

Young Audience Study Guide

The Red Balloon & White Mane



Presented as part of the French Institute Alliance Française (FI AF)'s Young Audience Program

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Dear Teachers,

Welcome to the Florence Gould Hall at FIAF! We have made this study guide to help you introduce your students to the films they are about to watch. From both a cultural and a social point of view, it is our goal to make this moment unique and enjoyable for all.

As a result, we expect the students to behave appropriately. We kindly ask you to tell them:

- NOT to talk or whisper during the film
- NOT to move from their seats
- NOT to eat, drink, or chew gum in the theater
- NOT to wear headphones

We are always looking to improve our events, so we would love to hear your feedback after the screening. Please send any questions, comments, or suggestions to H elo ise Darcq at hdarcq@fiaf.org.

About the director



Albert Lamorisse began his career as a photographer and later turned to writing, producing and directing short films in the late 1940s. He quickly gained an international reputation for the poetic qualities of his first two films that involve the fantasy worlds constructed by children, *White Mane* (*Crin blanc: le Cheval Sauvage*, 1953) and *The Red Balloon* (*Le ballon rouge*, 1956). Both of these exceptional pieces received the grand prize at the Cannes Film Festival and as of 2013, *The Red Balloon* remains the only short film to ever win the Academy

Award for Best Writing (original screenplay). The two films remain French classics to this day.

Lamorisse's films are well known to highlights certain values that are dear to him including friendship and the acceptance of differences. The director has crafted his own particular world with these: candid films that are filled with poetry and enchanting narration.

- **DID YOU KNOW ?**

-As a great chess player, Lamorisse created the popular board game *Risk*, originally published in France in 1957 as *La Conquête du Monde*.

- Lamorisse used his children as actors. In *The Red Balloon*, his son, Pascal Lamorisse, plays Pascal in the main role and his daughter, Sabine, portrays a little girl.

About The Red Balloon



The film, which has a music score but almost no dialogue, tells the story of Pascal, who, on his way to school one morning, discovers a large helium-filled red balloon. As Pascal plays with his new found toy, he realizes the balloon has a mind and will of its own, and it begins to follow him wherever he goes. The red balloon follows Pascal through the streets of Paris, and the pair draws inquisitive looks from adults and the envy of other children. At one point the balloon enters Pascal's classroom, causing an uproar from the other students. The noise alerts the principal, who becomes angry with Pascal and locks him up in his office until school is over. At another time, Pascal and his balloon encounter a little girl with a blue balloon that also seems to have a mind of its own. In their wanderings around the neighborhood, the unlikely duo come across a gang of bullies, who are envious of Pascal's balloon and soon destroy his new friend. The film ends as the other balloons in Paris come to Pascal's aid and take him on a ride over the city.

About White Mane



In the marshes of Camargue, France, a herd of wild horses roam free. Their leader is a handsome white-haired stallion named White Mane (Crin Blanc in French). A group of ranchers capture the wild stallion and place him in a corral. Yet White Mane escapes. A boy

named Folco, who lives with his fisherman grandfather, watches intently as White Mane escapes, and he dreams of one day handling White Mane. After the ranchers try and fail again to capture White Mane, Folco asks the men if he can have the white horse. Yes, says one of the men, "but first you have to catch him". Later Folco comes across White Mane in the marshes, and he tries to rope him. The horse gallops away and drags Folco in the water. Determined to capture White Mane, Folco refuses to let go of the rope and almost passes out. White Mane relents and the two become friends.

The ranchers return and try to spook White Mane, but Folco jumps on the horse and rides him across the marshes of Camargue and over the dunes to the sea. The ranchers give chase and surround them, but they refuse to be caught. With Folco on his back, White Mane rides into the sea. The film ends as the narrator states that White Mane took Folco to an island where horses and children can be friends forever.

Two timeless tales

The stories are simple and fable-like in both *The Red Balloon* and *White Mane*. Each features young boys as the heroes and subjects that focus on the purity and power of a child's imagination. Yet these movies are also shot through with a very adult melancholy; an awareness that life tends to not measure up to the glorious pictures in our young minds.

Paris & Camargue



The Red Balloon was shot in Paris, in the Belleville neighborhood while the story of *White Crane* takes place in Camargue, located south of Arles. The movies show two very different landscapes of France: the city in the North and the province in the South.

The North, Paris- Belleville



The Red Balloon takes place in the Belleville of the 1950s. Belleville is a working-class neighborhood of immigrants and artists on a series of hills in the north-east section of the city (19th & 20th arrondissements). The movie featured many parts of the region that the Parisian government would later demolish in the 60s to be replaced with housing

projects. Belleville today is a colorful, multi-ethnic neighborhood. Like you can see in the movie, Belleville- and especially the Parc de Belleville- ascends the western slope of the hill and offers a panoramic view of the Paris skyline.

The south, La Camargue



Camargue is the region located between the Mediterranean Sea and the two arms of the Rhone River delta. The Petite Camargue represents a further expanse of marshy plain to the west of the western arm. In *White Mane*, you can see the importance of the area's flora and fauna. Camargue

is home to more than 400 species and the marshes are also a prime habitat for a large variety of insects. To this day Camargue horses, considered to be one of the oldest breeds of horses in the world, continue to roam the extensive marshlands.

With this exercise, the children can see that each film has its own universe. *White Mane* seems to be so far away from our urbanized environment whereas *Red Balloon* is taking place in a city. We can highlight similarities and differences in a comparison table.

	My universe	White Mane	The Red Balloon
Landscape(city/country)			
Housing			
School			
Shops			
Transportation			
Roads			
Clothings			
Recreation			
Drudgery			
Food			
Others details			

Tame the Untamed

Childhood, in many ways, is about learning to navigate the world around us, to make sense of what seems overwhelming and gigantic. Having a special companion makes that experience more manageable and less scary.



In both films, the two boys attempt to tame something: in *The Red Balloon*, Pascal tames the balloon and in *White Mane*, Falcon tames the horse. *The Little Prince* offers an explanation that taming means “creating ties” with another person so that two people become more special to another. As we can see in *The Red Balloon* and *White Mane*, the process of taming while labor intensive led to both boys establishing special and unlikely relationships.

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