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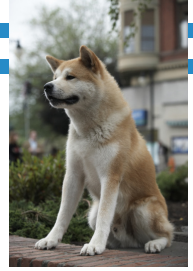
DISCUSSION GUIDE

Developed by Heartland Truly Moving Pictures to accompany *Hachi: A Dog's Story*, recipient of the Truly Moving Picture Award, an honored distinction given to films that unlock the vast potential of the human spirit and enable us to view stories that display courage, integrity and hope, taking entertainment to a higher level.

www.TrulyMovingPictures.org



Introduction



One Film Can

Heartland Truly Moving Pictures, a non-profit organization, recognizes and honors films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life. We believe that one film can move us to laughter, to tears or to make a difference. *Hachi: A Dog's Tale* is a film that demonstrates that **One Film Can**.

Synopsis

Hachi, a heartwarming film is an American adaptation of a famous Japanese tale about a loyal Akita dog named Hachiko.

This special dog, nicknamed "Hachi," accompanies his master Parker (Richard Gere), a university professor, to the train station every morning to see him off and then returns to the station each afternoon to greet him at the end of his day. The emotionally complex nature of what unfolds when their uncomplicated routine becomes interrupted is what makes Hachi's story a tale for the ages; a dog's faithful devotion to his master exposes the great power of love and how this simplest of acts can become the grandest gesture of all. Also starring Academy Award® Nominee Joan Allen and Jason Alexander.

Since the early 1930's the story of a loyal Akita dog named Hachi from Tokyo has been a staple of Japanese folklore, so much so that three bronze statues of the dog stand throughout the country, one being the most famous meeting spot in Tokyo: the "Hachi Exit" at the Shibuya Train Station.

In the seven decades since Hachi became a Japanese hero, the beloved story has been made into a Japanese blockbuster film, *Hachikō Monogatari* (1987), and been the subject of two children's books: *Hachikō: The True Story of a Loyal Dog*, written by Pamela S. Turner and *Hachi Waits* written by Lesléa Newman, both published in 2004. This timeless tale of commitment and friendship is now being introduced to American moviegoers as a major motion picture directed by Academy Award nominee, Lasse Hallström.

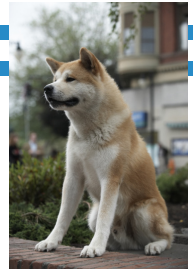


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Hachi is a movie that explores the depths of love and loyalty of one Akita for his owner.

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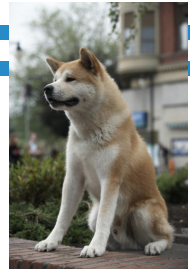
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The Real Story



The following is excerpted from the 'Hachi' Production notes, courtesy of Sony Pictures Worldwide Acquisition Group © 2009.

In 1924, Hachikō was brought to Tokyo by his owner, Hidesamurō Ueno, a professor in the agriculture department at the University of Tokyo. During his owner's life, Hachikō saw him off from the front door and greeted him at the end of the day at the nearby Shibuya Station. The pair continued their daily routine until May 1925, when Ueno didn't return on the usual train one evening. The professor had suffered a stroke at the university that day. He died and never returned to the train station where his friend was waiting.

Hachi was given away after his master's death, but he routinely escaped, showing up again and again at his old home. After time, Hachi apparently realized that Professor Ueno no longer lived at the house. So he went to look for his master at the train station where he had accompanied him so many times before. Each day, Hachi waited for Ueno to return. And each day he didn't see his friend among the commuters at the station.

The permanent fixture at the train station that was Hachi attracted the attention of other commuters. Many of the people who frequented the Shibuya train station had seen Hachi and Professor Ueno together each day. Realizing that Hachi waited in vigil for his dead master, their hearts were touched. They brought Hachi treats and food to nourish him during his wait.

This continued for 10 years, with Hachikō appearing only in the evening time, precisely when the train was due at the station.

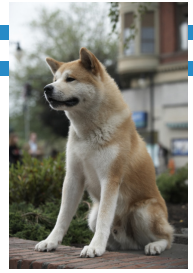
That same year, another of Ueno's former students (who had become something of an expert on Akitas) saw the dog at the station and followed him to the Kobayashi home where he learned the history of Hachikō's life. Shortly after this meeting, the former student published a documented census of Akitas in Japan. His research found only 30 purebred Akitas remaining, including Hachikō from Shibuya Station.

Ueno's former student returned frequently to visit the dog and over the years published several articles about Hachikō's remarkable loyalty. In 1932, one of these articles, published in Tokyo's largest newspaper, threw the dog into the national spotlight. Hachikō became a national sensation. His faithfulness to his master's memory impressed the people of Japan as a spirit of family loyalty all should strive to achieve. Teachers and parents used Hachikō's vigil as an example for children to follow. A well-known Japanese artist rendered a sculpture of the dog, and throughout the country a new awareness of the Akita breed grew.

In April 1934, a bronze statue in his likeness was erected at Shibuya Station, and Hachikō himself was present at its unveiling (Hachikō died on March 8, 1935). The statue was recycled for the war effort during World War II. After the war, Hachikō was not forgotten. In 1948 The Society for Recreating the Hachikō Statue commissioned Takeshi Ando, son of the original artist who had since died, to make a second statue. The new statue, which was erected in August 1948, still stands and is an extremely popular meeting spot. The station entrance near this statue is named "Hachikō-guchi", meaning "The Hachikō Exit", and is one of Shibuya Station's five exits.

A similar statue stands in Hachikō's hometown, in front of Odate Station. In 2004, a new statue of Hachikō was erected on the original stone pedestal from Shibuya in front of the Akita Dog Museum in Odate. The 1987 movie *Hachikō Monogatari* told the story of the dog's life from his birth up until his death and imagined spiritual reunion with his master, the Professor. Considered a blockbuster success, the film was the last big hit for Japanese film studio Shochiku Kinema Kenkyū-jo.

The Real Story



After reading the real story upon which the movie *Hachi* was based, courtesy of Sony Pictures Worldwide Aquisition Group, use the following questions to discuss the impact the movie Hachi had on you.

Discussion Questions:

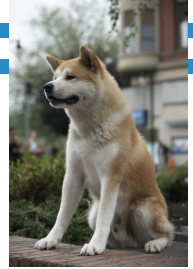
- Does knowing the real story behind the movie change the impact the movie had on you? In what way?
- How does setting the story in America instead of Japan affect the story for you?
- What was the most impactful part of *Hachi*? Why?
- Can you think of any other stories like Hachi's that has drawn a community together? How?
- Akitas are a unique breed defined by some of the traits demonstrated in the movie. Do more research on Akitas to discover their unique history in Japan. The impact Akitas have had on Japanese culture over the years is fascinating. Use the links below to get you started.

Resources

www.moellgaard.dk/English/Dogs/Akitas/Akitas_and_GJDs.htm

www.barkbytes.com/history/akita.htm

Love and Loyalty



Hachi, like other dogs, is one who demonstrates unconditional love and unimaginable loyalty. While Hachi's circumstances might be slightly different than that of the average dog, he still represents many of the remarkable qualities dogs have.

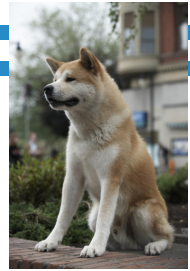
In the production notes for *Hachi*, Joan Allen who plays Cate, Parker's wife states, "I really think that is this story's great lesson: to take time, step back and really connect with people you care about. And that not everything is so disposable -- we live in such a disposable society. This story is about something that is long-lasting. This beautiful dog doesn't give up on waiting for something that he loves."

Use the following section to discuss not only Hachi, but all dogs and how they can enhance life.

Discussion Points

- Think of the way Ken describes the Akita breed to Parker early in the film. What are some of the Akita's most unique qualities?
- If you are a dog owner, what are some of your dog's unique qualities? Are they unique to your dog's breed and heritage or are they simply unique to your dog?
- Is Hachi different than other dogs? How?
- What does Hachi bring to Parker's life that not even his family members can provide?
- Why do you believe the tension between Parker and his wife existed in the film around keeping Hachi? Do you think keeping Hachi was the right decision for Parker's wife?
- Parker and Hachi's relationship builds over time, just as a relationship between people does. Have you ever experienced a relationship like Hachi and Parker's with a pet of your own? How did it evolve?
- After Parker's death, how does Hachi's presence impact Parker's wife and daughter? How do they each deal with Hachi's presence differently in the film?
- Did this film cause you to rethink love and loyalty? How?

Take Action

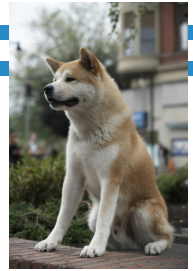


Dogs, no matter the breed, are a devoted member of many families throughout the world. Use this section to think about and address the well-being of dogs and other animals, as well as bringing the joy of pets to others.

Actions Ideas

- Akitas, as represented by Hachi, can be very loving and loyal dogs. However, when a certain dog is popularized on film there is often a surge in interest for that particular breed. Sadly, many families simply don't do the research required before bringing a new pet into their home and soon realize that they can't keep up with its needs. Then they often have to get rid of the dog.
 - Look into getting involved with a local shelter or dog rescue facility in your community to help take care of these dogs in need of a home.
 - Another option is to advocate for animals by educating the public on temperments and requirments of certain breeds so that more people consider the true impact of having a pet before they adopt one.
- Dogs, as well as other animals, can aid in therepy for individuals in hospitals or nursing homes. Some animals are even used in schools and libraries as "listeners" for young readers to practice their reading skills. Look into animal therapy possibilities near you so that you can help others find the joy that animals can bring.

Moving Moments



Hachi: A Dog's Tale has been honored as a Heartland Truly Moving Picture Award-winning film. This award was created to honor films released theatrically that align with Heartland's mission to recognize and honor films and filmmakers whose work explores the human journey by artistically expressing hope and respect for the positive values of life.

These award-winning films are made up of moving and inspiring moments – those moments that cause you to think, see something in your life differently, and be inspired to take action. They are what make the film and its message remain with you well after you've left the theater.

Think about *Hachi*. What were the moments that stood out to you? How did they make you feel? How will they cause you to think about things differently in the future? Share these moments with others at www.TrulyMovingPictures.org. Simply create a membership or login, if you already have one, and then search the movie list for *Hachi: A Dog's Tale*. You can leave your review of the movie or thoughts about this film in the "Thoughts and Reviews" section.



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