



Discussion guide developed by Heartland Truly Moving Pictures to accompany *Henry Poole is Here*, a Truly Moving Picture award-winning film. A Truly Moving Picture award winner is a film that unlocks the vast potential of the human spirit and enables us to view stories that display courage, integrity and hope, taking entertainment to a higher level.

www.TrulyMovingPictures.org

HENRY POOLE IS HERE

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. *Henry Poole is Here* is a movie that demonstrates that One Film Can.

Synopsis

Luke Wilson (*The Royal Tenenbaums*, *Old School*), Academy Award® nominee Adriana Barraza (*Babel*) and Radha Mitchell (*Finding Neverland*) star in a modern day fable about the unexpected wonders of the everyday from director Mark Pellington (*U2 3D*, *The Mothman Prophecies*). *Henry Poole is Here* tells the funny, poignant and uplifting story of a disillusioned man who attempts to hide from life in a rundown suburban tract home only to discover he cannot escape the forces of hope.

Henry Poole (Luke Wilson) just wants to disappear. Shattered by circumstances beyond his control, he offers full price on a cookie cutter house in a drab, middle-class, L.A. neighborhood through his perky realtor Meg (Cheryl Hines). But just as he settles in to his indulgent isolation with a case of vodka and all the junk food he can eat, his neighbor, a well-meaning busybody named Esperanza (Adriana Barraza), drops by with a plate of homemade tamales and a whole lot of questions.

Despite his desire for solitude, Henry can't help noticing Dawn (Radha Mitchell), the beautiful young divorcée next door and her daughter Millie (Morgan Lily), an eight-year-old amateur spy who hasn't spoken a word since her parents' break-up.

Henry's self-imposed exile is shattered when Esperanza discovers a mysterious stain on Henry's stucco wall that is seen to have miraculous powers. She begins leading pilgrimages to the "holy site" and invites church officials, including her pastor, Father Salizar (George Lopez), to inspect the apparition.

Although Henry remains skeptical, he finds himself gradually drawn back towards life, especially after his silent friendship with Millie brings him closer to Dawn. As news of the apparition spreads throughout the neighborhood and his feelings for Dawn grow, Henry realizes his plan to live out his days in quiet desperation is going to be much harder than he ever imagined.

HENRY POOLE IS HERE

You choose love over fear, clarity over clouds, and hope for the best in yourself and the world around you. *Mark Pellington, Director*

Mark Pellington is known for his suspense movies such as *Arlington Road* and *The Mothman Prophecies*, so *Henry Poole is Here* is a departure from those movies for which some audiences know him.

Pellington had seen the script for *Henry Poole is Here*, originally titled "Stain" in 2003. Then Pellington's wife died in 2004 and he and his young child were left to think about her departure and the type of stories that most spoke to them. The above quote is about his feelings once emerging from the mourning process. Stating that he'll miss his wife everyday, he knew that he had to choose hope. And as a result of the loss of his wife, Pellington chose to direct Albert Torres first screenplay, *Henry Poole is Here*.

Discussion Questions

- Knowing this background information about Mark Pellington, how might the film *Henry Poole is Here* have been a healing experience and an appropriate film in this period of Pellington's life?
- Have you ever experienced a situation such as Henry in which you had to deal with the death or illness of a loved one or a scary diagnosis such as Henry's? How did you deal with it? Do you understand Henry's response to his diagnosis?
- Many of the characters in the movie have experienced a loss of some sort in their life. How did each loss affect each character differently?
- With which character did you most identify? Why?

Symbolism

- There is heavy symbolism in the movie, particularly in the names of the characters. Albert Torres selected the names he did as a means of highlighting the fable aspect of the film. Did you feel that Patience, Esperanza, and Dawn were appropriately names? Why? Does the name Henry have any symbolism?
- Although the other characters might not have symbolic names how do the other characters signify meaningful things? Think of Millie, Father Salazar and Meg, the real estate agent, in particular.
- Why do you believe the name of Henry's disease was never mentioned? How did the mysterious disease affect the dynamic Henry's interaction with everyone in the movie?

Read Heartland Truly Moving Pictures' interview with Mark Pellington at
<http://www.trulymovingpictures.org/interview-view.aspx?id=82>

Listen to the Heartland Truly Moving Pictures' podcast and interview with Mark Pellington at
<http://www.trulymovingpictures.org/podcast-view.aspx?id=83>

HENRY POOLE IS HERE

The story is about home, going home. *Mark Pellington, Director*

Mark Pellington elaborates on the above quote by stating that, “Anyone should be able to see this and enjoy it and understand what it’s about without believing in God or Jesus Christ or Allah. It doesn’t matter. That wasn’t what the movie was about for me. It was about safety, love, faith and hope. Those are the four things that I personally tried to build into the movie. And I think those themes convinced tons of people to work on this movie for way below their usual rates because they loved the script, because they loved the passion, they loved what it was about.”

This movie, more than faith, dealt with hope and passion for life.

Discussion Questions

- Did you view this movie as one about faith or was the overarching theme to you about hope? Why?
- How is this movie about going home? How does Henry go home and what about that process is healing for him?
- Have any of your searches in life taken you home? How?
- Does going home give you a sense of peace? Is it different if home has never changed and your family is still in the same place or if, like Henry, his childhood house is no longer a place to which he can return? What is the difference in returning home in these two instances?
- How do each of the characters in this film find hope? In what way do each of them impact or interact with Henry on his journey?
- How did each character need hope and how did each character find it in the process of the film? Think in particular about Esperanza and Millie.

HENRY POOLE IS HERE

The music for Henry Poole is a joy, a gift; a series of songs and orchestrations that give, reflect, speak and move. *Mark Pellington, Director*

Pellington is internationally recognized as one of the world's premier music video directors. His video for Pearl Jam's "Jeremy" is one of the most popular in history, as well as one of the most honored. It earned him Best Director at the 1992 Billboard Video Music Awards and picked up four 1993 MTV Video Music Awards, including Best Director and Video of the Year. *

Pellington's background making music videos proved to be a strength of Henry Poole is Here. Think about the way that the soundtrack helped shape your experience viewing the film when discussing the following questions.

** Excerpted from Henry Poole is Here: The Production Notes © Overture Films.*

Discussion Questions

- Thinking back on the movie and the soundtrack how did the soundtrack help shape the movie for you?
- What are a few of the scenes that impacted you most? What helped those scenes stand out? Was it the music or something else?
- Did the opening sequence set up by The Eels, "Love of the Loveless" appropriately set the tone of the movie for you? Why? In what way?
- If you could score a soundtrack of your life, who would be some of the predominant artists from whom you would select tracks? What song or songs would you select for day to day life? Why?



Henry Poole is Here © Overture Films. All Rights Reserved.

HENRY POOLE IS HERE

Truly Moving Moments

Henry Poole is Here 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 movies are made up of moving and inspiring moments – those moments that cause you to think, see something in your life differently, or be inspired to do something. It’s what makes the movie and its message remain with you well after you’ve left the theatre.

Think about *Henry Poole is Here*. 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 those Truly Moving 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 *Henry Poole is Here*. You can leave your review of the movie or thoughts about your Truly Moving Picture in the “Thoughts and Reviews” section.



Henry Poole is Here © Overture Films. All Rights Reserved.