DEATH OF A SUPERHERO
Germany, Ireland 2012, 93 min.

German certification: minimum age 12, recommended for 14 years and older

What DEATH OF A SUPERHERO is about
15-year-old Donald has had cancer for over a year and has long since lost all his hair from the constant chemotherapy. While his father secretly prays in church, and his mother investigates treatment options on the Internet, Donald has already come to terms with the fact that he is going to die soon – and without ever having had a girlfriend. Meanwhile he draws bleak comic strips where he gives a face to his rage at the disease, at the doctors with their injections, and to his fear of dying. In doing so he fights to maintain, at least in his imagination, a little freedom and control over his life. But then Donald meets a psychotherapist, Dr King, who seems to understand him – and he falls in love with Shelly, an unusual girl who has little regard for rules. He realizes that love, which he has always seen as a danger, can also give him strength.

This sensitive drama focuses on dealing with an incurable disease, and with fears, longings and wishes. Yet Ian FitzGibbon does not turn this material into an earnest tear-jerker, but tells a melancholy story about a boy who learns, in difficult conditions, what friendship and love mean – and who finds, in his vivid imagination, a way to understand his life and his feelings. Animated sequences are coherently integrated into the live action of the film, and show symbolically how Donald perceives his situation.

The following worksheets deal with
• the interplay of reality and imagination, and the importance Donald’s fantasy world has for him
• the relationships between the characters
• the melancholy mood of the film, and how this is evoked

Published information
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Photo credits:
NFP Marketing & Distribution, EuroVideo
(All the stills are from the DVD DEATH OF A SUPERHERO, released in Germany by EuroVideo. They serve as image quotations, to enable study of the film’s content, and not as illustrations.)
**Imagination and reality**

Compare Donald’s fantasy world with his situation in reality. Discuss the following aspects:

- similarities or differences
- fears and wishes
- the role Donald sees himself as playing
- the camera perspective and its effect
- the meaning of the choice of colours and the effect of the colours

> Donald’s alter ego

> Donald and women
> Donald and the doctors

Describe the presentation of the fantasy world. What comics does it remind you of?

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The fantasy world changes
Use the following two stills to explain the relationship between Donald’s fantasy world and the real world at the beginning of DEATH OF A SUPERHERO, and later on in the film.

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The characters
Describe briefly what the following characters mean to Donald, and how they interact with him. For each character identify one scene in which this is particularly emphasized.
Mood of the film
DEATH OF A SUPERHERO is the story of a 15-year-old boy who has to get to grips with his own death. Describe the mood of the film, with reference to the following aspects:

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