

 PRAGDA | SPANISH FILM CLUB

DISCUSSION GUIDE



MY BROTHER DREAMS AWAKE (MIS HERMANOS SUEÑAN DESPIERTOS)

A film by CLAUDIA HUAIQUIMILLA

Chile / 2021 / 85 min
Spanish with English subtitles

BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before watching a film, it is important to know the current events and history of the country that film comes from. Learning about the filmmaker is also a relevant way to gain insight on the context in which the film was produced. You can learn more about Claudia Huaiquimilla at <https://pragda.com/film/my-brothers-dream-awake/>.

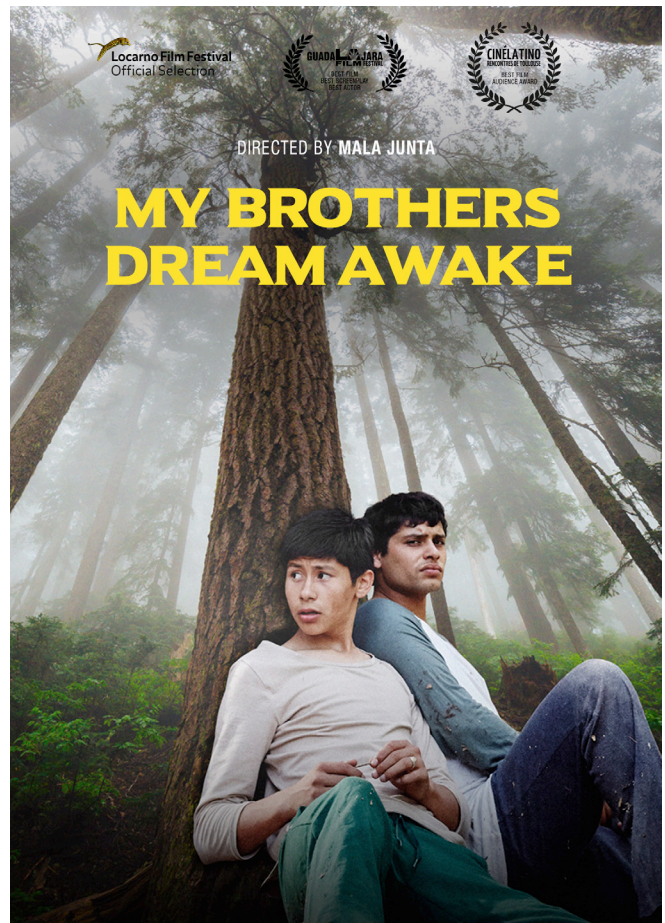
INTRODUCING THE FILM

A **film synopsis** is a piece of text designed to summarize the film's narrative, genre, style, and key participants in a way that appeals to a wide audience. The synopsis is part of the film's marketing process and tends to follow a traditional format. Read this synopsis for *My Brother Dreams Awake*.

Ángel and his younger brother Franco have been incarcerated in a juvenile prison for a year. Despite the difficulties, they have formed a solid group of friends with whom they spend their days sharing dreams of freedom. Everything changes when the arrival of a rebellious young man offers a possible escape: the only door to make those dreams come true.

Based on real events, Mapuche director Claudia Huaiquimilla paints a complex image of imprisoned youth clearly depicting the love and care they show toward each other day by day. These moments of love, joy, and care illuminate a warm, tender side of these young people, who are usually reduced to the stereotypical patterns of savagery, aggression, and other uncontrollable behavior.

- > From the film synopsis, can you imagine the genre and tone of the film?
From this same text, try to identify the main events of the film's plot and the socio-political context of the film.
- > Do you think that the film will have a political message? Cite specific language from the synopsis to support your answer.
- > How do the trailer, poster, and still images encourage you to watch the film?
- > Viewing the marketing materials alone (i.e., trailer, poster, and still images available at pragda.com/film/my-brothers-dream-awake/) without the aid of the synopsis, can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about?



AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

NARRATIVE

- > The film begins with the two brothers beyond the walls of the prison, telling each other about their dreams for the future. How does this sequence introduce the audience to the two main characters? What does it tell us about these two brothers?
- > Describe the relationship between Ángel and Flea. How do the two characters differentiate? In what ways do both characters react to being locked in the prison?
- > Midway through the film, a short flashback shows the two brothers being captured. Why are they in prison? What circumstances caused them to commit their crime? Does Ángel feel guilt for the incarceration of Flea?
- > While Ángel navigates life in prison, his relationship with Tiare continues to grow. In what ways are they compatible? What similar traumas have helped them to bond?
- > Analyze the dynamics between the various prisoners. How do they develop a community throughout the duration of the film? Provide examples of how they positively support each other against the abusive institution.
- > Ángel is a character who can be described as generally level-headed; He abides by the rules and avoids conflict when possible. What circumstances influence him to join the escape plans? Why does he choose to abandon his hopes of entering university?
- > At the end of the film, Ángel and Franco can be seen alongside a crowd of other prisoners in the forest. What do you make of this scene? What does this conclusion mean or symbolize?
- > As the film concludes, it states that it is based on a true story and then proceeds to dedicate itself to the 1796 youth that have died in this same institution. Does being reminded of this fact change your experience of the film? How does it serve as a conclusion to the film?



CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

- > The film opens with aerial shots of the forest that surround the prison. Following this sequence there are a few other scenes that use similar shots of the forest, especially during monologues. What does the forest represent? Why did Huaiquimilla choose to start the film this way?
- > Analyze the design of the prison. How does Huaiquimilla utilize space within the various rooms to tell the narrative? Does the prison feel cramped and suffocating or empty and lonesome?
- > Near the start of the film, some of the prisoners are filmed in the showers through a cell phone camera. This technique is one that does not recur. Why was it chosen to be used in this scene? Do you feel that it creates a certain level of intimacy? What does it try to tell the audience?
- > Describe the color palette used in *My Brother Dreams Awake*. How is it used in order to promote the hopelessness that the prisoners feel within the prison?
- > Many scenes throughout the film utilize a handheld camera, especially during interactions between the prisoners. Provide examples of when it is used. How is this technique identifiable? What effects does it have on the viewers' comprehension of these interactions?

CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES *continued*

- Speak on the soundscape of *My Brother Dreams Awake*. How and when is non-diegetic music used? How does it impact the mood of the scenes that use it?
- During moments of intensity, the film frequently dampens the sound of dialogue. Some of these moments include the arrest of the two brothers and the prison riot. What is the purpose of this technique? Does it have a dramatic effect?
- As the film ends, it is implied that all the prisoners involved in the revolt die. However, this sequence is crosscut with footage of countless youth wandering in the forest outside of the prison. Why were these shots included during this scene? What do they signify?

THEMES

- Explain the significance of the title *My Brothers Dream Awake*. Who is it referring to? Are there any specific moments in the film that directly correlate with this title?
- Ángel and Flea are very dependent on one another. Explore the dynamics and complexities of sibling relationships. How do they support each other as they try to overcome their hardships? What happens when they are separated?
- Within the prison, the teenagers are deprived of positive role models. Nonetheless, their teacher, Ana, strives to support her students in whatever way possible. Speak on the importance of having positive adult figures in one's life. What is the importance of an open, supportive learning environment?
- When the audience is first introduced to the prison, the teenagers are depicted as harsh and aggressive. The inmates are constantly fighting, and everyone struggles to protect themselves. However, as the film progresses a sense of community and solidarity is formed amongst the teenagers. Highlight the power of friendship and support in overcoming obstacles and achieving goals. What are some instances of the inmates overcoming their differences in order to help each other?
- Throughout the film, the teenagers are constantly physically abused by the guards. This form of aggression is always excessive and typically leads to more issues as other prisoners become involved. Provide examples of this abuse. How does it worsen these respective situations? How can we as citizens campaign for more just and humane treatment for those incarcerated?
- During a meeting with their lawyer, it is revealed that Ángel and Flea have been imprisoned for over a year, without having a proper trial or hearing. Explore the injustices and deficiencies of the legal system. Why has it taken so long for them to be officially judged within a court?
- Ángel and Flea have a complicated relationship with their parents. Their father was always absent, and their mother abandoned them after their incarceration. How do each of them handle this feeling of abandonment? Speak on the moral obligations of parenthood. What happens when children grow up without involved parents?
- Following the room inspection, all the prisoners are forced to physically push themselves after nobody admits to the possession of a prohibited item. Speak on this form of collective punishment. What are the moral implications that come with this form of treatment?
- Throughout the film, there are a variety of moments of serious neglect from the prison workers, most notably when Jaime suffers from withdrawal and is denied his medication. How can moments like these be prevented? How can government workers be held accountable for moments of neglect?
- Ángel is a character that faces many personal conflicts. He understands his potential and tries his hardest to realize it. Nonetheless he chooses to abandon this behavior in order to stand in solidarity with his fellow inmates. Speak on the topic of personal sacrifice. When does it make sense to jeopardize one's own future for a greater cause?

