

Mulan

(1998, 88 minutes) Rated U, FILMCLUB suggests 5+

Identity & Belonging Inclusion Project theme: Who are we?

What's this film about?

The Chinese legend of Hua Mulan is one of China's most beloved folktales. The film *Mulan* is an animated drama full of action, adventure and the courage of a young girl – Mulan. It is set in China during the Han Dynasty.

The Huns, led by the evil Shan Yu, invade China. Each family must send one man to be a soldier. Fa Zhou, Mulan's father, is the only man in the family but he is too old and frail so Mulan decides to go instead. She disguises herself as a man and joins the army. She knows that if she is discovered to be a woman, she will be killed. When her family learn of Mulan's secret departure, they are all very anxious. They send a little dragon to try and discourage her from fighting. *Mulan* tells the story of her journey into war and how she challenges society's expectations of women from her community.



Why we have chosen this film?

Issues raised

Identity and the role of women: The legend of Mulan is just one of a number of Chinese folk tales that challenge the traditional role of women in Chinese society. In the film *Mulan*, a young woman, is shown as being brave, intelligent and heroic.

Courage and responsibility: Mulan bravely takes on the responsibility of being a soldier, despite the danger of disguising herself as a man.

Loyalty: The Emperor and the people of China praise Mulan. While she accepts the Emperor's crest and other gifts, she politely declines the offer to be an advisor and asks to return to her family.

Be aware of...

This film has a couple of uses of mild bad language.

Before the film: Starter activity

Ask Club members to share what they know about ancient and modern China. The Club leader could prepare a simple True / False quiz with a prize for the winner.

After the film: Discussion questions

What traditions of ancient China have you learned about from watching *Mulan*?

How difficult was it for Mulan to challenge and act against the expectations of her family and community?

Mulan showed great courage and bravery in the film. She always put the needs of her country before herself. Can you share any examples of children and young people who have shown real bravery and courage?

After the film: Further explorations

1. When Mulan looks in the mirror she reflects on who she is. Is she the girl that people see when they look at her, or is she the warrior she knows she is inside? Ask Club members to explore who they are, both inside and outside. What traits can people see when they look at each other? (Examples might include boy / girl, hair, skin colour). What traits do we have that people cannot see? (Examples might be brave, smart, caring, etc). Ask Club members to draw an outline of a body on a sheet of paper. Ask them to decorate the outline with words and drawings to represent their 'inner' and 'outer' selves.
2. Mulan became a legend in China by being a young woman who was brave enough to challenge what was expected of her, and to bring about positive changes. She also stayed loyal to her family and never forgot them. Provide Club members with blank postcards and ask them to draw on one side a scene of the film involving Mulan. On the other side, write a message from Mulan to her family, which includes some of her thoughts and feelings.

Get reviewing

Check the *FILMCLUB Guide to Writing Effective Film Reviews – Primary* for ideas and activities to help club members write their reviews.

<http://www.filmclub.org/resources/details/26/review-writing-guide-primary>