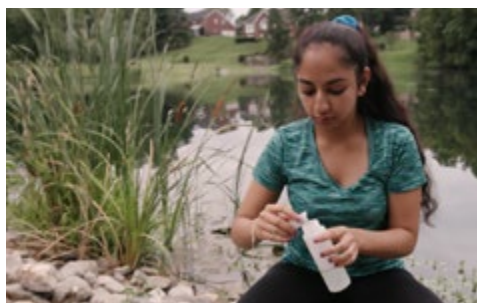


Vancouver International Film Festival

High School Program

Educator Resource Guide



Science Fair

Directors: Cristina Costantini and Darren Foster

Country of Origin: USA

Running Time: 90 min.

[Watch the trailer](#)

Language: In English, Portuguese, German with English subtitles

Classification: No advisory*

* Visit the [Consumer Protection BC website](#) for more information.

About VIFF

Founded in 1982, The Greater Vancouver International Film Festival Society is a not-for-profit cultural organization that operates the internationally acclaimed Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF) and the year-round programming of the Vancity Theatre at the Vancouver International Film Centre. Both in terms of admissions and number of films screened, VIFF is among the largest film festivals in North America.

What is a film festival and why is it important?

- Film festivals such as VIFF generally include screenings, talks and events that serve as a catalyst for a diverse community to discover, discuss and share the creativity and craft of storytelling on screen.
- For filmmakers, showcasing their film at an international festival such as VIFF allows them to build an audience, meet other filmmakers and even win awards to help fund future films.
- It is in VIFF's mandate to encourage understanding of the world's cultures through the art of cinema.

"This immensely likeable documentary serves as an ode to the teenage science geeks on whom our future depends... An affectionate and supremely entertaining celebration..."--Peter Debruge, *Variety*

About the film

Cristina Costantini and Darren Foster's joyful documentary can't help but inspire hope in these grim times as it follows nine science-obsessed teenagers in the lead-up to the esteemed Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, an arduous competition where the winner stands to pocket a cool \$75,000 and perhaps change the world. Costantini was an ISEF contestant herself, which helps account for the empathetic treatment accorded her and Foster's whizz-kid subjects, all of whom come across as fully rounded--and fully human--characters while competing with 1,700 fellow neophyte scientists from 78 countries. Among the contestants profiled are Brazilians Myllena Braz de Silva and Gabriel de Moura Martins, who are working on a genetic mutation to combat the Zika virus; German aeronautics tyro Ivo Zell, who has designed a more fuel-efficient plane wing and built a prototype plane; and Muslim-American Kashfia Rahman, who combats sexism, intolerance and indifference to pursue her research into brain function in risk-taking adolescents. If there is one underlying commonality among these kids--other than their exceptional intelligence, of course--it is a quiet, almost self-effacing, determination to succeed and to help make the world a better place. Costantini and Foster capture this spirit perfectly, resulting in a wonderfully humane and profoundly positive documentary.

Curriculum Connections

Primary Curriculum Interest:

- [Science for Citizens 11](#)

Other Curriculum Interest:

- [Science 10](#)
- [Specialized Science 12](#)
- [Media Arts 10](#)

Before viewing

For more information about the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) please visit their website: student.societyforscience.org/intel-isef

Director Profile



Science Fair is Cristina Costantini and Darren Foster's second collaboration and first feature. The pair previously partnered on "Death by Fentanyl," a 2017 duPont Award-winning investigation about an opiate that's making the worst drug epidemic in U.S. history even deadlier.



Long before Cristina was an investigative journalist, she was a science fair nerd. As a dweeby high school kid from Wisconsin, the international science fair is where she found her tribe. The documentary *Science Fair* is a love letter to a world that validated her during the dark years of high school.

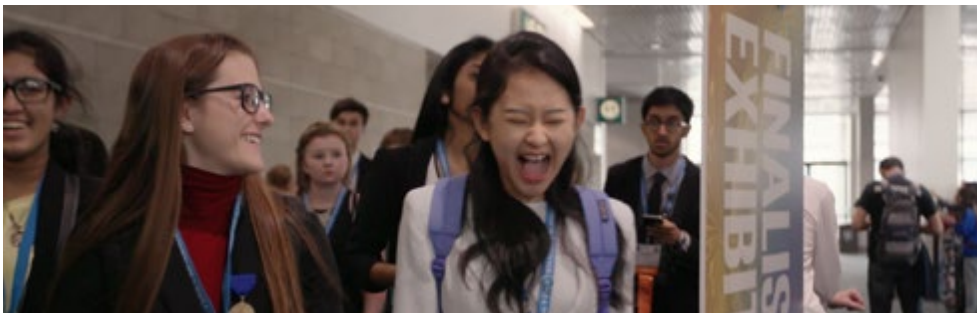
Darren's other recent projects include "Chasing El Chapo," a short documentary about the hunt for El Chapo Guzman; "Borderland," in which six ordinary Americans of different political persuasions make the journey across Mexico and the U.S. border; and "Inside: Secret America," an investigative series he co-created and produced for National Geographic.

Review Contest

This year, students can unleash their inner critic and submit a film review of one of our VIFF 2018 High School films for a chance to be featured on the VIFF blog and to receive movie passes!

- An excellent film review always starts with a short description of the film followed by a compelling and clear summary of the reviewer's opinion.
- Be sure not to give away too much of the plot! We want future audiences to see the movie without spoilers.
- Consider commenting on positive or negative elements of the film such as the performances, cinematography, direction, writing, editing, costume or set design, score or soundtrack, or its unique significance.
- Use examples from the film and wrap it up with a conclusion.
- Recommended length of approximately 200-500 words

Please email film review submissions to education@viff.org by **October 22nd**.



After viewing

Lead a discussion by asking the students:

- What aspects or scenes of the film stood out to you? What images stayed with you? What surprised you?
- Of the six people featured in *Science Fair*, whose story stood out the most to you? Why do you think the filmmakers chose to follow each of these students? What made their stories unique?
- What are the factors outside each student's research that affected their status with the judges at ISEF? For example: communication skills, their boards, if they were nervous, how they dressed, etc.

Activity 1: Vancouver's claim to ISEF fame

Students from Vancouver won the top prize of the Gordon E. Moore Award of \$75,000 two years in a row! In 2015, Raymond Wang—a graduate of Vancouver's St. George's School—won for his invention that slows the spread of germs in airplanes. For more information on Raymond and his science fair project, please visit:

bcic.ca/news/blog/vancouver-students-win-worlds-biggest-science-fair-competition/

Or, watch Raymond explain it in his own words at his Ted Talk:

[ted.com/talks/raymond_wang_how_germs_travel_on_planes_and_how_we_can_stop_them](https://www.ted.com/talks/raymond_wang_how_germs_travel_on_planes_and_how_we_can_stop_them)

In 2016, Austin Wang—graduate of Vancouver's David Thompson Secondary—won for his project on using microbial fuel cells to convert organic waste into electricity. For more information on Austin and his science fair project, please visit:

youthscience.ca/news/austin-wang-wins-top-prize-intel-international-science-and-engineering-fair

cbc.ca/player/play/707279939675

- a) Working in small groups, students research past winners of the Gordon E. Moore Award from recent years and create a presentation on that project. What were its merits? What impact could it have on our world and/or daily lives?

Activity 2: Class science fair!

As a class, brainstorm and list some social or environmental issues that affect residents of Vancouver or the Lower Mainland. Examples include: risk of oil spill in the Burrard Inlet, decreasing orca population, the opioid crisis, unsafe levels of lead in BC schools, etc.

- a) How can science and engineering be used to improve or eliminate these issues?
- b) Invite students to propose a science fair project based on one of these issues.

For more information about creating a science fair project, please visit:

gvrsf.ca/students/handbook/