



Pressure Cooker

(USA 2007, 99 minutes)

Directors: Mark Becker and Jennifer Grausman

Synopsis

Pressure Cooker profiles the lives of three high school seniors from Northeast Philadelphia, each with unique hardships but with the shared goal of winning scholarships to the country's best culinary schools. Their unlikely hero is the irreverent culinary arts teacher, Mrs. Stephenson, whose teaching style is hilariously blunt. Mrs. Stephenson is both a surrogate mother and a culinary boot-camp instructor, as she pushes her kids to achieve beyond what anyone else expects from them.

Themes: Culinary Arts, Health, Intra and Inter-Cultural Awareness, Coming of Age, Camaraderie/Friendship, Competition, Community, Goal Setting

Classroom Exercise

1. Write a thank-you letter to someone whom you consider your role model. You may wish to give them the letter or you may decide not to. In the letter write about what it is that you appreciate about them. Be specific, if it's something they have helped you with, let them know. Maybe it's just for being there when you need advice or reassurance.
2. Each of the students in the film shared a common goal, to get into a college culinary arts program. Create a list of three goals and a detailed outline of how you plan to achieve those goals.

Study Questions

- Why do you think the filmmakers chose to follow Erica, Fatoumata and Tyree?
- How does Mrs. Stephenson's attitude change throughout the film?
- Why do you think the filmmakers chose the title *Pressure Cooker*? In what ways can high school be like a pressure cooker?
- If you were the filmmaker, what is one thing you would do differently with the film? What would you keep the same?

Useful Websites

Soufflé? Sauce a Chocolat? Crème Patisserie? Interested in a career in the culinary arts? This website gives more information about the local Chicago Chapter of the Careers through Culinary Arts (C-CAP) program <http://www.ccapinc.org/>

The official website for the film <http://www.takepart.com/PressureCooker>