



SUMMER'S DAY

TEACHING TOOLKIT





ABOUT THE FILM

Summer's Day is a warm coming-of-age story which follows Summer's awkward transition into a teenager. Summer is 11-years old when she gets her period for the first time. Without a mother to guide her, she navigates becoming a woman, and her body image troubles, with the help of her best friend Mackenzie.

USING THIS RESOURCE

This resource will support Years 5-8 teachers and students in exploring the content and themes in *Summer's Day*, including menstruation, puberty and body image. The content relates largely to the Health and Physical Education curriculum, and also links to English, Media Arts and the General Capabilities. The *Summer's Day* Teaching Toolkit can be used as a standalone resource, or to complement a school's existing health education or puberty programs.

The learning tasks in this resource were designed to be accessible to all students, not just those who have periods. Students are often separated by gender - or perceived gender - for puberty education, based on the assumption that this will make them more comfortable. However, keeping the class together for instruction can be worth the extra effort and potential embarrassment. This approach gives students facilitated experience in communicating about sensitive topics with peers, and helps them to empathise with a range of experiences.

As this resource addresses sensitive issues including puberty and body image, it is important that the learning environment is safe and supportive. Respectful classroom behaviours such as active listening and 'no put-downs' will allow students to share their ideas, ask questions and express their views openly.



TASK 1: BODY IMAGE

CLIP: DINNER ON THE BEACH
(01:52 – 05:47)

Summer tells her dad that she's not hungry, and perhaps this is true: symptoms including nausea and bloating mean that some people experience appetite fluctuations during their periods. But as this clip continues, it becomes more apparent that Summer is struggling with her body image.

Preparing for bed, she sighs with relief as she unravels the tight bandages from around her chest. On her bedroom walls, we see Summer's cut-out face stuck onto magazine pictures of thin fashion models. Well-meaning comments from her dad about 'puppy fat' are not helping, and living in a body-beautiful beach town further adds to the pressure Summer feels.

After viewing and discussing this clip, have students work in pairs to brainstorm and record the psychological, emotional and social changes that affect young people during puberty. For example, it is common for young people to think more about how their bodies look and compare their bodies with others'. Have students share their work with the wider class. Can students suggest practical strategies for coping with these universal changes?

This learning task could be used to assess students' current understandings about the non-physical changes resulting from puberty, and to highlight areas for future teaching.

TASK 2: FIRST PERIOD

CLIP: SUMMER'S PERIOD ARRIVES
UNEXPECTEDLY (05:48 – 08:58)

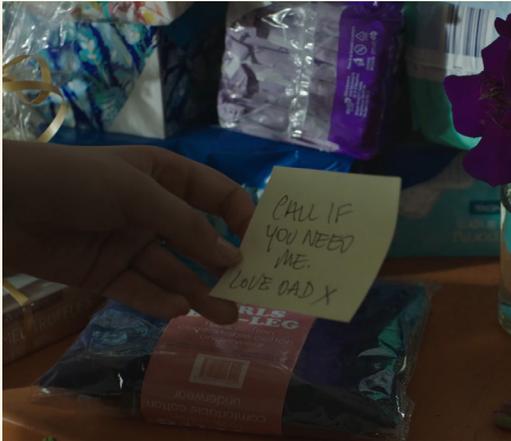
While it is common for girls to get their first period between the ages of 12 and 14 ('Physical changes in puberty', n.d.), there is no way of knowing when it will start. Because of this, a first period always arrives unexpectedly, leaving many girls and their parents feeling unprepared. When Summer gets her period, her dad reaches out to their neighbour for help. He says he is 'not ready', and that Summer's mum would have been better able to guide her.

Despite his uncertainty, Summer's dad is willing and able to help his daughter through this transition. Unfortunately – and for varying reasons – not all students have the same level of parental support in navigating the changes related to puberty.

In groups, ask students to brainstorm people, resources and organisations that could assist peers who need extra support or advice during puberty. This might include: friends, siblings or extended family; a homeroom teacher or school nurse; books or quality online resources; or organisations such as Kids Helpline. Findings could be shared during a whole-class reflection.

TIPS FOR MANAGING A FIRST PERIOD

- An 'emergency' pad can be made by folding up toilet paper.
- Blood-stained underwear, clothing or sheets can be soaked in cold water and then washed as usual.
- Pads and tampons need to be changed every three or four hours (more frequently if necessary). Period underwear can often be worn for longer, and menstrual cups can be worn for up to 12 hours.
- Wash hands before and after changing menstrual products.



TASK 3: SUPPORT AND SELF-CARE

CLIP: DAD LOOKS AFTER SUMMER (08:59 – 10:13)

On the night of her first period, Summer rests in bed with a hot water bottle. She quickly shuts down a conversation with her dad out of frustration: gender stereotypes underpin his ideas about her chores at home, and her future career options. The following morning, Summer awakes to a 'peace offering' from her dad. He has left menstrual products, new underwear, chocolate, and a supportive note for her.

Like Summer in this clip, it is common to have stomach pain, and to feel tired, sensitive, or emotional during a period. As a class, ask students to identify and discuss the ways that Summer practiced self-care in this scene, and the ways that her dad provided emotional and practical support. For example, Summer rests and keeps warm, and her dad offers to refill her hot water bottle.

Ask students to reflect on their preferred ways to care for themselves when they feel sensitive or unwell, and how they can support others who feel like this. Working independently, have students record their thoughts in a T-chart. If they are comfortable doing so, they may like to share these strategies with a partner in order to learn from each other.

TASK 4: MANAGING PERIODS AT SCHOOL

CLIP: SUMMER AT SCHOOL (10:36 – 11:58)

After hurriedly reading the instructions, Summer uses a pad for the first time at school and then rushes back to class. She hasn't positioned the pad properly, and blood leaks onto her school dress during class. Luckily her best friend Mackenzie is there to help her: she wraps a jumper around Summer's waist and rushes her to the school toilets.

In this clip, Summer misses class time twice because of menstrual management. If her family was unable to afford menstrual products – a reality for some families – the impact on Summer's learning would be even greater. 'Period poverty' leaves some girls improvising menstrual products every month, or routinely missing school because they aren't adequately prepared.

Recent local and international campaigns have called for menstrual products to be made freely available in school bathrooms. This would enable students to manage their periods at school with confidence and dignity, regardless of their family's financial situation. Doing so would also help us become more open, communicative and positive about menstruation, and break down the stigma surrounding it.

After discussing period poverty as a class, have students write a persuasive letter to their federal, state or territory education or health minister, calling on them to provide free menstrual products in school bathrooms. To inform their reasoning, students could research Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews' pledge to supply disposable menstrual products in government schools from 2019 (Cook, 2019).



TASK 5: EVERY BODY IS DIFFERENT

CLIP: SUMMER AND MACKENZIE TALKING (11:59 - 12:39)

While Summer scrubs her school uniform, Mackenzie expresses her jealousy that Summer is becoming a woman. They find humour in their different approaches to mutual body image troubles: Summer binds her stomach and breasts to flatten them, while less-developed Mackenzie stuffs tissues in her bra so that her breasts appear bigger.

Puberty marks the transition between childhood and adulthood. It usually begins at around 10-11 years for girls and 11-13 years for boys, but the 'normal' age range for the onset of puberty is wider than this: 8-13 years for girls, and 9-14 years for boys ('Physical changes in puberty', n.d.). The amount of time it takes to complete puberty also varies. It is reassuring for young people to know that everyone develops at different ages and rates, and that this is completely normal.

Give each student a slip of paper. Ask students to write a question from the perspective of a fictional person who is concerned about an aspect of puberty. This question should relate to a physical, social or emotional change that commonly occurs during puberty.

Shuffle these slips of paper and distribute one question to each student. Ask students to research the issue raised in the question they were given, then apply this new knowledge in their response. Students' written responses should be reassuring, empathetic, and provide practical suggestions to address the problem. Compile these resources into a hard copy or digital 'book' that can be used as a resource for the class.



TASK 6: HEALTH MESSAGES IN THE MEDIA

CLIP: MACKENZIE TEACHES SUMMER ABOUT PERIODS (12:41 - 14:03)

Mackenzie seems to know everything about periods, which is unsurprising given that her mum always shares 'too much information'. Along with explaining the length and frequency of menstrual cycles, Mackenzie tells Summer: 'You'll be able to get out of swimming carnivals now, Saturday sports, heaps of stuff.'

Symptoms including fatigue, stomach cramps, headaches and dizziness do mean that some people are unable or unwilling to exercise during their periods. Others avoid exercise because they are concerned about possible leaks or menstrual products becoming visible.

However, physical activity can improve the experience of having periods. According to the Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne ('Exercise, diet & periods'. n.d.), regular exercise reduces the likelihood of menstrual pain, cramps and mood disturbances. When we also consider the availability of effective pain medications and discrete menstrual product options (including period swimwear), it becomes clear that periods are not the inevitable barrier to sports participation that Mackenzie suggests.

In groups, have students critically analyse the health messages in this and other clips from *Summer's Day*. How might this messaging influence viewers' attitudes, beliefs, decisions or behaviours in relation to periods? Which health information is most helpful to the film's young audience? Are any negative stereotypes about periods perpetuated through dialogue, language choices, or gestures and facial expressions? Ask groups to share their thinking with the wider class, reflecting on how the media can influence the way people act and the choices they make.



TASK 7: SUSTAINABLE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

CLIP: MACKENZIE EXPLAINS MENSTRUAL CUPS (14:04 - 15:02)

Mackenzie introduces Summer to sustainable period products when she discusses her mum's menstrual cup. Summer sees this choice as further evidence that Mackenzie's family are 'hippies'. But reusable menstrual products are gaining popularity with a range of people – not only hippies – because of their environmental and financial benefits.

In groups, have students investigate the benefits of sustainable menstrual products, including menstrual cups, cloth pads and period underwear. Environmental considerations include: how many of each product type would be used over a lifetime; materials and their production process; waste in landfill and the ocean; how long the materials take to break down; and the packaging of different products. Financial considerations should include the potential savings over a lifetime of menstruation. Groups could present their findings back to the class through a short multimodal presentation.

TASK 8: CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

CLIP: RITUAL BY THE LAKE (15:04 - 21:04)

On the first day of Summer's period, Mackenzie tells her: 'It's a big day. We can make our own ritual.' The girls head to the blood-red Tea Tree Lakes to perform a rite of passage ritual, like Summer's mum might have done if she was alive. Mackenzie discards the tissues from her bra, Summer unravels her bandage, and they both splash and play in the water, suggesting that the girls are both on their way towards self-acceptance.

This improvised ritual was informed by what the girls had observed their 'hippie' Byron Bay mothers doing in the past. Other families in the community might mark the occasion differently, and different cultures around the world would have different approaches again.

Ask students to individually research 'coming of age' or 'rite of passage' ceremonies. Do their own families or communities mark the transition from childhood to adulthood in any way? How do other cultures acknowledge this special time? Do these rituals differ for boys and girls? Would students like to see any of these rituals adopted in their own communities? Have students share their learning through a written response, such as an information report, a zine, or a comic.

TIPS FOR MANAGING PERIODS AT SCHOOL

- Periods can be irregular for the first couple of years, but using a diary or period tracking app to record dates and symptoms may help students to better predict their cycles.
- Spare menstrual products and underwear can be kept in lockers or school bags in case a period arrives unexpectedly.
- Check the school toilets to see which cubicles have disposal bins for pads and tampons. If there are no bins available, disposable products can be wrapped in toilet paper and thrown in the bathroom's rubbish bin.
- Some schools supply disposable menstrual products in bathrooms. At most schools, the nurse will have spare pads and tampons that students can access, and perhaps clean underwear and uniforms to borrow.



TASK 9: LANGUAGE CHOICES

Summer appears to be disgusted when she learns about menstrual cups from Mackenzie, describing her mum's disposal of menstrual blood as 'gross'. At least the girls are having an open conversation about menstrual products: Summer's dad is too uncomfortable to ask their neighbour for pads or tampons, and instead just gestures between his legs.

Unfortunately, menstruation remains a taboo subject for many people and periods are often spoken about using euphemisms – or not spoken about at all. As a class, brainstorm and reflect on the different phrases and words that are used to speak about:

- Having a period (including phrases like 'that time of the month')
- Menstrual products (including words like 'sanitary')

Many of these language choices suggest that there is something unclean about having a period, which is not the case. Using euphemisms also contributes to the ongoing stigma and shame surrounding periods, and makes people feel like menstruation needs to be hidden. Explain to students that they can help to reduce the stigma surrounding periods by simply engaging in open and respectful conversations about periods.

TASK 10: RESEARCH TOPICS

Having watched *Summer's Day* and reflected on the issues raised in the above learning tasks, ask students to undertake independent research into one of the following topics. These topics highlight some of the ways that menstruation is relevant to all members of society, not only those experiencing periods.

1. In 2018, Australian Commonwealth, state and territory treasurers made the unanimous decision to remove GST on menstrual products (Cook, 2018). What is the history of the 'tampon tax', what were the arguments for abolishing it, and what are the financial implications for individuals and GST revenue?
2. Social restrictions are routinely imposed on girls and women during their periods in different parts of the world. Research the cultural beliefs that underpin these restrictions, and the impact that period stigma has on individuals. Identify organisations that are working to challenge and change enduring cultural myths about periods and summarise their work in health and education.
3. Following a successful 2018 campaign by humanitarian organisation Plan International, a period emoji is being added to emoji keyboards ('Period emoji', 2019). Why is a period emoji important, and what is Plan International hoping this addition will achieve?
4. In recent years, hashtags have been used to encourage community action related to periods. These include: #PeriodPoverty, #PeriodPositive, #JustATampon, #EndPeriodStigma, and #PeriodsAreNotAnInsult. Research these hashtags, and discuss the effectiveness of 'hashtivism' in changing mindsets, behaviours and/or government policies?

CURRICULUM LINKS

	YEAR 5/6	YEAR 7/8
CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING	<p>Identify situations where current approaches do not work, challenge existing ideas and generate alternative solutions.</p> <p>Identify and justify the thinking behind choices they have made.</p>	<p>Pose questions to probe assumptions and investigate complex issues.</p> <p>Critically analyse information and evidence according to criteria such as validity and relevance.</p>
ENGLISH	<p>YEAR 5 Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts. (ACELT1608)</p> <p>Present a point of view about particular literary texts using appropriate metalanguage, and reflecting on the viewpoints of others. (ACELT1609)</p> <p>Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive print and multimodal texts, choosing text structures, language features, images and sound appropriate to purpose and audience. (ACELY1704)</p> <p>YEAR 6 Compare texts including media texts that represent ideas and events in different ways, explaining the effects of different approaches. (ACELY1708)</p> <p>Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions. (ACELY1709)</p> <p>Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience. (ACELY1714)</p>	<p>YEAR 7 Understand the way language evolves to reflect a changing world, particularly in response to the use of new technology for presenting texts and communicating. (ACELA1528)</p> <p>Compare the ways that language and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and options in different types of texts. (ACELT1621)</p> <p>Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content and multimodal elements to promote a point of view or enable a new way of seeing. (ACELY1720)</p> <p>YEAR 8 Explore the ways that ideas and viewpoints in literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts may reflect or challenge the value of individuals and groups. (ACELT1626)</p> <p>Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts. (ACELT1807)</p> <p>Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that raise issues, report events and advance opinions, using deliberate language and textual choices, and including digital elements as appropriate. (ACELY1736)</p>
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION	<p>Examine how identities are influenced by people and places. (ACPPS051)</p> <p>Investigate resources and strategies to manage changes and transitions associated with puberty. (ACPPS052)</p> <p>Investigate community resources and ways to seek help about health, safety and wellbeing. (ACPPS053)</p> <p>Plan and practise strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing. (ACPPS054)</p> <p>Recognise how media and important people in the community influence personal attitudes, beliefs, decisions and behaviours. (ACPPS057)</p>	<p>Investigate the impact of transition and change on identities. (ACPPS070)</p> <p>Evaluate strategies to manage personal, physical and social changes that occur as they grow older. (ACPPS071)</p> <p>Investigate and select strategies to promote health, safety and wellbeing. (ACPPS073)</p> <p>Analyse factors that influence emotions, and develop strategies to demonstrate empathy and sensitivity. (ACPPS075)</p> <p>Evaluate health information and communicate their own and others' health concerns. (ACPPS076)</p>
INTERCULTURAL CAPABILITY	<p>Describe and compare the knowledge, beliefs and practices of various cultural groups in relation to a specific time, event or custom.</p> <p>Imagine and describe the situations of others in local, national and global contexts.</p>	<p>Analyse the dynamic nature of cultural knowledge, beliefs and practices in a range of personal, social and historical contexts.</p> <p>Assess diverse perspectives and the assumptions on which they are based.</p>
MEDIA ARTS	<p>Explain how the elements of media arts and story principles communicate meaning by comparing media artworks from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island media artworks. (ACAMAR065)</p>	<p>Identify specific features and purposes of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore viewpoints and enrich their media arts making, starting with Australian media artworks including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media artworks. (ACAMAR072)</p>

WRITER / DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT BY HATTIE DALTON

When I first saw the opportunity to make a TV episode to fit within the Girls Film Season, I was excited because it was right up my alley. Spending a lot of time with my nieces and now my own daughter, I have been acutely aware of the fact that young, pre-teen girls are inadequately represented in all forms of media, especially film and TV. They are often portrayed as overly childish or 'wannabe' teens, complete with make-up, short skirts and attitude.

I remember growing up and relying on friends for information, especially when it came to embarrassing, intimate topics. It was *Dolly* magazine or Judy Bloom's *Are you there, God? It's me, Margaret* because there was no real open communication about the big changes that were going on in my body, and mind. In my research, it seems that it's not that much different today. I was intrigued to see if young girls would be able to access more open, honest information than was available to me via the internet. While there is information out there, I found it to be mostly very clinical and not addressing the shock and anxiety that comes with getting your first period. I want to create a conversation between friends, and with girls and their families.

This isn't a film about a young girl grieving the loss of her mum, but a young girl who is navigating huge changes while feeling isolated. It creates a world where young girls can feel they are not so alone when they are going through the big stuff, even if their Mum is alive. It gives access to all the girls who don't have an intimate, open connection with their Mum or female role models, for many reasons: like a lack of presence due to work, the 'busy-ness' of life, the generation gap or maybe because they feel the cultural shame so often attached to any bodily function. It's so often that girls will bumble through problems with their friends rather than go to an adult for help. I want to show that the 'sisterhood' is where we can seek refuge, that there is no such thing as the perfect scenario for dealing with challenges. I want to show the girls being themselves, being kids, which makes them feel lighter and able to navigate whatever comes their way.

I feel strongly that there is a need to demystify the unavoidable natural process of menstruation, in a way that young girls can easily relate to, cringe over, laugh at and then feel at ease about. After all, it's as normal as eating or using the toilet. The plan is to do that, while addressing other irrefutable issues such as poor body image and gender bias with the same lightness of touch so that the themes resonate with the young audience, giving them space for self-acceptance and a vehicle for further discussion.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources and organisations can provide teachers and students with further information about puberty and menstruation.

GIRLS AND PUBERTY:

http://www.health.wa.gov.au/docreg/Education/Population/Youth_Health/HP010367_girls_and_puberty_booklet.pdf

Free PDF booklet created by the Western Australian Department of Health to address the changes that girls experience during puberty. A 'Boys and Puberty' booklet is also available.

KIDS HELPLINE:

<https://kidshelpline.com.au>

A free, private and confidential phone and online counselling service for young people.

MENSTRUAL MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION AND CARE:

<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/supporting-students/health-e-safety-and-wellbeing/health-support-planning/managing-health-education-and-care/personal-care/menstrual-management>

Comprehensive information on menstrual management practices and how educators can best support students.

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Produced by SUMMER'S DAY FILM PTY LTD

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