

 **PRAGDA** | SPANISH FILM CLUB

# DISCUSSION GUIDE



## TIGER

A film by José María Cabral

Dominican Republic / 2024 / 84 min  
In 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 José María Cabral at <https://pragda.com/film/tiger/>

*Bad Hair* was released in 2013, already reflecting a Venezuela marked by poverty, social tension, and political uncertainty. That same year, Hugo Chávez's died of illness and Nicolás Maduro came to power. Since then, the country has plunged into a deep political and economic crisis, with hyperinflation, mass protests, food and medicine shortages, and growing repression. Millions of Venezuelans have fled the country, creating one of the world's largest refugee crises.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

From the late 1990s through the early 2000s in the Dominican Republic, summer camps for boys became popular spaces where families aimed to shape their sons into "tigueres"; a term that blends street smarts, cunning, and resilient masculinity. These camps, often set in the mountains of Jarabacoa or Constanza, and in resort areas like La Romana, are deeply rooted in local culture. They emphasize physical challenges, discipline, and group activities to foster resilience and leadership. The film *Tiger* by José María Cabral explores how these camps both reflect and reinforce rigid ideals of masculinity, questioning whether such environments truly benefit boys or perpetuate harmful stereotypes in Caribbean culture.

### 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 *Tiger*:

*Tiger* is a raw, electrifying exploration of identity, tradition, and what it truly means to be a man. A group of male teenagers is sent to a Tigueraje boot camp to become tough, fearless, and dominant – this is what their parents expect them to become, Dominican "Tigers". The camp's head coach, Alberto, decides it is time for his son Pablo to join the group. What Alberto doesn't know is that Pablo is already carving out his own version of a tiger—one that challenges everything his father stands for.

As their clashing ideas of masculinity collide, Pablo is thrust into a journey of self-discovery; one that will force him to question not just his father's expectations, but his own. Amidst the struggle, it shines a light on hope and the possibility of redemption, for the adults too.

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 <https://pragda.com/film/tiger/>) without the aid of the synopsis, can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about?



## AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

### NARRATIVE

- How does the film portray the concept of “tiguer” masculinity, and what are the key traits associated with this identity?
- In what ways does Pablo’s artistic nature conflict with the expectations of the camp and his father’s vision of masculinity?
- How are the two female characters, Pablo’s mother and the maid, portrayed in the film? What is their view of the men’s behavior?
- How does the relationship between Pablo and Alberto, his father, evolve throughout the film, and what does it reveal about generational differences in attitudes toward masculinity?
- How do we sense, or fail to sense, that Alberto is Pablo’s father? How does this evolve in the story?
- What role do class and race play in shaping the boys’ experiences and interactions within the camp?
- How does the camp environment reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes?
- Discuss the significance of the boys’ brief escape from the camp. What does this episode reveal about their desires and the possibility of alternative masculinities?
- In what ways does the film critique the notion that toughness and cunning are essential for survival in Dominican society?
- How does the film’s setting, deep in the wild, mountainous landscape of the Dominican Republic, shape the story and influence the characters’ development?
- How do moments of vulnerability and camaraderie among the boys contrast with the camp’s rigid expectations? What do these moments suggest about the nature of male friendship?
- What might the horse represent in the film? How does Pablo’s relationship with the horse reflect his inner world or journey?
- Near the end, Pablo becomes violent during a fight, brutally hitting another boy. What does this moment reveal about masculinity, growing up, or the pressure to prove oneself? Do you see it as a personal victory for Pablo?
- In the final scenes, the camp is dismantled and everyone leaves. The horse escapes and dies. Do you think Pablo is responsible for what happened? How do you interpret this ending? What emotions or ideas does it leave you with?



### CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

- Rodrigo Fonseca, film critic, said about *Tiger*: “A *Latin Fight Club* governed by macho law. Hernán Herrera’s cinematography meticulously explores this wild world, where training unfolds as if in a war zone. The camera captures the action from claustrophobic angles, turning forests and rivers into trenches. One future tiguere in particular, Pablo, begins to question his master’s teachings—his own father—and sets off a subtle process of resistance, aiming to expose the man’s hidden fragility.” What do you think of that statement?
- How does the film use camera angles (such as high-angle or low-angle shots) to convey power dynamics between characters, especially between Pablo and Alberto?
- In what ways do close-up shots in *Tiger* emphasize the emotional states of the characters, and how do they contribute to the viewer’s empathy?

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## CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES *continued*

- How does the editing rhythm affect your experience of the story? Is the pace slow, fast, or uneven, and what might be the purpose behind that choice?
- How does the cinematography utilize wide shots to portray the Dominican landscape and the isolation of the boot camp setting?
- How is natural light used in the film? What effect does it have on the realism and mood of the story?
- How does the film's lighting design contribute to the mood and themes, particularly in scenes depicting vulnerability versus toughness?
- How does the cinematography handle transitions between scenes: does it use montages, cross-cutting, or other editing techniques to advance the narrative or emphasize thematic elements?
- In what ways does the film employ color grading and contrast to reflect the psychological states of the characters or the oppressive atmosphere of the camp?
- How does the film use silence to convey meaning? Can you identify scenes where silence speaks louder than words?
- Does *Tiger* use any symbolic framing or visual metaphors through its cinematography to reinforce the film's critique of masculinity?



## THEMES

- What do you think is the central meaning of *Tiger*?
- How would you describe the tone of the film?
- How does the film examine the construction and idealization of masculinity within Dominican and Caribbean culture, particularly through the “tiguer” archetype?
- In what ways does the film reinforce or challenge the stereotype of machismo in Latin America? Do you have any examples of similar behavior in your own environment or community?
- In what ways *Tiger* critique toxic masculinity and its impact on young men's emotional development and relationships?
- How does the film address generational conflict, especially between Pablo and his father, regarding expectations of manhood and self-expression?
- How are themes of bullying, emotional repression, and homophobia depicted, and what impact do they have on the boys' development?
- What role does the bootcamp setting play in reinforcing or challenging traditional gender norms and social hierarchies?
- In what ways does the film highlight the psychological and emotional costs of suppressing vulnerability in favor of toughness and dominance?
- How are class and social status used to complicate the boys' experiences and the lessons they are taught at the camp?
- What does the film suggest about the possibility of change or resistance to entrenched cultural norms around masculinity?

