The Way I Spent the End of the World
by Cătălin Mitulescu

Romania - 2005 - 106 min

> The Way I Spent the End of the World is part of a collection of European films: the CinEd collection, a film education programme for young people.

> This student sheet allows me to rediscover the film, to go through it in words and images, to know more about where the characters live and their time, to create and invent, to go further by discovering other works: films, books, music, photographs, paintings...

By participating in CinEd, I share the discovery of films with young people from other countries, all over Europe!
The film

1. Seen in the film

1. The Way I Spent the End of the World

2. A

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6. (1)

7. Seen in the film

8. (2)

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22. (9)

23. Seen in the film

24. (10)

25. Seen in the film

26. (11)

27. Seen in the film

28. (12)
The Way I Spent the End of the World

(7) After having trained the entire summer in order to prepare for their dangerous escape, Andrei and Eva eventually run off one night by train.

(8) But Eva has second thoughts, so she stops halfway through and returns home, unlike Andrei, who manages to escape.

Lalalilu’s plan to get near Ceaușescu is successful. He is allowed to attend a grand assembly in the center of Bucharest where the leader is supposed to deliver a speech, during which his friends are impatiently waiting at home.

They’re able to catch a glimpse of him on TV and the two kids consider that the upheaval which they see happening in the square is a consequence of Lali having thrown a stone with a slingshot at Ceaușescu.

The adults are also impatient about the events. In fact, they’re all witnessing the last speech delivered by Ceaușescu and the upheaval is an important event marking the beginning of the 1989 Romanian Revolution.

The dictator is indeed overthrown and the entire family as well as their neighbors celebrate the end of the Communist regime.

Grigore: Alright, tell me... What’s going on with that boy from across the street, Andrei?

Eva: We’re classmates. Why?

Grigore: And besides that?

Eva: And besides that, what?

Maria: You promised me you’ll go back to Alex.

Eva: No, I didn’t.

Eva: I’m coming with you. How about it?

Andrei: We’ll have to think about it.

Eva: Everything is already thought through. We’ll arrive to Italy. We’ll go via Yugoslavia.

Lalalilu: We’re making a big submarine to cross the Danube!

Eva: What did you just say, Lali?

Lalalilu: We could run away in it!
Cătălin Mitulescu, the director of the film *The Way I Spent the End of the World*, explains how his personal experience of living in Communist Romania influenced his childhood and adolescence and how this has inspired him in the process of making the film.

In 1989 I was 17 years-old, the same age as Eva in the film. When writing the script for this first feature, I drew my inspiration from my memories about youth, about the life of my generation. It’s a bit of a nostalgic journey through memory. I was born in 1972. I grew up thinking about Nicolae Ceaușescu’s dictatorship. My brother and I were revolutionary at heart. We aspired to freedom. My parents, on the other hand, lived in fear of the militia, of the denunciations. They made us keep silence and be distrustful of our neighbors and of everyone. My father was an electrician working in an automobile factory who didn’t make much money. Therefore, there were days when we didn’t eat much. But that didn’t stop us from being happy.

(Cătălin Mitulescu, Interview Le Figaro, August 30th, 2006).

In Europe and elsewhere

How do you say *The Way I Spent the End of the World* in other countries?

**United Kingdom:** The way I spent the end of the world

**France:** Comment j’ai fêté la fin du monde

**Spain:** Cómo celebré el fin del mundo

**Portugal:** Como passei o fim do mundo

**Italy:** Come ho festeggiato la fine del mondo

**Finland:** Kuinka vietin maailmanlopun

**Lithuania:** Kaip aš sutikau pasaulio pabaigą

**Czech Republic:** Jak jsem strávil konec světa

**Romania:** Cum mi-am petrecut sfârșitul lumii

**Bulgaria:** Как посрещнах края на света
The film and its era

In Europe and elsewhere

One of the consequences of World War II was the rise of the USSR’s influence (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) over a group of states in Central and Eastern Europe that formed the communist Eastern bloc. On the one hand, this led to the beginning of the Cold War, dividing capitalist countries such as the US and communist one, and, on the other hand, it opened the way for almost 50 years of life under communist rule in countries such as nowadays Romania, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany (East Germany), Albania or the former Yugoslavia. One could say that the world was cut in half.

In 1961 the construction of the Berlin Wall began in nowadays Germany in order to separate the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) from the German Democratic Republic (GDR). This frontier was officially removed in 1989 and the demolition of the Berlin Wall began in 1990.

Therefore, 1989, the year referenced in the title of the film as the end of the world is the year when a wave of revolutions against the communist rule emerged in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Romania. This change of political regime continued in the following years in other countries as well and in 1991 the USSR was officially dissolved and became nowadays Russia.

For many people who had been born and who had lived their whole life under the communist regime, personified in the film by Eva and Lalalilu, overthrowing this regime equaled the end of the world as they knew it.

The film and me

If I could choose another title for the film The Way I Spent the End of the World, it would be…

Why does Eva choose to return home instead of eloping all the way with Andrei?

In the film we see Eva looking at photos Andrei sends her from abroad.

Let’s imagine that after Andrei crosses the Danube and travels to other countries he were to write about his thoughts and feelings in a diary.

We keep in mind that he is a teenager on the run, alone, and that he has just illegally escaped from an oppressive regime. It’s the first time he gets the chance to get a glimpse of Western societies where the rules are different than what he has known so far, but at the same time, he has to manage on his own. I imagine what Andrei might write about.
The film and me

Dear Cătălin…

I write a letter to the director of the film, Cătălin Mitulescu, to let him know what I thought about his film:
- what touched me
- what I didn’t like
- what I understood or
- what I didn’t understand about his choices.

In the film we see certain aspects of the political regime reflected in the everyday life of the Romanian people such as the necessity to engage in patriotic activities in school, differences in social status between ordinary citizens and members of the Securitate (Communist Secret Police), censorship of music considered to be subversive, difficulties in traveling abroad, or the limitation of goods available on the market, as a result of how strict the importing of foreign goods of any kind was back in the 80s.

After the 1989 Revolution, all these things changed in Romania…I talk to my family or to a teacher and I try to find out how their life looked like in the late 80s. Did anything important happen or did anything change in my country in 1989?

Based on what I found out from the film and from my family/teacher, I choose the character that was the most important for me and imagine how his/her life looked liked after 1989, by creating my own follow-up story.

What would I like to know about the country (Romania) or about the era (late 80s) in which the action takes places, besides what I’ve discovered from the film?

Choosing and creating images

- I talk to my family and I ask them if they have any photos from the late 80s or from 1989, if they can lend them to me or if I can take photos of them/scan/make drawings based on them and make my own collage illustrating the life of my own family during that era.

- I make my own poster of the film.

- I put images in interaction with one another.
Do these film stills from The Way I Spent the End of the World make me think about other images I know? Which ones? (These can be paintings, comics, photos, images from video clips, commercials, images from other films etc.)

- I choose images from the film (using the Young Spectator Space).

- In the Young Spectator Space, I choose my favorite images/ those that struck me/ moved me/ shocked me. I can also select images which suggest one or several of the following themes: adults and children, coming-of-age, love, friendship, relationship between siblings, darkness and light, reality vs. imagination, life in Communism.

  - I make my own a sequence of images from the photos I’ve chosen and I write a few sentences in which I describe my story/ visual poem.

  - I can also produce my own images (drawing, painting, photography) inspired by one or several film stills and I can share them with others by uploading them on the website if I feel like it.

Young Spectator Space
cined.eu/en/youngsters-space
To go further

If I liked *The Way I Spent the End of the World*, I might also like:

*Shelter* (1961, Bulgaria)
by Dragomir Sholev
(Film in the **CineD Collection**)
The main character of this film, 12-year old Rado, has a difficult relationship with his parents. He rebels against them, he goes missing for two days and his parents don't approve of his choice of friends, not unlike Eva and her parents from *The Way I Spent the End of the World*. Although the rebellion of the two characters has significantly different reasons and outcomes, the films share the desire to explore the conflicting views on life of teenagers and their parents.

*Pierrot le Fou* (1965, France)
by Jean-Luc Godard
(Film in the **CineD Collection**)
takes the notion of rebellion against conventional social norms and cinematic storytelling to another level in a playful and challenging manner. A must-see of the French Nouvelle Vague, this film centers around the romantic couple Marianne and Ferdinand as they try to create their own utopia by withdrawing from a decadent world to live out their love as modern Robinson Crusoes.

These characters:

*Farah*, in the film *As I Open My Eyes* (Leyla Bouzid - 2015)
played by first-time actress Baya Medhaffer. The action takes place in the summer of 2010, a few months before the Jasmine Revolution started in Tunisia, where Farah is the lead teenage singer of a rock band. She rebels against her mother's wish to become a doctor and, instead, fights for her dream of becoming a singer. Her music conveys a political message which gets her into serious trouble with the local police. Like Eva, Farah chooses to stand by her beliefs despite social-political constraints and, therefore, she, too, has to live with the consequences of being an outcast.

*Marjane*, the protagonist of the animated film *Persepolis*
(Marjane Satrapi - 2007)
based on an autobiographical graphic novel. The film depicts her childhood up to her early adult years in Iran during and after the Islamic revolution. As a child, she is both precocious and outspoken, bearing a certain resemblance to Lalalilu; as a teenager, however, she resembles, up to a point, Eva, seeing how the two are both young girls with powerful and well-defined personalities living under social-political circumstances with which none of them fully resonate.
This film:

- Tales from the Golden Age, an omnibus Romanian film in 2 parts: Comrades, Life is Beautiful! (2009, directed by Ioana Uricaru, Hanno Höfer, Răzvan Mărculescu, Constantin Popescu) and Love after Hours (2009, directed by Cristian Mungiu). The film is a dark comedy, set in the last decades of Communist Romania, based on 6 urban legends which depict comic, bizarre, and often surreal events of the everyday life from the perspective of ordinary people.

This book:

- Animal Farm (1945), a novel written by George Orwell. In the beginning, Orwell depicts the rebellion of a group of animals against Mr. Jones - the owner of the farm they live in - and later on, the society they decide to remodel based on principles of egalitarianism between animals. However, as time goes by and corrupt pigs take over the leadership, their utopic society slowly becomes an oppressive one. The book was intended to be a satirical allegory of Stalinist socialism and of totalitarian propaganda and it was forbidden in the countries from the Eastern Bloc until 1989. Up to a certain degree, one can find certain similarities to how Cătălin Mitulescu depicts the final years of Communist Romania in The Way I Spent the End of the World. Just like the animals’ ideals of social justice turn into injustice, the film, too, underlines the differences of social status between the families of officers of the Securitate (Communist Romanian Secret Police) and the rest of the population.

This music:

- Hey you, by the English progressive rock band Pink Floyd in the album The Wall (1979). The album traces the life of the fictional protagonist, Pink Floyd, from his boyhood days in post-World-War II England to his self-imposed isolation and alienation as a world-renowned rock star. Over the years, the album begun to be seen as a powerful political anti-establishment statement.

- Like a Rolling Stone, by Bob Dylan released on the album Highway 61 Revisited (1965) - was listed by the Rolling Stone magazine as the number one song in their “500 Greatest Songs of All Time” chart. Initially, the phrase “rolling stone” referred to a lack of material possessions and a lack of belonging for those who first used it, namely blues singers. Later on, during the revolutionary 60s, it became a symbol of liberation for the rock generation.

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