

BROOKLYN YOUNG FILMMAKERS  
**POINTING FINGERS**  
 FILM DISCUSSION GUIDE

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**WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR**

- Self-starting filmmakers who want to make their characters and stories more believable and better plan and organize their films shoots.
- People who love film and want to have a behind-the-scenes experience
- Families, church, school, and social groups looking for a unique media tool to help stimulate meaningful and animated discussions among their members about life issues and human behavior. *(In **POINTING FINGERS** issues include rivalry and anger between siblings, bitterness and misunderstanding between parent and child; impact of drug addiction on a family; and the problems of aging)*
- For all ages of adults and teens 14 yrs and older. This guide is most effectively used in intergenerational settings with a strong facilitator.

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**“MAKE A FILM” CLASS SERIES**

Brooklyn Young Filmmakers unique three class series takes participants through development of a short script, pre-production, and production, concluding with the shooting of a short film.

Brooklyn Young Filmmakers offers the first two classes through New York City College of Technology’s Division of Continuing Education. The third class is offered directly by Brooklyn Young Filmmakers. For the schedule of the next MAKE A FILM Class Series call NYC Tech’s Continuing Ed for a Class Catalogue (718)552-1170. You can also visit Brooklyn Young Filmmakers’ [FACEBOOK](#) page and check out BYFC’s blog [www.wearebyfc.org](http://www.wearebyfc.org). For more info about the classes contact Brooklyn Young Filmmakers: [classes@wearebyfc.org](mailto:classes@wearebyfc.org) (718)935-0490 [www.wearebyfc.org](http://www.wearebyfc.org)

**COMMUNITY FILMMAKING**

Brooklyn Young Filmmakers invites a larger community to join our students in making our films by recruiting emerging cinematographers, gaffers (lighting), editors, visual artists, and musicians as collaborators. We shoot our films in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, where we hold a Community Casting Call; conduct a Scavenger Hunt for locations, set, prop, and wardrobe materials; and recruit local residents as production assistants and consultants.

**TEACHING STORIES**

In the MAKE A FILM Class Series Brooklyn Young Filmmakers chooses a student script that shows originality, has timely subject matter, and can be shot on a low-no budget. The BYFC Artistic Director leads the class through workshoping and rewrites of the chosen script to add depth to the characters and complexity to the plot points. BYFC scripts are developed into layered “Teaching Stories” that can lead audiences to new discussions about life choices, human behavior, and the art of filmmaking.

“**POINTING FINGERS**” (2009, 15min) is Brooklyn Young Filmmakers first packaged Teaching Story DVD w/Discussion Guide. This particular guide’s main focus is on the storytelling aspects of filmmaking. Included are a few

questions about the preparation for and technical issues of the actual film shoot. The next packaged BYFC Teaching Story film we will be releasing, "BACK STREETS" (2009, 29min – an action film shot in 10 locations), will focus on the financial, logistical, and technical issues involved with planning, funding, running a set, and directing actors.

## BROOKLYN YOUNG FILMMAKERS

**OUR STUDENTS** have included MTA workers, waiters, lawyers and teachers; public access TV producers; high school and college students; skilled workers curious about crossing over to film; actors and playwrights; and retirees.

**WHO WE ARE** Brooklyn Young Filmmakers Center is a 501(c)(3) neighborhood non-profit located in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, dedicated to community building through storytelling. We are bringing together people of different ages, different races, different economics and upbringings, different levels of knowledge and commitment, to produce richly crafted low-no-budget narrative films. Brooklyn Young Filmmakers is a volunteer organization with no paid regular staff or public office. Over the last nine years we have been developing the curriculum and educational formats, as well as neighborhood and film community links, for Community Filmmaking. Monies we raise from our classes, DVDs, and events go back into Community Filmmaking. We are a small project with a big concept that we are still growing.

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## USING THE DISCUSSION GUIDE

As discussion leader, view POINTING FINGERS on your own and review the questions, keeping in mind how much time you have for discussion and who your audience is. Star the questions you most want to ask and feel free to rephrase them in your own words. Many of the questions are open to different answers. Use them as springboard into an open-ended discussion with participants. Ask for the opinions of those who are quiet. When answering questions, whenever possible, add in your personal experiences and knowledge and encourage participants to do so also.

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## PRODUCTION DESIGN: Props, Set, and Wardrobe

### 1) What is the definition of a "prop"?

**ANSWER:** A "prop" is an item "handled" (not just worn) by an actor. James Sr.'s cane, Bible and coffee can are props. Janet's car keys and handkerchief are props. Junior's headphones and drug store bag are props. Really large props like Janet's car (and horses and airplanes) are called "action props".

### 2) In the original student script the father stashes money in a cookie jar. In the shooting script the cookie jar was changed to a coffee can. Why?

**ANSWER:** When we when shopping for cookie jars that looked old fashioned, everything we saw was too expensive and very breakable. If we had bought one cookie jar and someone broke it during the shoot, we would have had problems with continuity, so either we had to buy two of the items or use something unbreakable.

### 3) The room we shot in was very long. We wanted to set up the living room area so it was right by the hallway leading to the bedroom. It was actually 30 feet from the sofa to the front door. Can you guess how we made it seem like a small room?

**ANSWER:** We moved the TV set and the African wall hanging of two people from the living room set to right by the front door, so you see those things in the shot when Janet and Junior enter. Then we moved those things back to the living room set area so you see them as the actors enter the actual living room set. When the different shots were edited together it looked like one continuous area.

### 4. Every set item you saw we intentionally put on the set. Ask each participant to list four of the set items they saw, not repeating anything that someone else lists.

**ANSWER:** The list can include everything from the lace curtain framing the kitchenette area where Junior prepared the pills, to old magazines stacked by the sofa, to Kleenex. The purpose of this question is to get participants thinking about the amount of small things as well as big that are needed to make a set look realistic. You can also ask them what other items they might have at home or could borrow that they think would have looked appropriate on the POINTING FINGERS set. Explain that it is the job

of the Set Decorator to gather all these items, organized and labeled them for the set area where they are to be put, and then oversee their transportation to the location and arrangement on the set.

**5. In order to know what items to gather for a set you first have to put into words what kind of set you want and how it should fit the characters. Describe what kind of environment you think the filmmakers wanted to create for POINTING FINGERS.**

**ANSWER:** We wanted to create an environment that felt like it belonged to an elderly man who is in poor health and living on a limited budget with few life interests. We also wanted to create the feeling that a woman had once been present in the house (*i.e. lace curtains and framed photo of woman on coffee table*). We wanted some clutter and dustiness, but also a sense of emptiness, so there are lots of areas of blank space.

**6. Wardrobe helps to build an impression of who the characters are for the audience. For the most part the actors wore their own clothes in POINTING FINGERS but were given direction as to what type of impression their wardrobe was to convey. In addition, each actor was given a specific item. Describe the impression you think each character's clothes were suppose to give. Guess what special wardrobe item each actor was given.**

**ANSWERS:**

**James Sr. :** Tired, old and slept in. Item given: worn military hat

**Janet:** Dark suit jacket and slacks, tight fitting not in sexy way but stiff business like way. Item given: handkerchief (*the handkerchief can be considered both wardrobe and prop*)

**James Jr. :** Comfortable, neat, casual, working class – not street. Item given: an original hand painted t-shirt.

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## EDITS AND CAMERA SET-UPS

**1. What is a camera set-up? Guess how many camera set-ups are in POINTING FINGERS? What is an edit? Can you guess how many edits there are in POINTING FINGERS?**

**ANSWER:** A camera set-up is when the camera is moved to a new location in the same scene to get a different shot and angle. An edit is when one piece of footage is joined together with another (like a close-up of a person is joined to a full body shot of the person). It is supposed to be done so smoothly that the viewer doesn't even notice that the shot has changed. There are ninety-one edits in POINTING FINGERS. There are twenty-nine camera-set ups. *Example:* When the father opens the door to his daughter and she enters into the living room, there are 3 different camera set-ups:

- 1) The camera is facing the front door and window, shooting the back of the father as he approaches the door.
- 2) The camera shoots over the shoulder of the father following Janet as she walks towards the curtained pantry area and then turns back to face her father.
- 3) The camera shoots over the shoulder of Janet catching the father as he walks towards her, his back to the front door.

*(Note: The pantry area was 30 feet from the front door. This is where editing makes things that are not close seem close -- refer back to question #3.)*

**2. What sequence of shots do you think were the most difficult to plan and to execute?**

**ANSWER:** The fight between Janet and James Jr. BE CAREFUL IN STAGING FIGHTS AND FALLS! IF AN ACTOR IS HURT IT CAN STOP THE SHOOT. The actor playing James Jr. was instructed to grab Janet's fists as she strikes out at his chest and to hold on. They were to try to push each other off balance while he maintained his grip on her hands. We shot it handheld from several directions and then the editor had to match movement with each edit. The fight was not in the original student script. We added the fight scene to the shooting script to make the sister's anger more visual and out of control.

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## SOUNDTRACK

1. Soundtrack music can help establish mood and meaning. Two very distinct original songs were used in the POINTING FINGERS soundtrack. What mood and meaning do you think they added to the story?

### ANSWERS:

i) “Losin’ It”, Composed and performed by Derrick Thomas ([www.vagabondrecords.net](http://www.vagabondrecords.net))

In the film’s opening we wanted a bluesy and slow melody to create the feeling that the father was not a big city guy and came from a different era.

ii) “Dear God”, Written and sung by Ashanti (Pat-Riot) Baptiste

We wanted to end the film with the sense of the son’s world, so we used rap music.

2. Below is a lyric and the chorus from “Dear God”. What do you think is the message of the song? Which of the specific lines do you think are accurate descriptions of the characters feelings and actions?

(Examples: “My mind is struck in one place as if cemented.....” could describe Janet’s attitude towards her brother, as could “Arguing with people close to me never ending” )

### DEAR GOD

My mind is struck in one place as if cemented  
And when I try to escape I’m just prevented  
Feels like the thoughts I think about be demented  
Should have been in a crazy house getting sentenced  
Seven days a week my brain being blended  
Arguing with people close to me never ending  
If it’s a message I’m a send it N defend it  
But only u can recommend it  
People curse u out  
Say that u don’t exist  
Dear God  
Wherever u are, Whoever u are  
U probably chill with the stars

**ANSWER:** One interpretation is that God goes beyond any religious definition and that God can be found in places other than mosques, churches and synagogues. “U probably chill with the stars” might mean that the answers in life can best be found by looking (and listening) to nature and the world around us. Maybe God is twinkling all around us in simple things that we often ignore. These are the thoughts of someone who has a lot of issues in his life and is overwhelmed by all the horrible things that are happening in the world. While James Jr. does not grab for a Bible like his father when he is in distressed, his song **DEAR GOD** shows James Jr. is searching for spiritual understanding and guidance to help him find meaning in life’s chaos and hurt.

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## WHAT IS THIS STORY ABOUT?

Kick off dialogue about the story by asking different audience members to share what they thought the film was about. Then use the study guide questions to lead your audience through a detailed discussion of different aspects of the story. We will return to this question, “What is this story about?” at the end of the guide and supply possible responses.

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## CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS

1. **JANET:** Ask your audience to create a Character Profile and Back Story for Janet from all the things said and hinted at in the story.

*(Back Story: Significant things that have already happened in the character’s life before the timeline when the story opens. This old history might affect how the character responds to the current situation.)*

**ANSWER:** Janet is ambitious and striving to go above her family’s economic class. She is determined, self righteous, angry, and resentful towards her brother. Janet put herself through college and now is successful. When she says only her grandmother thought she was special, we can infer that she wasn’t happy as a child because she believed that her younger brother got special attention and support from their parents.

**2. What does Janet say that summarizes the wrong she feels she has been done by her family?**

**ANSWER:** Janet: *“I had to get this all on my own!”*

**3. What is Janet’s relationship to her father?**

**ANSWER:** She has a lot of anger and resentment towards her father because he favored his son and paid for James Jr. to go to college while he gave Janet no help at all. Janet shows concern for the father by helping him financially with his bills, but there is an element of self righteousness. Inside she is saying, *“Ha! I am helping you while you never helped me.”* The father displays his sexism when he says, *“No woman tells me what to do.”*

**4. What physical thing does Janet do that shows how she feels about being in her father’s rundown apartment?**

**ANSWER:** Janet spreads her handkerchief on the sofa to sit on it. Perhaps this is to avoid touching where her sickly father has been. It may also be Janet, now that she has a good salary and a nice car, unconsciously expressing her sense of separation from the economic class she came from. When audiences see that act, they often go, *Whoa!* and start to dislike Janet.

**5. Describe the relationship between the sister and brother.**

**ANSWER:** Not good. The sister is jealous of the attention her brother received from their parents and angry about the harm she believes her brother’s drug addiction did to the family. With her father aging, Janet believes she has to be the one to keep everything together and that means protecting her father from her brother.

**6. What was the initial thing that sparked friction between the siblings?**

**ANSWER:** Janet says she is especially furious about her brother stealing the brooch. Her Grandma had been the only one in the family who thought Janet was special and she had promised Janet that the brooch would be hers. James Jr. stole away Janet’s memory of the Grandma by selling the brooch for drug money. It’s probable though that Janet was upset with her brother well before he started using drugs. As a small child Janet was displaced as the baby-child when her brother was born, and she could see that her father favored her brother. Janet’s sense of neglect and resulting anger towards her brother could have started then.

**7. In a family with more than one child, do you think the order in which the child is born (i.e. first child, middle child, etc.) can make a difference with regards to how the parents treat the child? If so, why is this?**

**ANSWER:** Parents are changing as they grow older, as is the world and society they live in. Changes in the parents’ economics, health, and personal life goals can affect how they see and treat each child. Also each child is born with a different personality. Parents often have trouble understanding children whose personalities are in conflict with or different from their own.

**8. JAMES JR.: Ask your audience to create a Character Profile and Back Story for James Jr. from all the things said and hinted at in the story.**

**ANSWER:** James Jr. dropped out of college, tried a music career and messed up an opportunity. He became a drug addict. He’s been away and out of touch with his family for two years. James Jr. is back and sleeping on the floor in his father’s apartment. He is still writing songs and also painting.

**9. What does James Jr. say that summarizes his frustrates with his father?**

**ANSWER:** James Jr.: *“Pops gave me stuff, but he was trying to change me into someone I wasn’t.”*

**10. In the original student script all the characters were older. James Jr. was in his 40s and a street character without any life direction. He had a brother, not a sister. In the shooting script and the film James Jr. became a character in his twenties with artistic ambitions. Why do you think these changes were made?**

**ANSWER:** By making James Jr. in his 20s, we widened the audience that might be interested in the story. By making him artistic we raise new questions about what it is like to be born an artist in a working class family that has had no exposure to the different lifestyle and life goals of artists. The casting of the sibling as a female instead of a male came about by accident. When we were doing a staged reading of the script, the male student who had been cast was unable to make the reading and a female student replaced him in the part. Once the sibling was female we were able to imagine a different relationship between the father and his two children.

**11. What would you describe as attributes of an artist?**

**ANSWER:** Artists often transform their life experiences into their art. They usually have strong point of views and are critical of what is. They like to think outside the box. Usually sensitive, though not necessarily towards other people, they are easily affected by things that happen to them and might be moody and stubborn.

**12. What kind of father was James Sr. to his son? Do you think the father's personality matched up well with his son's?**

**ANSWER:** James Sr. probably had been a proud, but at the same time strict and controlling father to his son. The father and son's personality types would seem to be at odds. But because the father was the parent he might have thought his ways were right and that it was the son who had to change.

**13. THE ABSENT PARENT:**

**a) What was James Jr. relationship to his mother?**

**ANSWER:** When James Jr. angrily tells Janet that she and their father didn't care about the mother as she was dying, it can be inferred that James Jr. was close to his mother and looked after her.

**b) What was Janet's relationship to her mother?**

**ANSWER:** We can infer that Janet did not feel close to her mother, but we cannot know how the mother actually felt about her daughter without more information. Little girls often idolize their fathers, especially if their fathers don't spend a lot of time at home doing everyday tasks. Since Janet put a high value on success and getting ahead, if her mother was more domestically inclined and less verbally assertive, Janet could have actually looked down on her mother. It could even be that the mother did reach out repeatedly to her daughter and was rejected.

**14. How bad was James Jr.'s drug addiction?**

**ANSWER:** We don't know. He could have been an addict for years --- or less than a year. He could have been an out of control addict or more of a recreational user. In a family that is very conservative, they could regard a child who smokes pot a few times as being an addict. The fact that the son also was an artist, and wanting to live a less structured lifestyle could also have made his life seem more out of control to his father and sister. Their

negative response to who he wanted to be could have in turn have driven him deeper into drug use.

**15. The sister accused the brother of stealing the brooch, does that prove that he was a serious addict?**

**ANSWER:** Not necessarily. The brother definitely sounds like he was self-centered when he was younger, but it is possible that he didn't even know the story of the Grandma promising that the brooch would be passed on to Janet. James Jr. could have regarded the brooch as belonging to his mother. He was closer to his mother than his sister, so he might have thought he had a right to the brooch. On the other hand, James Jr. might have known that the Grandma had promised Janet the brooch and he sold it to spite Janet. We do not have enough information to determine what James Jr.'s true mindset had been when he took the brooch and sold it.

**16. What happens if a person has been a drug addict, or done something else that society sees as very wrong, but then he actually changes and becomes a better person. Do you think the person's friends, family, and foes will be ready to see the changes in him?**

**ANSWER:** It is usually very difficult for people to change their opinions of a person who has done wrong in the past. They might think that the person is only acting good to get their trust and will take advantage of them again. Another factor that might make people reluctant to recognize when the person who had been bad improves his life, is accepting the other person's positive change could shake up their own life. Some people thrive on feeling superior to others. Janet's positive self image of herself is built in part on seeing James Jr. as the opposite of herself. If she has to revise her opinion of her brother, she might also have to reconsider her own values and acts.

**17. When a person who has possessions and property dies, there can be confusion and arguments among family members about what will happen with the deceased's estates. Do you know any instances of fighting happening in a family after someone dies?**

**ANSWER:** This is a question for open discussion.

**18. JAMES SR.: Ask your audience to create a Character Profile and Back Story for James Sr. from all the things said and hinted at in the story.**

**ANSWER:** James Sr. is a widower and a war vet with a disability. The American flag, army cap, and framed Vietnam medal emphasizes the importance his war experiences have played in his life. He favored and put his hopes on his son, financially helping James Jr. go to college while ignoring his daughter's needs. James Sr. is grumpy, low energy, and forgetful.

**19. Do you think James Sr. has a medical condition? If so, what?**

**ANSWER:** James Sr. has **Dementia**, a lesser form of **Alzheimer**. It is a degenerative brain disease of unknown cause. It usually starts in late middle age or in old age, though some football players and boxers who have been hit often have gotten it in their 30s and 40s. It results in progressive memory loss, impaired thinking, disorientation, and changes in personality and mood.

Dementia comes on gradually and family members might initially not give special importance to the symptoms or not even know that they are symptoms of a disease. The BYFC Director's stepfather was eventually diagnosed with Dementia. Her mother initially thought that her husband's strange behavior was a result of **Depression**. The stepfather had enjoyed working hard and being active all his life. But in his 80s he became physically frail and partially paralyzed. His driver's license was taken away. After that, he didn't want to get up from bed. He retreated into a shell and became angry. Nothing that anyone did for him could satisfy him. Some of the symptoms of Dementia are also symptoms of Depression – which is when a person still has his abilities, but stops using them because he doesn't care anymore.

For an overview of symptoms of Dementia:

<https://health.google.com/health/ref/Dementia>

For an overview of symptoms of Depression:

<https://health.google.com/health/ref/Major+depression>

**20. In the bedroom scene when James Sr. cries, "The blood, the blood, it's all over!", what is that about?**

**ANSWER:** James Sr. is having flashbacks from his wartime experiences. The BYFC director's stepfather, a WWII vet, had war nightmares that started when he was a soldier and continued throughout the rest of his life, though he never wanted to talk about them. They became worse when he got Dementia. These nightmares were a sign of **Posttraumatic Stress (PTSD)**, a severe anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to any event which causes psychological trauma, such as wartime combat, physical violence or a natural disaster, or a threat to one's physical, sexual, or psychological integrity can also trigger it. Symptoms include depression, anxiety, flashbacks, recurrent nightmares and avoidance of reminders of the event. PTSD began to be widely talked about during the Vietnam War, but it has existed with all wars. Before Vietnam, soldiers returning traumatized from war didn't understand why it was so difficult for them to fit back into society. PTSD happens to children as well as adults. Both female and male rape victims often experience PTSD.

For more information on PTSD:

<http://www.helpguide.org/mental/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-symptoms-treatment.htm>

For more information about the impact of PTSD on rape victims:

<http://www.aest.org.uk/survivors/rts.html>

**21. Describe what went on between the father and son in the bedroom scene. What do you think it meant?**

**ANSWER:** The director choreographed the bedroom scene movement by movement, beat by beat, from the son taking off the father's military cap and wiping away the sweat, to the father bear hugging his tired son. This scene was a visual dance between father and son where we see an exchange of roles and responsibilities. Who's the caretaker and who's being taken care of? Who's the child? It goes back and forth. The relationship between parents and children can change over time out of necessity, with the grown children needing their parents less and the aging parents starting to need the support of their children more.

In the original student script James Jr. *tells* his sister that their father has Alzheimer\*, and there was no bedroom scene between the father and son. It is always better to *show* an audience something than force your

characters to *tell* the audience the information. When we workshoped the script in class, the bedroom scene was added to show the father's condition. (*\*Because James Sr. only had partial memory loss, mixed with many moments of being coherent and in the moment, his condition might better be diagnosed as Dementia.*)

**22. In "POINTING FINGERS" who is aware of the father's changing medical condition?**

**ANSWER:** The brother. Even though the sister has been helping the father with bills, she has not really been noticing him as a person.

**23. How has the son relationship with the father been affect by the father's Dementia?**

**ANSWER:** A person experiencing Dementia can have a total personality change. Someone who has been gentle can become rude and angry, or it can happen the other way around. In James Sr.'s case, it seems like Dementia has made the father more emotional and more accepting of who his son is, as shown when he asks to hear one of his son's songs. Now James Jr. feels needed by his father and sees he can make an important contribution to his father's well being by just being present and attentive. This can be just as important as being able to pay the father's gas bill.

**24. When the sister leaves at the end she does one final act, what is that?\***

**ANSWER:** Janet takes money from her wallet, puts it under the coffee can on the table and starts to leave. Then she reconsiders and instead of leaving the money out, she puts the money inside the coffee can, and puts the coffee can back on the pantry shelf, then leaves. (*\*NOTE: This was an act that the Director put into the shooting script that was not in the original student script. In the shooting script though Janet leaves the money and exits right after James Jr. leaves the living room. It was the Editor's idea to extend Janet's stay and have her remain seated in the living room, listening to the exchange between her brother and father in the other room, before she leaves the money and exits. This is an example of how the Editor, like the Director, can become an unofficial co-writer of the script.*)

**25. From Janet's point-of-view what was the significance of her act?**

**How might her act affect how the audience regards her character?**

**ANSWER:** Janet wanted to give to her family without taking credit for it. Who knows when the father or brother would look into the can again and whether they will realize where the money came from. Janet's act makes her suddenly more likeable to the audience, and we have hope and interest in what will happen next for her.

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**WHOSE STORY IS IT?**

**ANSWER:** You can determine whose story it is by which character undergoes the most change. We can infer that James Jr., in the two years that he has been away from his father and sister, has pulled his life together. But in the actual course of the story James Jr. does not change – the audience just learns that there is more to him than his sister wants to admit. James Sr. is changing – but it is due to a medical condition, not his own choice.

The story's protagonist is Janet. She is changed by end of the story. She has been humbled by her ignorance of not knowing about her father's medical condition while boasting about how much she does for him. She realizes that she is wrong about who her brother is in the present -- which could make her wonder if she ever really understood who he was years ago. The vivid memories she has built her attitudes upon might have been misinterpretations of the past.

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**WHAT IS THIS STORY ABOUT (REVISITED)**

**Ask the audience again what they think the film was about. There is no one answer. Encourage discussion among the audience members.**

**ANSWERS:** General responses might include troubled communication between family members; problems of aging; and effects of addiction on a family.

Here are some responses from various people we showed POINTING FINGERS to:

a) Tom, a webmaster with the Parks Department, summarized the story's themes as: *"betrayal, sibling rivalry, redemption, and aging."*

b) Tessa, a child development specialist, said it was about *"difficulty with forgiveness, war trauma, and child development and neglect"*. She saw all three characters as *"holding trauma"*.

**What is Trauma? What does it mean to "hold trauma?"**

The definition that Tessa gave was *"disruption of flow"*. Trauma is any physical damage to the body caused by violence or accident, or an emotional wound or shock usually having long term effects. *"Holding trauma"* is when the event is unprocessed in somebody and the residual effects of it are still impacting on the way the person functions in his daily life and how he views the world.

c) Diane, a French student in New York studying publishing, said it was about *"loneliness and memories. The characters are all lonely even though they are a family. Memories go with loneliness because it's like a lost past. Like they cannot redo what they were as a family before. So all they have are memories."* When Janet and James Jr. were small kids and their parents in good health, they undoubtedly had ordinary moments as a family, like eating dinner together or learning how to ride a bike. But as they got older they became focused on how to survive and grow on their own. As adults, the memories of growing up that stand out for them are the moments that they believed shaped their self-esteem and sense of being supported as individuals.

d) Martin, a banking intern, said, *"The film is about interpretation. You have someone who is misinterpreting – the sister. People think as they are. If there is something they don't really understand or have not seen before, their first reflex is to make comparisons and assumptions based upon things they have seen in the past. That's how the brain works."*

If you misinterpret one thing about a person, it could make you misunderstand many things about the person. The film is also about how a viewer interprets the characters as the film is unfolding and you don't know where it's going. POINTING FINGERS becomes more interesting with

the second viewing because you know more things. You know at the start of the movie that the father is ill and you will regard different his actions, and that of his children.

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**STORY STRUCTURE**

**Most stories have three act structure – a beginning, a middle, and an end.**

**ACT I: The primary character (or protagonist) is introduced and his ordinary world established. Something happens that disrupts that world and challenges the character.**

In POINTING FINGERS Janet's ordinary world has been taking care of her father and being the one he depends upon. That is disrupted when her brother returns and her father lets James Jr. stay with him, even though Janet advises against it. When her father tells her that James Jr. has stolen from him, Janet feels it is up to her to make her brother leave her father's home.

**ACT II: The protagonist becomes fully engaged with dealing with the problem. As the protagonist tries to find a way to end the problem matters get more complicated and threatening, leading to a climax.**

Janet accuses her brother of doing wrong, but James Jr. response back by challenging her right to point a finger at him. They exchange angry words back and forth, hurling painful moments from the past at each other. The turning point is when the father calls from the bedroom for the dead mother, and Janet realizes the situation at home is not what she imagined it was.

**ACT III: The conflict is resolved (for good or bad) and the protagonist shows she has gained new knowledge or understanding.**

Janet realizes that her brother has been more sensitive to their father's needs than she has, and has been helping rather than hurting the father. Janet leaves the money in the coffee can as a way to quietly support her father and brother.

*This Discussion Guide was written by the Brooklyn Young Filmmakers Director, Trayce Gardner © Brooklyn Young Filmmakers 2010*  
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