Is Jason lonely? How do you know? What scenes show Jason expressing displaced anger? (e.g., He angrily rips off the note his mother has left him on the refrigerator. What was Jason really angry about here?) In what situations is a direct expression of anger more helpful to individuals than displaced anger?
6. In what other instance of the film is Jason confronted with being different from his friends and subject to "peer pressure?" How strongly did Jason protest about breaking into the deer park? What were his emotions at that time? (Students might improvise a dialogue between Jason and his friends.)
7. How did you react to the way Mr. Mason spoke to the class about vandalism in the school? Did he get through to the students? He took a moralizing approach — what other approaches might he have taken to transmit his own values?
8. How did you react to the poetry lesson? Can you suggest ways in which the teacher might have engaged more of the class emotionally in poetry?

Learning Corporation of America
Length: 18 Minutes

Prepared by: R. Michael Chandler
Extension Specialist
Community Resource Development



**Community Resource
Development**

Virginia Cooperative Extension Service programs, activities, and employment opportunities are available to all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicap, or political affiliation. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and September 30, 1977, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Mitchell R. Geasler, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, and Vice Provost for Extension, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061; Clinton V. Turner, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia 23803.