

DOSSIER PÉDAGOGIQUE

Festival THIS IS ENGLAND – ROUEN



SISTER WIVES

LOUISA CONNOLLY-BURNHAM 2024

DOSSIER PROPOSE PAR : JEANNE FERRIE



Dossier pédagogique à destination des enseignants du lycée / lycée professionnel

THIS IS ENGLAND 2024
le festival du court métrage britannique de ROUEN

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About the film

Full Cast & Crew :

- **Louisa Connolly-Burnham**

Writer

The Call Centre, The Track, The Ceiling, Sister Wives

- **Louisa Connolly-Burnham**

Director

The Call Centre, The Track, The Ceiling, Sister Wives

- **Louisa Connolly-Burnham**

Producer

The Call Centre

- **Augusta Woods**

Producer

The Track, The Ceiling, Fifty-Four Days, Rambler Man

- **Louisa Connolly-Burnham**

Key Cast

"Kaidence"

Call The Midwife

- **Mia McKenna-Bruce**

Key Cast

"Galilee"

How To Have Sex

- **Michael Fox**

Key Cast

"Jeremiah"

Downton Abbey

Synopsis :

Sister Wives is a multi-layered love story that tells the tale of young women living in a strict, fundamentalist, polygamous society in 2003 Utah, USA. Kaidence and Galilee find themselves bound to one another, under the same roof, in the same marriage, as they develop scary, new, exciting feelings for each other. In a harsh, regressive, watchful community where being queer is considered a cardinal sin, they begin having thoughts of leaving the only life they have ever known behind. Sister Wives will offer a vital perspective to the canon of coming-out films; at its core, it is a story of female friendship, of allyship, a story of exploration, both physical and psychological, as together they find the courage to dream in tandem, of a world beyond the walls.

About the director : Louisa Connolly-Burnham



Louisa Connolly-Burnham is an award-winning director & screenwriter from Birmingham. She founded the production company THIMBLE FILMS in 2019 & she is a member of the female filmmaking collective CINESISTERS. In January 2024 Louisa wrapped principle photography on SISTER WIVES the short which she wrote, directed, produced & starred in alongside BAFTA-winner Mia McKenna-Bruce (How To Have Sex).

Her statement about the film :

As research for Sister Wives began, particularly into the community that inspires the film, I couldn't believe the stories I was reading. Turbulent tales of child marriage, domestic violence, sexual abuse, underage pregnancies; it felt like "The Handmaid's Tale", but real, happening now today in 2023. However, I also read beautiful accounts of forbidden love, brave escapes, families reunited and long estranged friendships flourishing once more, and to me, love in the most unlikely of places, is love I want to watch.

On first seeing footage and photographs of this community, I couldn't believe it was modern-day, it looked Victorian - the women in long pastel-coloured prairie dresses, every inch of skin covered from wrist to ankle, their hair, never cut, impossibly long, woven into waist-length braids. Thematically, here I will draw inspiration from M. Night Shyamalan's "The Village", the audience should feel shocked to discover these people are in fact living in the 21st century.

The colour palette will be dulled, reflecting the mundanity of their lives, except the girls' dresses, these will be vibrant and accentuated, drawing inspiration from the infamous pop of the red dress in "Schindler's List". The music will be unexpectedly contrasting, electronic and seductive, pulsing through the bodies of our protagonists and audience, beating like a second heart in your chest, think "Drive", think "Lost In Translation" - the condemned music Kaidence and Galilee would listen to if only they could.

We will witness their isolation, their confines, feeling it in the colourless, decor-less homes, the grandiose, clinical white churches, the vast lakes and forests where no one can hear you scream, the rolling hills with nothing for miles and the cold steel metal gates that keep them.

Sister Wives will offer a vital perspective to the canon of coming-out films; at its core, it is a story of female friendship, of allyship, a story of exploration, both physical and psychological, as together they find the courage to dream in tandem, of a world beyond the walls.

Sister Wives will offer a fresh take on the coming-of-age genre, one that resonates with teens and adults alike, queer or straight, religious or not, a film for anyone that has ever had their heart torn in two.

Topics and issues :

Lycée / Lycée professionnel : B1, B1+

★ Sects / FLDS / polygamy

★ Liberty

★ Love story

★ Women's rights

Documents and links :

KEEP SWEET: PRAY AND OBEY Trailer (2022) | Netflix

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OOMBMItc3o>

Escaping Polygamist Cult - Inside the Dangerous World of the FLDS us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1OkK7P4bng>

Inside the Disturbing FLDS (Fundamentalist Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints) Polygamist Cults of Warren Jeffs and Samuel Bateman:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2uyp5JBxHY>

Louisa Connolly-Burnham Interviews:

- Hollyshorts 2024 Interview : Louisa Connolly-Burnham "Sister Wives"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCdG_m9AF2w

- Nonchalant magazine: Actress and Filmmaker Louisa Connolly-Burnham Chats to Us About her New Queer Film Sister Wives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDMJdWNXL20>

Tasks and to go further

★ In one of her interviews Louisa Connolly-Burnham mentions that she would like to develop her short movie into a feature film. What aspects would you develop and why? Explain? (**Proposition de séquence**)

★ You meet Louisa Connolly Burnham during the festival This is England. Which questions would you ask her on her short film “Sister Wives?”

★ Watch Louisa Connolly-Burnham interviews. What are her intentions?

★ Write a short movie review on Sister Wives.

★ Record a podcast, present your “Sister Wives” review.

★ PowerPoint/ picture essay: Use ten pictures of the short film to present what is FLDS?

To go further:

★ **Love stories in films:** Present your favourite love story in a film: Brokeback mountains, Titanic, The fault in our stars, Forrest Gump ...

★ **Women’s rights in the USA:** Work on a timeline you can display on the wall of your classroom for Women’s history month(March)



Example:

Or Quiz on women who changed the world.

Sister Wives

Proposition de séquence

Final Task: In one of her interviews Louisa Connolly-Burnham, the film director and actress, mentions that she would like to develop her short movie into a feature film. What aspects would you develop and why? Explain?

Activity 1 : Anticipation. Guess what is the short movie about ?



Where ? *English countryside. An old home*

When ? *Victorian age*

Who ? Give their physical descriptions. *Two young girls and a man*

“women in long pastel-coloured prairie dresses, every inch of skin covered from wrist to ankle, their hair, never cut, impossibly long, woven into waist-length braids”

Atmosphere?

What is it about ?

Activity 2 : Watch the video. Compare your answers with activity 1. Did you guess well?

Where? Justify. *In the USA(American flag floating), near Nevada (but Utah 2003),*

What sort of a community? Justify. *probably a sect. Justification: prophet, religious weight, prayers, married at 14, “my older sister ran away”, 37 siblings, 12 siblings, elders, no sexual education, are not allowed to wear red, banned books, want to flee*

When? *Even though it seems that the scene takes place in the 19th century we can see a mobile phone, a briefcase, a car, the music(?)*

Who? Describe the characters

Character 1: *Kaidence. 1st wife married at 14*

Character 2: *Galilee. 2nd wife married at 19*

Character 3: *Jeremiah, Jerry. Husband*

What is their relationship? How does it evolve?

Character 1+3: *married*

Character 2+3: *married*

Character 1+2: *lovers*

Atmosphere? *Fear, dark, violent, scary, connection, brave,*

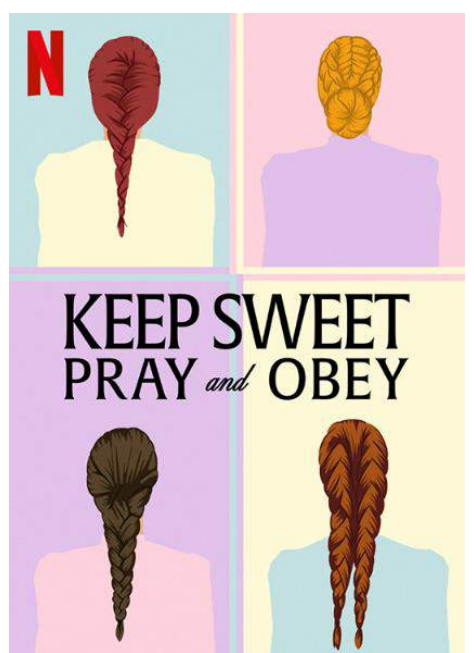
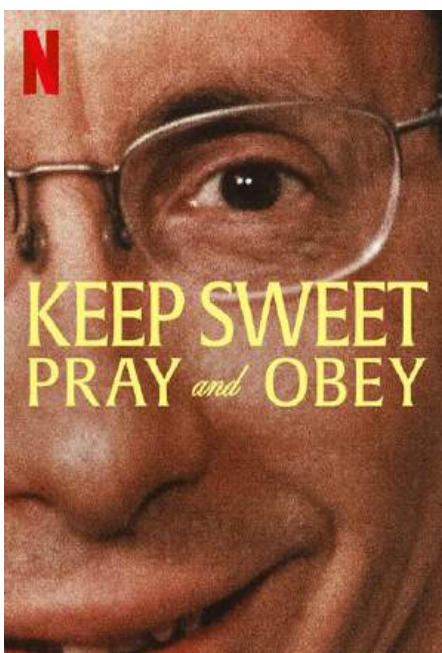
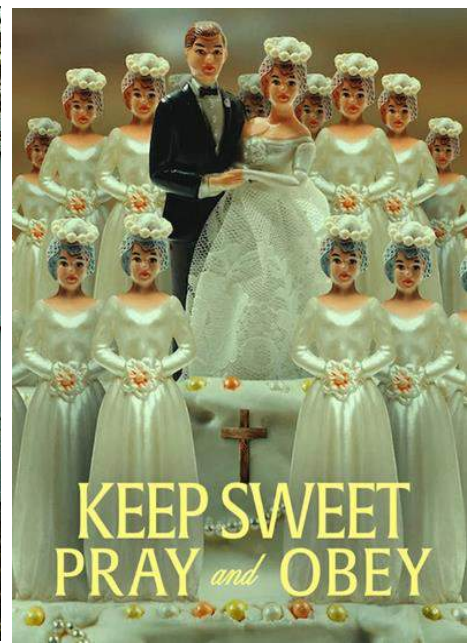
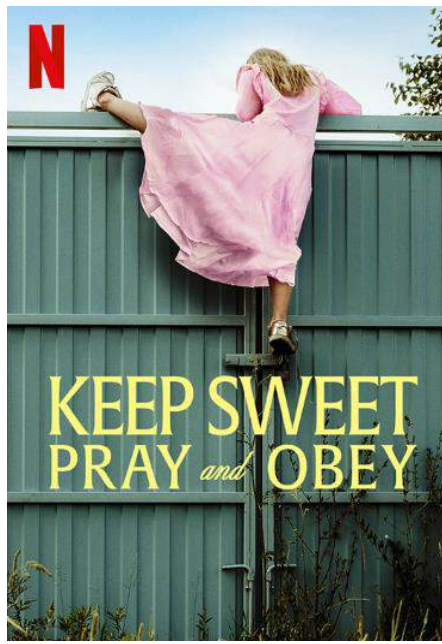
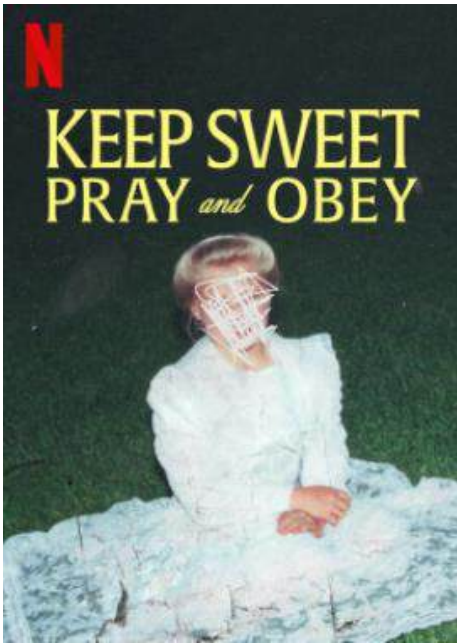
Colours? *Dull, except the dresses, painterly*

Music? Why? *Electronic soundtrack, contemporary, synth waves, vibrations, contrast not orchestral angle*

// Lost in Translation

What is it about?

Activity 3: Louisa Connolly Burnham was inspired by the Netflix series “Keep sweet : Pray and Obey”. How do the following posters of the series echo the short film?



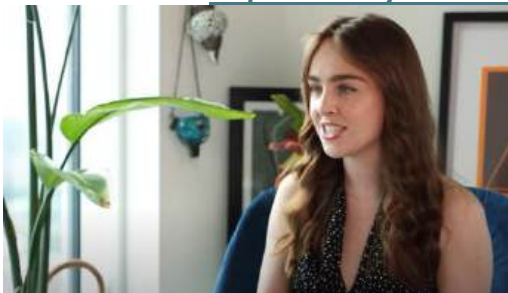
Activity 4: What is FLDS?

Instructions: Work in groups. Gather all the information you can. Sum up in French.

➡ **Group 1**

Actress and Filmmaker Louisa Connolly-Burnham Chats to Us About Sister Wives

CO Interview : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDMJdWNXL20> → From 0'47 to 3'03"



➡ **Groups 2 and 3. Split the text in two. One part for each group.**

CE: <https://abcnews.go.com/>

9 Things You Didn't Know About the FLDS Church



Polygamist sect leader Warren Jeffs

The Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints has been in the spotlight for the past few years, but there are many questions about what the group believes and what their members' lives are like inside the polygamist sect. Here are a few things you might not have known about the FLDS.

1. The FLDS Is Different from Modern Day Mormon Church

The Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints is a radical polygamist sect that splintered off from the Mormon Church, a religion more formally called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, more than a century ago. FLDS ancestors broke away from the Mormon Church over the issue of polygamy after the church renounced its practice.

2. The FLDS Home Base Is on the Arizona-Utah Border

Known to members as "The Creek," the FLDS community dominates the twin towns of Colorado City, Arizona, and Hildale, Utah, which straddle the state lines. Roughly 10,000 people are believed to live in the community.

3. FLDS Followers Believe Warren Jeffs Is Their "Prophet" Even Though He Is in Prison

Warren Jeffs became the leader of the FLDS community after his father died in 2002. Many believe Jeffs still controls the church, despite the fact that he is currently serving a life sentence in prison for sexual assaulting two girls, one of which was a 12-year-old he considered to be one of his wives.

It is believed that Jeffs has as many as 70 wives.

4. FLDS Members Are Supposed to Constantly Pray for Warren Jeffs

According to former FLDS member Joe Broadbent, FLDS followers are supposed to stop every hour during the day, no matter what they're doing, to pray for Warren Jeffs to break out of prison.

"That's a big test for them," Joe Broadbent said. "He's like, 'the only way that I'm not out is because you're not faithful enough'... he puts so much pressure on the people. They're fasting... they don't eat for three days at a time, [and] they pray, and pray and pray."

5. Warren Jeffs Decides Who Marries Who

In one of his sermons, Warren Jeffs said that the job of an FLDS wife is to obey her husband and bear children, and many former female members said they were forced to marry when they were in their young teens. Some said they were forced to marry distant cousins.

6. FLDS Women Are Required To Wear Prairie Dresses And Not Cut their Hair

According to FLDS followers, women cover their bodies from neck to ankles because their bodies are considered sacred temples that can't be exposed. They also never cut their hair because, according to their teachings, they will need it in heaven to wash men's feet as an anointing.

7. Most Forms of Entertainment Are Banned

After he rose to power, Jeffs made up a series of new very strict rules for the community and banned most forms of entertainment including dogs, toys, television, newspapers, the Internet, birthday and Christmas celebrations, festivals, parades, camping and fishing, according to Joe Broadbent and his sister Sabrina Broadbent, both former FLDS members who left the church years ago.

8. FLDS Schools Teach that Warren Jeffs is President of the United States

The twin towns' public school, which re-opened this past year, had been closed for 13 years after Jeffs ordered FLDS families to pull their children out of the school and home-school them instead using additional teachings from FLDS leaders, including Jeffs himself, who was once a schoolteacher. Jeffs believed the public school was an evil influence. Former FLDS members said Jeffs's face is on every FLDS child's school notebook. They claim FLDS schools teach that Warren Jeffs is the president of the United States, and that man never landed on the moon because God guided Neil Armstrong away from it.

9. The Church Has a Bunker-Like Network of Tunnels

At the north end of the FLDS community is an abandoned man-made cave, which is a bunker-like network of tunnels drilled 100-yards deep into the mountainside half a century ago. It was designed to protect the FLDS from the threat of a government raid.

👉 **Groups 4 and 5: Split the text in two. One part for each group.**

CE: <https://www.newsweek.com/faith-bistline-flds-church-warren-jeffs-polygamy-1859015>

I Grew up in Warren Jeffs' Polygamist FLDS Church

Published Jan 09, 2024

Adapted



I was born into a polygamist family, part of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS). When I came into the world, my father had two wives.

One of my earliest memories is of my second mother—who wasn't my birth mother—caring for me as if I were her own child. I knew who my birth mother was, but they both loved me equally. From a young age, I realized that my family was different from those in the outside world. We were taught that we were superior to others.

When it came to my education, the FLDS had its own private schools, so I wasn't exposed to any children who weren't part of our community. Everything revolved around the church. Instead of learning about American history, we studied priesthood history, learning about the prophets and the tenets of Mormonism.

One of the things I enjoyed most about growing up in this environment was having a lot of siblings. We ate good food because we grew our own crops and even ground our own flour from wheat. In total, I have 27 siblings. Some of them are my half-siblings, but we don't refer to each other as such because we all grew up together. Reflecting on my childhood, I realize there were aspects I didn't enjoy as much. With so many siblings, it was challenging to have a one-on-one relationship with an adult or a parent. There were times when we found ourselves competing for our parents' attention due to the size of our family.

When I was around 9 or 10 years old, Warren Jeffs became the prophet of our church after his father's death. He began a practice of expelling men from the church, keeping their families within the community, and assigning their wives to other men.

When I was 13, my father was expelled from the church. Warren Jeffs gave no reason for this action. It was only years later that we discovered, through one of Jeffs' journal entries, that he had had a dream in which my father betrayed him to the FBI. Jeffs interpreted this dream as a divine revelation, and on this basis, he expelled my father, causing him to lose his entire family. The men who were expelled were instructed to move far away, sometimes specified as being at least 500 miles away. Our mothers took each of their biological children into their bedrooms and explained that our father was no longer our father. Warren Jeffs was now our father.

At the age of 16, after obtaining my GED, I enrolled in college. It was there that I took a chemistry class that profoundly changed my perspective. It wasn't the subject matter of the class itself, but rather the instructor who made the difference. He took the opportunity to open our minds by initiating a discussion about the nature of truth.

Around the same time, I got a boyfriend, which was not allowed as all marriages were arranged. I wanted to leave the church to be with him, but I was warned by the adults in my life that it would be the worst decision I could make and that I would never be able to return. I reached out to a brother who had left the church in the past, and he told me that leaving was the best decision he had ever made and recommended it to everyone. This advice was like a light bulb moment for me, probably the biggest epiphany of my life. That's when I decided to leave. Leaving the church was a daunting process. I was terrified. I chose to leave after dark when my older brother was not at home. My boyfriend picked me up, parked outside our brick wall, and turned off his headlights to avoid drawing attention. I carried some of my belongings out to the car, and we drove off. That was in 2011.

Since then, multiple siblings of mine have also left the church. At the time I left, I only had one older brother who had left. Shortly after my departure, three of my brothers were expelled from the church, just like my father had been.

Activity 5: If it were a feature film, what aspects would you develop and why? Justify

The characters? Which one?

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The community?

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The love story?

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The sect?

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Their life after FLDS?

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