

*April Showers* suggested teachings prior to viewing.

This should take no more than 20 minutes.

1. Review the events of Columbine with your students. Ask what they know, and then fill them in on the facts. The basic facts are: The Columbine shootings occurred on Tuesday, April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Jefferson County, Colorado, near Denver. Two students embarked on a massacre killing 12 students and a teacher, as well as wounding 23 others, before committing suicide.

While the film is based on the events at Columbine (director and writer Andrew Robison is a survivor of that day), explain to students that this is a work of fiction, and deals mainly with the aftermath of the event.

2. Ask your students to discuss ways in which people react to dramatic events. In what ways do people cope? You might want to put a T-chart on the board and list good and bad ways to cope with a crisis. One more thing to discuss might be Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, as it will become clear that one character in the film is dealing with this condition.

The National Institute of Health ([www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml)) defines PTSD as an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Symptoms can include flashbacks. Most people with PTSD repeatedly relive the trauma in their thoughts during the day and in nightmares when they sleep. Flashbacks may consist of images, sounds, smells, or feelings, and are often triggered by ordinary occurrences, such as a door slamming or a car backfiring on the street. A person having a flashback may lose touch with reality and believe that the traumatic incident is happening all over again.

3. Have your students discuss ways in which people connect to events, even if they aren't directly involved. Do they know someone who was in the event? Have they been in a similar event? Have they been to the area in which the event occurred? Are the people in the event similar to them?

4. Finally, if time remains, have your students predict what might happen in the movie. Leave this list and the previous list on the board so that you and your students can return to it after viewing the film.

Suggested curriculum for after viewing *April Showers*

1. First, check to see if any student needs to speak with a counselor. The film may have triggered memories of a previous traumatic experience.
2. Go back to the lists made on the board, first to the one on coping mechanisms. The character of Jason has chosen to deal with the situation by committing suicide. Explain that he felt that he had no one to turn to, but that we all have someone we can go to for help. Have the class come up with people he could have spoken with who could have helped him cope with what happened.
3. Check the predictions list. How accurate were the students' predictions. Ask the kids if anything surprised them.
4. Ask your students how they "saw" themselves in the movies. Obviously, some Plattsmouth Students are pictured quite clearly, but in what other ways? Was there a character to which they could relate? What role do they think they might've assumed after the tragedy? Would they have been a rescuer? A leader? A supporter?
5. If time remains, ask your students about the diary. Would a student today have left a diary? Would a blog have had as much of an impact?