

## FIRESIDE STUDY

### When trouble brings unexpected revelation

Film: **The Blessing of Charlie Sand**

#### *Introduction:*

Like a short film storybook, *The Blessing of Charlie Sand* is a children's fable of friendship which presents a case for the existence of angels. Through the eyes of the narrator, it recounts a childhood experience of deep personal significance.



#### *Key issues:*

#### **Religious neutrality**

*The Blessing of Charlie Sand* is a politically correct film. This is an observation rather than a criticism. Culturally, the choice of cast and the fact that it is told through the eyes of a Trinidadian national makes it thoroughly modern in its avoidance of any out-dated stereotypes.

Religiously, it carefully avoids naming any one belief, describing (for example) “an old text” which the viewer will naturally perceive to be his or her own.

#### **Signs of the supernatural**

Pragmatically, the story of “what happened that summer” is as straightforward as this: A boy is upset and climbs a tree. When gazing up, he is blinded by the sun, slips, but luckily lands directly on his feet. He is shocked by the experience and it jolts him into reassessing why he is upset.

However, we are presented with a number of supernatural or paranormal signs:

- “The feather never lied,” says the boy. It was a sign that things were about to change.
- The vision of the angel, who caught the boy and broke his fall, is a miracle.

It's these inexplicable events that loudly declare there is something beyond our everyday experience.

#### **A jealous heart heals**

For the narrator of the story, the arrival of Charlie Sand might have been the worst thing that ever happened to him and his relationship with best friend Bubba. But here is the most significant aspect of the tale – his heart was changed through an amazing and apparently unrelated event.

“Where was God when I needed him (or her or it)?” said the boy in his moment of despair. By his own reckoning, the boy discovered the answer. God knew his plight and sent “a divine messenger”. Regardless of whether you believe it or not, this is the film's big suggestion.

#### *Suggested questions:*

- Is it possible to be completely religiously or ideologically neutral?
- What is the meaning of the feather in the story?
- Do you believe in angels?
- How would you respond to the boy if he told you this story – would you dismiss it out of hand? How would you respond if a grown man told you this story, as this short film presents?
- What was *the blessing* of Charlie Sand? In what way was Charlie Sand involved in the blessing?
- What possible readings are there of this ‘spiritually open’ fable?