



# NFB FILM

## STUDY GUIDE

### THE STORY OF PETER AND THE POTTER

Color — 21 minutes

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada

Suggested Uses: Classes in English and Art, Grades 4-8

#### SYNOPSIS

Peter had selected a beautiful glass bowl for his mother's birthday, but hurrying home he had tripped over a fallen branch and smashed his prize to bits. Anneke, a potter's daughter, finds him and takes him to her father's workshop where he discovers the mystery of the potter's wheel, the baking of the earthenware vessels and the special art of glazing the finished product. Out of this adventure comes a splendid hand-painted bowl to replace the original gift. Above all, Peter has the satisfaction of knowing that his mother's present has been made especially for her.

#### OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

The selection of a mother's birthday present is an exacting and time-consuming task. It must be carried out with painstaking care, especially when a small boy's money resources are limited.

Peter makes his final decision and hurries home through the forest with a blue glass bowl clutched in his arms. Perhaps he wasn't looking, or evil spirits placed a broken branch in his way but, whatever the cause, he tumbles head over heels and his cherished treasure is reduced to a few pieces of broken glass. Even the birds seem to share the small boy's grief at this tragedy.

Then, out of the forest appears a girl. Normally an enemy to a boy of Peter's age, she seems to have a solution to an apparently insoluble problem. Anneke is sympathetic and leads Peter along a strange forest trail until they arrive at an odd-looking building with a sod roof. Peering through a window, Peter is surprised to see a man wearing dark goggles staring intently into some kind of roaring furnace.

Beside the house, he inspects a mysterious machine which seems to operate by means of a large stone wheel. Anneke, who had disappeared, returns with her father to explain that this is a potter's wheel and on it another present could be made for Peter's mother. Mr. Deichmann, Anneke's father,

sets the wheel revolving with his foot — and out of a shapeless mass of clay grows a jar, a jug, and finally a low bowl that suits Peter perfectly.

When Peter returns in a few days the bowl is dry and hard. Mrs. Deichmann delights him by decorating the bowl with animals and flowers, and the one word "Mother". Patience is needed now, as the bowl has to be baked in a special kiln. Finally the kiln is opened, and the bowl is cool enough to be removed. But it is still not ready. Mrs. Deichmann takes Peter into a special room where the bowl is dipped into a liquid glaze. He wonders now if the bowl will ever be ready for his mother's birthday, because the glaze must now be hardened in yet another kiln.

Early on his mother's birthday Peter returns to the potter's workshop to discover that the bowl is just being taken out of the oven. It is perfect. The heat has made the surface as smooth as glass and has changed the clay to a soft blue.

Anneke's mother wraps the bowl with extra care, and Peter hurries home with a special eye for fallen branches. He feels proud and excited to be going home with such a wonderful hand-made present. Peter is particularly pleased because he knows he will be able to tell his mother exactly how it was made.

## SUGGESTED CLASS PREPARATION

### (a) Introduction:

This film could be used for motivational work in written or oral English, and for the same purpose in the Art class.

(i) Tell the class to watch the film with the idea that, in a following lesson, oral and written compositions are to be prepared.

(ii) Tell the class that methods of producing earthenware pots and bowls will be shown. Suggest that they might attempt to make some in a future Art class.

In either case, if the teacher could bring into class a few examples of earthenware objects, they would provide an immediate and effective focus for class attention.

### (b) Words Which May Cause Difficulty:

pottery

glaze

Anneke

kiln

fragile

Deichmann

## DIRECTIVE QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN THE FILM

1. What did Peter choose for his mother's present?
2. What happened to this present? Why?
3. Who offered to help him?
4. What did Mr. Deichmann do? What did Mrs. Deichmann do?
5. How did Mr. Deichmann shape the pots and bowls?
6. Why was the bowl put in the oven the first time? The second time?
7. What was the purpose of the oven or kiln?
8. Why was Peter worried?
9. Why did Mr. Deichmann wear goggles when working at the oven?
10. Was Peter's bowl ready in time for his mother's birthday?
11. Why was he particularly pleased?

## SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Take up and discuss the directive questions.
2. Have the class discuss why Peter fell on a path which he knew so well.
3. Help the class to discover the type of clay needed for pottery work.
4. Discover methods which could be used to make a simple potter's wheel.
5. Have the class prepare a written or oral composition on the film.
6. In some classes a certain amount of ceramic work might be attempted.
7. The film contains many possibilities for picture making.

## RELATED VISUAL MATERIALS

### Films:

THE CHAIRMAKER AND THE BOYS (NFB—21 minutes)

CRAFTSMEN YOUNG AND OLD (NFB—10 minutes)

