



**CHIWETEL  
EJIOFOR**

AND INTRODUCING

**MAXWELL  
SIMBA**

A NETFLIX FILM

# THE BOY WHO HARNESSED THE WIND

BASED ON THE  
INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY

NETFLIX, PARTICIPANT MEDIA, BBC FILMS, AND BFI PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH HEAD GEAR FILMS & METROL TECHNOLOGY EONET LIPSYNC AND CORNERSTONE FILMS  
A POTBOILER PRODUCTION A FILM BY CHIWETEL EJIOFOR "THE BOY WHO HARNESSED THE WIND" MAXWELL SIMBA CHIWETEL EJIOFOR AISSA MAIGA LILY BANDA LEMOGANG TSIPA PHILBERT FALAKEZA  
WITH JOSEPH MARCELL AND NOMA DUMEZVENI COSTUME DESIGNER ALEXA L. FOGEL CSA HAIR & MAKEUP FRANCESCO VAN DER FEYST EDITOR BIA SALGADO POST PRODUCTION POLLY DUVAL MUSIC BY ANTONIO PINTO PRODUCTION DESIGNER VALERIO BONELLI  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS TULE PEAKE AND DICK POPE PRODUCED BY DONALD SABOURIN DIRECTED BY PHIL HUNT COMPTON ROSS PETER HAMPTON NORMAN MERRY JEFF SKOLL JONATHAN KING STRIVE MASIKIWA  
PAYNE BROWN JOE OPPENHEIMER ROSE GARNETT NATASHA WHARTON PRODUCED BY ANDREA CALDERWOOD GAIL EGAN THE BOOK BY WILLIAM KAMUKUUBA AND BRYAN MEALER "DIRECTED BY" CHIWETEL EJIOFOR

PARTICIPANT MEDIA POTBOILER PRODUCTIONS EMPY LIPSYNC METROL INGENIOUS BBC FILMS NETFLIX

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# The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind



When William Kamkwamba was born in Malawi in 1987, his father expected that he would follow in his footsteps as a farmer; instead, in 2014, he graduated from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire with a degree in environmental studies. *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* is the story of his first steps on that long journey.

## The World of William Kamkwamba

1. Locate Malawi on a world map in your classroom or textbook. The country is land-locked and heavily dependent on agriculture, with more than 50% of the people living below the poverty level. The film shows a famine resulting from drought in 2001; another serious drought occurred in 2015 and 2016. What more did you learn about Malawi and the life of its people from the film?
2. Watch the first two minutes of the film again. What has happened to the farm between the opening scene and the one that follows? What will happen to the people of this village as a result of drought? What resources do they have to fall back on?

3. What will be the long-term effect of climate change on the people of Malawi? On Africa in general? On the world?
4. What role does deforestation play in the problems of William's village? Why do some of the farmers in the area want to sell their trees? Who wants to buy them? Why? Why does William's father oppose selling the trees? What would you have done in this situation?
5. What do you learn from this film about both the local and national governments in Malawi? What does the film say about them? How did the national government handle the famine that resulted from the drought? Did this solve the problem?

### Resources for further reading and study:

Map of Malawi

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malawi\\_map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Malawi_map.png)

The World Factbook: Malawi

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/mi.html>

Famine in Malawi: Causes and Consequence (Human Development Report) [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/menon\\_roshni\\_2007a\\_malawi.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/menon_roshni_2007a_malawi.pdf).

# Meeting William

6. What kind of a person is William as a young teenager? What motivates him? If you were to write a character sketch about William, what characteristics would you include? What evidence do you have from the film to support your ideas?
7. William's family (his father, mother, sister, and the baby) is very close-knit. Which aspects of their family life are traditional? Which are more modern? Where do contradictions between tradition and modernity cause tensions?
8. Describe the school near William's home. How does William feel about it? Why was he forced to drop out? What solutions could have prevented him from having to leave school?"
9. After William was forced to leave school, how did he find the information that he needed to design his windmill and pump? Where did he get the materials he needed to make them? When you need information and materials for a project, what resources do you have?
10. After the period of William's life shown in the film, he came to the United States and studied at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Do you think this transition would have been difficult for him? Why, or why not?



## Resources for further reading and study:

William Kamkwamba and Brian Mealer, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope* (Harper Collins, 2009)

Short interview with William Kamkwamba at Dartmouth  
<https://news.dartmouth.edu/news/2012/01/video-conversation-william-kamkwamba-14>

Links to William's blog, book, and TED talks  
[https://www.ted.com/speakers/william\\_kamkwamba](https://www.ted.com/speakers/william_kamkwamba)

An article about the huge disparities in educational access in sub-Saharan Africa  
<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2017-march-2018/africa-grapples-huge-disparities-education>

A report from the Brookings Institution on unequal access to education in sub-Saharan Africa  
<https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/poverty-inequality-and-africas-education-crisis/>

# What about You? Getting Involved

11. Investigate the problem of desertification in Africa.  
What is the effect of world climate change on Africa?  
What steps could be taken to deal with this problem?  
What will happen if the problem cannot be solved?  
Prepare a presentation for your class or school on your findings.
12. There is still much work to be done in Malawi and other African countries affected by drought and famine. Plan a fundraiser for your school that will also spread awareness of the problems such countries face. You could contribute the proceeds to William's Foundation, Moving Windmills, or another nonprofit working in the region.
13. Identify a problem in your own community or school. Work with a team to imagine innovative ways you could solve the problem. Bring your ideas to community leaders or your school administration to generate support for your proposal.
14. Make your own short documentary film to explore the problem you identified in Question #13 and to create a record of your efforts to solve the problem.

## Resources for further reading and study:

Desertification in Africa: 10 Things You Must Know  
<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/natural-disasters/desertification-in-africa-10-things-you-must-know-54430>

The Immense Challenge of Desertification in sub-Saharan Africa  
<http://theconversation.com/the-immense-challenge-of-desertification-in-sub-saharan-africa-84439>

William's Moving Windmills Foundation  
<https://movingwindmills.org/innovation-center/>

Five-Minute Film Festival: Resources for Filmmaking in the Classroom  
<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/film-festival-classroom-filmmaking-resources>

## Film Credits:

**DIRECTOR:** Chiwetel Ejiofor

**WRITER:** Chiwetel Ejiofor

Based on the book by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer

**PRODUCERS:** Andrea Calderwood, Gail Egan

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS:** Jeff Skoll, Jonathan King, Joe Oppenheimer, Natascha Wharton, William Kamkwamba, and Bryan Mealer

**CAST:** Chiwetel Ejiofor, Maxwell Simba, Lily Banda, Noma Dumezweni, Aïssa Maïga, Joseph Marcell

This discussion guide for the film *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* was written by Eileen Mattingly, Director of Education at Journeys in Film. For additional free materials to bring the world to your classroom, see <http://journeysinfilm.org>.

IMAGE CREDITS:  **Participant media**