



# William and the Windmill

Film Screening Followed by a Panel Discussion

Friday, November 8, 2013 – 10 a.m.

Martin Luther King Performing Arts Center, Charlottesville High School



With only a library book as his guide, 14 year old William Kamkwamba builds a windmill in his Malawian village that changes his life forever. Using junk parts and an inexhaustible imagination, he harnesses enough energy to power a generator that saves his family from famine and resuscitates his dying farming community. An instant media sensation, the teen soon has the ability to chart a previously unimaginable future of Ivy League schools and speaking tours. Despite the help of an American entrepreneur who helps navigate his success, some changes threaten to capsize him. He was once just a kid back home, but suddenly he's a village leader. Away at school, the famous boy inventor struggles on a steep learning curve. Cameras capture both the dramatic upheavals and subtle shifts of perspective in this inspiring story of a young man facing the changes that a humble homemade windmill set in motion.

***William and the Windmill* serves as a facilitator for the study of engineering, physics, environmental science, leadership, globalization, sociology, education, innovative problem solving, and the arts of storytelling and documentary filmmaking.**

*Consider the following:*

Engineering/Technology: Despite lacking proper materials and formal training in engineering, William built a functioning windmill. What materials did William use to build the windmills?

What tools did he use? How does a windmill function? What did he use the windmill for on his family's farm and in the community? How does technology improve society? How does technology hinder it? People in William's community owned cell phones, but they lacked basic irrigation and electricity infrastructures. What does this reveal about technology and values in impoverished areas?

Physics: William used the power generated from the windmill to provide electricity in his family's home. How does the wind power the lights in their home? What function does the generator serve? What types of electric circuits would William have constructed in his home?

Environmental Science: What type of climate does Malawi have? What kinds of weather patterns contributed to the poor harvest? Does the climate change affect agriculture? How? William discussed his plans to use technology for irrigation. How would irrigation counter the effects of the climate? What are renewable resources? What are the benefits/disadvantages of renewable resources, such as wind energy? Why would this type of resource be advantageous for an impoverished community?

Scientific Method/Research: William first learned about alternative power sources through a book called "Using Energy" that he borrowed from the library. Is it important to do research before starting a project? How did research help him build the windmill? What are the steps of the scientific method? Did William follow these steps?

Sociology: William described how some villagers began behaving abnormally during the famine. Why did the villagers change their behavior at this time? William took the initiative to fix the problem, but the rest of the villagers called him "misala", crazy. Why did they view him as an outsider? How did his status as an outsider help/hinder him? How did he re-enter the community group after being an outsider? Did his achievements and success make him an outsider again?

Health and Safety: What types of health and safety hazards arise from the construction and operation of windmills? Does William consider these when he builds the windmill? How does the windmill contribute positively/negatively to the community's health and safety, especially during times of food insecurity?

Education: Although William received some formal education in his youth, he relied on informal education to build the windmill. What are the differences between these types of education? Why did William educate himself? How did he learn how to build the windmill? Can his education solve problems in his community? Was William prepared to go to ALA? How will higher education at Dartmouth help him and his community? How does building the school and providing public education solve some of the problems in William's village? How does education give one opportunity and choice in life?

Leadership: What is leadership? What characteristics does a leader need to have? Are there different types of leaders? What pressures do they face? Are there undesirable consequences of being a leader? Do leaders step up or are they chosen by the people? How does William become a leader in his community? What responsibilities do the villagers put on him? What

responsibilities does Tom Reilly put on him? How does he lead? Is he proud of his role? Does he want this role, or is it forced upon him? As a leader, is he still influenced by others? Should leaders be influenced by others, or insulated from public pressure?

Politics: As William becomes a leader in his village, he gains political clout. How does he have political influence in his community? Does his ingenuity and progress give him more influence in the political sphere? One of the villagers suggests that William should run for office. What characteristics make William an ideal candidate, and which traits will not serve him well in the realm of politics? What issues might William address if he does become a politician?

Business: How does William's success tie into business? Does Tom Reilly push for business that William does not want? Is it possible to separate success and business? How do the book deals and speaking tours benefit William? Do they do more good or harm to William? Is William equipped to deal with the business world himself or does he need Tom Reilly to help him navigate the business world? Why does William worry about the movie deal? Is he being exploited?

Economics: More than half of Malawians live below the poverty line. How does the Malawian economy differ from that of the United States? As a third world country, how can improving the economy help Malawian citizens? Does getting an education help William improve his economic value to the community? How so?

Culture: What is culture? How is culture expressed in a community? How is culture communicated to others that are outside of the community? Is it possible to be a part of multiple cultures? Does navigating between two different cultures affect William? How is culture different from identity? Does William find his identity in the film? In Chichewa, William's native tongue, there is no word for stress – he only learns of this concept when he learns English. How does this show the differences between these two cultures?

Family: What defines a family? Are the functions of families different in different places? What did William's parents think at first? Were they supportive? How did his absence affect his family? While he was experiencing all of these changes, did his home stay the same? Does this affect how he relates to his family? How did his success affect the ones he loved? Did he gain a surrogate family through Tom Reilly?

Change and Continuity: What types of changes do the people in this documentary undergo? How do they deal with these changes? William's invention thrusts him into the limelight. How does he react to his fame? How does he stay the same? Does he like or dislike the changes he experiences? Does he show any signs of regret or express a desire for everything to go back to normal? Is change ever inherently good or bad?

Globalization, Globalism and Global Citizenship: The world is becoming increasingly interconnected. What is globalization? What are the positive and negative effects of globalization? How is it different from globalism? How do people foster international connections? What is a global citizen? Do global citizens have a responsibility to other countries? If so, to what extent? The United States focuses its International Food Security

initiatives on Africa, aiming to help struggling families like the Kamkwambas. Is this helpful? Are there other ways to provide help to other countries? What types of aid should the United States or the United Nations provide – financial assistance, educational investments, trade agreements, or a combination of these or other types of assistance? What are the advantages/disadvantages associated with these forms of aid?

Storytelling: How does the filmmaker organize the film for the viewer? Is this effective? Does his journey fit the hero's journey paradigm? Does he achieve his goals? Are there parts of the story that are difficult to understand? If so, how could those parts be changed to communicate with the audience more effectively?

Documentary filmmaking: What are the different types of films? What are the traits of documentary films? In what ways is *William and the Windmill* like/unlike other documentary films you have seen? How does a filmmaker decide what style of film best suits the purpose? Can a documentary be unbiased?

Filmmaking techniques: How does director Ben Nabors' deliberate filmmaking affect the tone of the movie? How is William portrayed – passionate inventor, reluctant hero, or a combination of the two? What effect do interviews with William's family and Tom Reilly have on the film? How did the film techniques inspire an emotional response? How does Nabors use the film techniques to show William's identity? Do you think he exaggerates certain aspects of his personality for his own artistic purposes?

Film as a vehicle for change: Is this a controversial film? Is this a political film? Should filmmakers produce films that are controversial or politically charged? Why or why not? Is this film important in shaping our thinking about the global community? Does the film's director have a message goal or want us to think a certain way about the project? Did *William and the Windmill* inspire any goals of your own? Did it change or inform your opinions about third world countries?

Film description and teaching resources provided by {group theory} production's discussion guide.

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**The Virginia Film Festival**

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[www.virginiafilmfestival.org](http://www.virginiafilmfestival.org)

# Teaching Resources

Virginia Film Festival School Screening 2013

- **Agriculture and the United States:** [This official position paper](#) is the US's response to the World Food Summit (WFS) commitment made by the international community to reduce by half the number of undernourished people no later than the year 2015. This paper includes steps that have been taken as well as goals that haven't been met.
- **BBC News:** A country profile on Malawi includes an overview of facts, leaders and media, with a detailed timeline of key events.
- **Build ON:** The group showcased in the film as building schools in developing nations. To date they have built 74 schools in Malawi.
- **American Wind Energy Association:** This national trade association promotes wind energy initiatives in the US. The site includes wind facts, fact sheets, information on small wind energy projects and other links and resources for more information.
- **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:** The United Nations group has led an international effort to support Malawi's agricultural sector to defeat hunger. There are many core resources included on the site, along with other countries and projects.
- **Moving Windmills:** Founded in 2008, the group pursues rural economic development and education projects in Malawi.
- **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources:** The section titled ["Ontario's Renewable Energy Atlas and Prepared Wind Maps"](#) includes a link to maps of wind and water resources in the province of Ontario.
- **The Herald online:** An article titled ["Lessons from Malawi's Food Crisis"](#) discusses issues on Malawi's agricultural industry and the policies it requires for better food security.
- **TED Talks:** ["How I Built a Windmill,"](#) William's first talk. Delivered in Arusha, Tanzania in 2007 (four minute clip).
- **TED Talks:** ["How I Harnessed the Wind,"](#) William's second talk. Delivered in Oxford, England in July 2009 (six minute clip).