

Film Title and Release Date: *Life, Animated* (2016)

Length of Film in Minutes: 92 minutes

Film Genre: Documentary

Reviewer Name and Grade: Robert B., 8th Grade

Date Reviewed: April 1, 2021

The documentary *Life, Animated* is about a boy named Owen Suskind who developed Autism when he was 3 years old. The film starts when Owen is 23 years old and graduating High School and about to find an apartment to live on his own. It then shows Owen in home movies as a young child. In the film, Owen's father Ron and mother Cornelia discuss and explain how Owen stopped speaking at 3 and was unable to communicate. Owen's parents mention that he loved to watch Disney animated movies. A year after he stops communicating with others, while he is watching *The Little Mermaid*, his parents hear him speaking, and at first think that it is gibberish and has something to do with juice. They explain that they gave him his cup of juice and he didn't want it. They realize that he is actually saying a line from the movie-"just your voice". This gives them hope that Owen will be able to communicate again. Unfortunately, he does not speak again for some time, however when he is 6 years old, Owen's father attempts to reach out to him by using a puppet of the character Iago from the Disney movie *Aladdin*. Owen and his father connect and are able to communicate with each other. This event in Owen's childhood is shown through animated sketches and is really good.

The movie is presented in a mixture of documentary interviews with Owen's family and others that are involved in his life, home video footage, animated depictions of Owen's life and clips from Disney animated movies. The first half of the documentary focuses more on Owen's childhood and hardships he faced in school, including being bullied, and his relationships at home, not being able to communicate with his family. The second half focuses on Owen as an adult as he graduates from High School, moves into his own apartment, and learns how to be independent.

How did you find the film on Kanopy?

I found this film on Kanopy by browsing titles and after watching the trailer, thought it looked really interesting.

Did the presentation of information keep you interested?

The presentation of information kept me interested because it used a variety of formats throughout the film. For example, there was a part of the film where the events of a story that Owen had created were shown as an animated short clip. The film also had scenes from Disney animated movies, and interviews with individuals that provided interesting details of Owen's life.

Was the pace of the film too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the film was just right. I was never bored and each part of the film did not drag on too long. Also, the length of the film was just right and I was interested throughout all of it.

What grade level(s) is this film appropriate for?

This film is appropriate for grades 7th and higher because I think that they would be able to understand and even relate to a lot of the emotions and situations shown in the film, for example, dealing with bullying, relationships and other struggles in daily life.

Rating:

5 stars: *I'm really glad that I watched this film.* It was heartwarming and I learned more about autism from it. This film was also entertaining, especially the animated scenes. I really recommend this film!