

# FILM LITERACY AS A KEY TO A BETTER LEARNING

THE INTRODUCTION OF  
KOULUKINO METHODOLOGY  
BASED ON THE FILM  
**“AILO’S JOURNEY”**

# FILM LITERACY AS A KEY TO A BETTER LEARNING

## THE INTRODUCTION OF KOULUKINO METHODOLOGY BASED ON THE FILM **“AILO’S JOURNEY”**

This nature adventure film is suitable for all age groups and tells the story of survival of wild reindeer calf Ailo during his first year-long journey. Over that period, the cute little calf grows up to become a strong young reindeer. The family film focuses on the wild nature of Lapland and the unyielding tundra landscape, as well as everlasting motherly love thanks to which Ailo begins his life’s adventure together with other wild animals.

*(Producer: MRP Matila Röhr Productions Oy. The film is distributed in Estonia by Estinfilm and will be available to all the cinemas in Estonian or Russian from the 15th of March. Estinfilm also holds the screening rights for Latvia and Lithuania but no premiere date has been set yet.)*

**The learning material has been created for primary and basic school levels. Some of the tasks are intended for younger students and others for older students.**

The learning material has been compiled by teacher of environmental education, FM Marianne Saviaho.

The learning material has been prepared by Koulukino (School Cinema Association).

The learning materials were translated thanks to the support of Estonian Film Institute.

The translation was provided from Finnish to English by Mart Rummo.

## FILM

The story of Ailo is fictional, i.e. made up. All the events have been filmed in nature and everything seen in the film is real, but the plot has been made up and the circle of nature and the events are conveyed using the tools of the cinematic art. The film focuses on the wild nature of Lapland as well as motherly love thanks to which Ailo dares to begin his great adventure together with other wild animals.

### Recalling the film

1. With younger students, recall the film with the help of the speech bubble task (**Annex 6**). Discuss the events of the film together.
2. With older students, recall the events of the film with the help of topical questions (**Annex 1**). The correct answers are in the teachers' annex (**Annex 2**). You can take the task along to the screening and hand it out to the students even before watching the film.
3. Colour the picture of Ailo and his mother or the Arctic fox (additional material). Discuss the events of the film. What did Ailo experience during his first year of life? How did the Arctic fox behave? How do you think Ailo, his mother and the Arctic fox are doing now? Post a photo of the coloured picture on Instagram with the hash-tag #ailoporo #ailoelokuva #koulukino
4. Play a word explaining game either in pairs or with the entire class, in order to clarify the meaning of the words used in the film. The teacher distributes printed-out words to the students (**Annex 3**). At the end of the game, discuss how the words relate to the film. Explain the meaning of words that remain unclear. Students can also propose words.

### Heroes and motherly love

5. The film director wanted to show the heroic battle of a small reindeer calf against frost and predators from the very first moments of his life.  
  
Discuss or write whether the director achieved the objective? What kind of people or animals are heroes? Is Ailo a hero and why? Do you know any other heroes?
6. One of the carrying themes of the film is motherly love. How is it expressed in the film? Exchange thoughts or write down something about your own mother or another adult who has helped you overcome difficulties.

## STRUCTURE OF THE FILM

The structure of a film is generally divided into three parts: the beginning, the middle part and the end. The plot or the narrative can also be divided into five parts: exposition, rising action, confrontation, climax and resolution.

1. Write the parts of the plot on a board and discuss the structure of the film together. Use a plot plan to analyse the events of the film. With younger students, you can analyse the film on the basis of division into three parts and with older students on the basis of division into five parts. The teacher can use the complete plot (**Annex 4**).

2. Continue the previous task and write the most happy/funny/scary/exciting event of the film on post-it-notes of different colour. You can write happy events on yellow pieces of paper and scary events on red ones. Integrate the task with emotional skills and add more feelings (sadness, surprise, anger). Fix the post-it-notes on the right places on the plot plan. Discuss which parts of the film contained more happy events and which parts contained more events that were scary or created negative feelings.

## NATURE OF LAPLAND

1. Recall which other animals and birds you saw in the film (reindeer, wolf, stoat, pine marten, eagle (golden eagle), common raven, lemming (Norway lemming), snowy owl, European polecat, Arctic fox, crow, hare, wolverine, bear, mosquito). Do you remember them all? What other animals live in Lapland?
2. Discuss together or contemplate individually which animals seen in the film adapt to and survive harsh winters? For instance: Arctic fox, reindeer, hare, squirrel, lemming. Choose an animal and draw a small comic strip of the life activity of that animal in winter.
3. The semi-domesticated reindeer or *poro* has been bred from the wild tundra reindeer. Reindeer are owned by reindeer herders, but freely move around on natural pastures. Reindeer husbandry is one of the oldest sources of subsistence which have remained viable to this day in the Nordic countries. It is an important source of income and invaluable for Finland from both the cultural and the traditional viewpoints. Historically, the Sami people have been engaged in reindeer husbandry; today it is mainly handled by the Finnish Sami people and the Finns. The reindeer has been declared as the mascot animal of the Lapland County. Learn more about the history and customs of Finnish reindeer husbandry. If the students are unfamiliar with the topic, you can watch videos about the habitats of reindeer and about the rearing of *poro* by way of introduction.
4. In Lapland, seasons change in a different rhythm than in Southern Finland. Discuss and find out the lengths of different seasons in Lapland and Southern Finland and compare these. How do seasons of different length influence nature? What is the nature of Southern Finland like? What about the nature of Lapland? Talk about the effects of light and temperature on nature.

## CLIMATE CHANGE IN ARCTIC AREAS

1. Climate change is particularly endangering Arctic species. Global warming is more rapid in northern areas than in the south. Discuss the possible life of the characters in the film if there was less or no snow. You can write a short story about the life of the animals seen in the film in a snowless winter or draw a topical picture. Discuss why the climate in the north is warming more rapidly than in the south.
2. There are three options, when rapid changes start taking place in the living environment of a species due to global warming. The species will have to adapt, move elsewhere or die out. Find out the level of extinction risk threatening the species represented in the film and whether any of these species are particularly endangered. Which factors endanger the species? Discuss whether a species is able to adapt or move elsewhere or will instead go extinct due to climate change.

## FEELINGS AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

When talking about feelings, you need to keep in mind that no one should be forced to talk. Those who do wish to talk could be commended by, for instance, saying: "It's great you said how you're feeling." "It is not always easy to talk about one's feelings." "Who else has experienced the same feelings as Jari?" "I appreciate you wanting to tell us about your feelings."

*Source: Finnish Association for Mental Health, "Get to Know Your Feelings"*

### Getting to know the main emotions

1. The film talks a lot about emotions. Discuss in the class, in small groups or pairs, what kind of feelings the film created. Find out about the main emotions before or after the discussion. Different theories of emotions list the main emotions in slightly different order, but the main emotions recognised globally are: joy, sadness, fear, anger and disgust. The scale of emotions can be expanded by also including love, surprise, pleasure and shame.

Emotions can be introduced to younger students by asking them to describe themselves: I feel joy when..., I feel sad when..., I get angry when..., I am sometimes scared when...

2. In the task about Ailo's feelings, (**Annex 5**), the discussion focuses on what Ailo probably felt in different situations. When the task is completed, every student picks a feeling of Ailo and tells his or her task partner or the entire class (if he or she so wishes) in which situation he or she has experienced the same feeling. Write an essay in which students choose and analyse 1 to 3 feelings of Ailo as well as situations in which they themselves have experienced such feelings. Students are to describe the situations, their own experiences and behaviour and the experiences and behaviour of others if any.

### Fear and coping with fear

3. Ailo had to experience a lot of fear. The film describes fear as follows: "It paralyses your mind like poison. It lurks as a threat around you. You can sense it everywhere: in the shape of the clouds and in the rustle of the wind. You can keep telling yourself that it is all your imagination. But it doesn't calm your mind."

Discuss or write about the fears Ailo experienced and what situations these fears were related to. Have you been in a scary situation? What did you feel? How did you cope?

4. The film talks about coping with life and moving on. It is said in the film: "The world is wonderful."

"Sometimes life is so hard that you want to give it all up and say: "Forget about me, go on as if I didn't exist." "But still, every time you still decide to get back up on your feet and move on, you realise that life is a great adventure!" Discuss or write what kind of thoughts these sentences make you think. Can you recall any situations in which you would have liked to say "Go on as if I didn't exist!"?

5. "Is the world a harsh place? Yes, but it is our world. There is meat and blood, anger and joy. We strive ever forward, we attack or are attacked..." What kind of thoughts do these quotes inspire? Discuss or write.

### **Animals as actors**

In this film, animals fill the roles – no human presence is seen. Nevertheless, the structure and evolution of the film is largely similar to the feature films created with human actors. The great adventure of reindeer calf Ailo is similar to a typical children's film: a growing-up story in which a child (animal) separated from his or her mother experiences exciting adventures and learns a lot about himself or herself and the surrounding environment in the course of the journey. When watching the film, did you notice any similarities with the plot of any other films? What is your attitude towards the personification of animals? Can the feelings of animals and humans be compared and if so, in what way?

## **ANNEX 1**

Think back to the film and answer the questions as well as you can.

**How have the main topics been depicted in the film: the nature of Lapland, the untamed wilderness, and motherly love?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**How do humans disturb the life of wild reindeer?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**It is said in the film that reindeer migrate. What does that mean?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**In how many minutes did the new-born calf have to get up on his feet and learn to walk, run and swim?**

.....

**Why does a reindeer calf have to acquire those skills so quickly?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Why do reindeer spend winters out on the windy tundra? Why do they not stay in the forest?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Briefly explain the meaning of the following words: herd, cow reindeer, bull reindeer and *räkkä*.**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Do you think the film taught you anything?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



## ANNEX 2

### Teacher's Material

Think back to the film and answer the questions as well as you can.

#### **How have the main topics been depicted in the film: the nature of Lapland, the untamed wilderness, and motherly love?**

*The film talks about the nature and inhabitants of Lapland as well as about their life. All the animals in the film are real, not animated. The story is fictional, but the animals and the environment are authentic. The unyielding nature is full of dangers. This means fast-flowing rivers which get covered with ice, predators (wolves and bears), reindeer who freeze into ice, and eerily crowing ravens. Life is dangerous and unpredictable and any moment could turn out to be the last one. Motherly love protects Ailo from the dangers of the savage wilderness and helps him to survive. Mother leads him on, shows him the way, gives him advice, feeds him and finds him when he gets lost.*

#### **How do humans disturb the life of wild reindeer?**

*Humans cut down forests, building roads and cities. It is said in the film: "Roads connect people, but for reindeer these roads are like walls or obstacles which obstruct their ancient migration paths."*

#### **It is said in the film that reindeer migrate. What does that mean?**

*Reindeer migrate from one region to another in search of food. They generally migrate to particular regions along the same paths (unless these are changed due to external factors). During different seasons, they migrate to different regions: in spring, they travel to green valleys and in autumn to high tundra.*

#### **In how many minutes did the new-born calf have to get up on his feet and learn to walk, run and swim?**

*In 5 minutes. "Children in Lapland are told that unlike human children a new-born reindeer calf has to get up on its feet in five minutes, learn to walk in the subsequent five minutes and then has another five minutes to learn how to run and swim."*

### **Why does a reindeer calf have to acquire those skills so quickly?**

*If the calf fails to learn fast, it may not necessarily survive. Like it is said in the film: "The question is how to make it out of the ever-present dangers alive."*

### **Why do reindeer spend winters out on the windy tundra? Why do they not stay in the forest?**

*In winter, the forested valleys are covered in deep snow. Higher up on the tundra, the layer of snow is thinner and reindeer can find lichen which they need to survive. It is said in the film: "Ailo and his herd must make it back to the tundra before winter arrives, because trudging in deep snow would be too exhausting. The snow that has blown down from the tundra piles up into thick snowdrifts in the valleys. Underneath the snow, there is lichen which helps reindeer survive the winter."*

### **Briefly explain the meaning of the following words: herd, cow reindeer, bull reindeer and räkkä.**

*Herd: the way of collective habitation of reindeer. Cow reindeer: a grown-up female reindeer (over three years old). Bull reindeer: a grown-up male reindeer (over three years old).*

*Räkkä: a period with massive numbers of mosquitos and horseflies..*

### **Do you think the film taught you anything?**

*It perhaps taught that no one's life is easy. Finding your own place in life may turn out to be hard, particularly when you are young. Conditions may be harsh. The wild nature of Lapland was harsh for Ailo, but for humans an environment created by other humans may be harsh instead. This may mean bullying, loneliness or problems in the family. The film teaches us that it is still possible to cope in any situation, if you keep your head up high, steadfastly move forward and do not give up.*

*The film begins with the following sentences: "The world is full of wonder. We do not know why we are here, but nonetheless... We need to get up every morning, set out on our way and find our place among others. There are days on which you would only like to stay asleep... dream away to yourself... But life goes on, so you have to keep going.*

*There are so many things which we have not yet experienced or which we would like to experience again."*

*And the closing sentence of the film: "Sometimes life is so hard that you want to give it all up and say: "Forget about me, go on as if I didn't exist." But still, every time you decide to get up on your feet and move on, you realize that life is a great adventure!"*

## ANNEX 3

REINDEER

MOTHERLY LOVE

LAPLAND

FEAR

FOREST

JOY

TUNDRA

WILDERNESS

MOTHER

CONE

HERD

HARE

SQUIRREL

LONG-EAR

STOAT

WOLVERINE

POLECAT

MOSQUITO

WOLF

ARCTIC FOX

BEAR

RAVEN

EAGLE

RÄKKÄ

**LEMMING**

**GHOST OF WILDERNESS**

**NORDIC MEATBALL**

**HERO**

**WINTER**

**CALF**

**SNOW**

**LEADER OF THE HERD**

**LICHEN**

**PUP**

**RIVER**

**BULL REINDEER**

**FINLAND**

**WILD ANIMAL**

**NORWAY**

**COURAGE**

**FRENCH**

**INTUITION**

**NATURE**

**AILO**

**FICTION**

**MIGRATION**

**MOTHER**

**ADVENTURE**

## ANNEX 4

### Structure of the Film

With younger students, you can analyse the structure of the film on the basis of division into three parts.

#### THE BEGINNING – THE MIDDLE PART – THE END

**THE BEGINNING: the main characters and the place where the events take place are introduced. At the beginning of the film, a conflict or contradiction related to the central character emerges.**

*Ailo's mother and her herd are in a snow storm in the harsh tundra landscape. Ailo is about to be born.*

*The beginning of Ailo's life is full of difficulty and danger. Will the little reindeer survive?*

**THE MIDDLE PART: the film delves deep into the story and the characters. The conflict which emerged at the beginning of the film escalates. The events become tense.**

*Spring and summer arrive; Ailo is growing and slowly becoming smarter. The intensity of the chain of events is alleviated by side characters who bring colour to the story, including a squirrel, pole-cats, a hare, an Arctic fox and a lemming (a Nordic meatball). Wolf pups have grown and learnt to hunt. „They are ready. Now they will hunt together. In the course of games, the pups have endlessly trained for this moment. Now they no longer play.“ This is followed by a long hunting scene, getting lost in the forest and meeting a wolverine. Ailo and his mother survive.*

**THE END: the main conflict is solved, the problems are handled and all the questions are answered. The characters of the film go on living their life**

*Winter arrives and the herd migrates to the tundra. There is talk that Ailo's mother is expecting a new calf. In his first three years of life, Ailo has survived countless dangers and is becoming a grown-up reindeer. "It is now time to go and live without his mother. To live the life of grown-ups. This is what Ailo is now preparing for. The sun will soon again shine above Lapland, bringing new adventures. Good luck, Ailo, a young prince of Lapland!"*

With older students, you can analyse the structure of the film on the basis of division into five parts.

#### EXPOSITION – RISING ACTION – CONFRONTATION – CLIMAX – RESOLUTION

**EXPOSITION: the main characters and the place where the events take place are introduced. At the beginning of the film, a conflict or contradiction related to the central character emerges.**

*Ailo's mother and her herd are in a snow storm in the harsh tundra landscape. Ailo is about to be born.*

*The beginning of Ailo's life is full of difficulty and danger. Will the little reindeer survive?*

**RISING ACTION: the chain of events evolves, new situations, problems and solutions emerge. The tension is gradually rising and the characters vary.**

*Ailo and his mother join the herd. There are many other calves in the herd. The film hints that difficulties lay ahead: "Together they will battle frost, rivers and snow storms." A wolf appears nearby, but does not yet strike. It is biding its time and will definitely return. Spring and summer arrive; Ailo is growing and slowly becoming smarter.*

*The intensity of the chain of events is alleviated by side characters who bring colour to the story, including a squirrel, polecats, a hare, an Arctic fox and a lemming (a Nordic meatball).*

**CONFRONTATION: the conflict that emerged at the beginning of the film has reached an important turning point. The situation is extremely tense and 'explosive changes' can be expected at any moment. Possible side plots reach a conclusion.**

*Wolf pups have grown and learnt to hunt. „They are ready. Now they will hunt together. In the course of games, the pups have endlessly trained for this moment. Now they no longer play." Will Ailo escape the wolf pack? This is followed by a long hunting scene, getting lost in the forest and meeting a wolverine. Ailo and his mother survive. Ailo and the herd keep moving on, but the tension holds. Winter is about to arrive and the herd has to reach the tundra. They must move fast in order to avoid falling prey to predators. Led by a raven, the wolves embark on a new hunt, but the herd makes it to the tundra and the wolves are forced to give up. In a side plot, an Arctic fox is looking for a mate. The situation seems hopeless, but the Arctic fox finally finds a mate with whom to happily play..*

**CLIMAX: the main conflict of the film is solved, the problems are handled and all the questions are answered.**

*The herd is on the tundra. There is talk that Ailo's mother is expecting a new calf. In his first three years of life, Ailo has survived countless dangers and is becoming a grown-up reindeer. "It is now time to go and live without his mother. To live the life of grown-ups. This is what Ailo is now preparing for. The sun will soon again shine above Lapland, bringing new adventures."*

**RESOLUTION: the viewers get a chance to quietly contemplate the conflicts and the resolution. The characters of the film go on living their life.**

*Ailo is running on snowy tundra. "Sometimes life is so hard that you want to give it all up and say: "Forget about me, go on as if I didn't exist." But still, every time you decide to get up on your feet and move on, you realize that life is a great adventure!"*

## ANNEX 5

### Ailo's Feelings

What could Ailo feel in the following situations?  
Pick one or two feelings for with every situation.

JOY    SADNESS    FEAR    ANGER    DISGUST    LOVE    SURPRISE    PLEASURE    SHAME

SITUATION	FEELING
Ailo is born and his mother leaves.	
Ailo wakes on the first morning beside his mother.	
Ailo watches the stoat move about fast.	
Ailo tastes lichen for the first time.	
Ailo follows his mother across an ice-cold river.	
Ailo sees other reindeer calves in the herd for the first time.	
Ailo meets mischievous polecats	
Ailo gets to know a hare and tries to imitate it.	
Ailo flees from wolves.	
Ailo meets strange reindeer who are in an enclosure.	
Ailo notices a wolverine near the enclosure.	
Ailo gets lost in the forest.	
Ailo watches the landscape from a tundra slope.	
Ailo's mother gives birth to a new calf.	

## ANNEX 6

Write text into the speech bubbles.

