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**PALEY** EDUCATION @Home  
presented by **citi**

What We're Watching



# Greetings from The Paley Center for Media's Education Department!

Welcome to the latest installment of "What We're Watching." Twice a month the education department reaches out to the community with tips and ideas for consuming media with kids by highlighting different themes that connect to two selected programs, one for younger viewers and one for older viewers, each with related activities and resources.

Watching media alongside your kids is a perfect jumping-off point to making media literacy a part of your everyday lives. Familiarizing yourself with the basics is a great first step. You can [view our first newsletter about media literacy best practices archived here](#). We also recommend the [National Association for Media Literacy Education's Parents Guide](#)—it's a terrific introduction!

## What We're Watching: Life's Not Plastic, It's Phantasmic!

Apparitions from the past, whether from our past or the past of land we occupy, have long inhabited story lines to comfort our unease of the unknown. From the earliest oral tradition to today's endless stream of digital media, spectral characters often play advisory roles, guiding and encouraging mortal protagonists with lessons learned after leaving this earthly existence. We progress through their loss, and like memories, these spirits never vanish but recede until the need to make their presence felt. For this hallowed eve, we look at two programs where phantasms reveal the beauty and brevity of life, love, family, and the spaces we call home. As mortals we could benefit from their otherworldly advice!

## This Week's Recommendations for Younger Viewers

**City of Ghosts: "Leimert Park" (2021)**

*Recommended for Grades 2+*

*Available on Netflix*

This original and imaginative animated series uses the mockumentary format to dig into the biography of land and its hidden histories by investigating different neighborhoods in the City of Angels—Los Angeles, California. The Ghost Team, young reporters ranging in age from 6-8 years old, interview both their neighbors and those dearly departed but not yet ready to leave. In this episode, Eva, a member of the Ghost Team, talks with Sonya, owner of a vegan café in Leimert Park who also teaches poetry to young kids. Sonya has been hearing strange sounds from the coffee machine and late at night mysterious drumming is so loud that neighbors call the police. Huddling beneath a table in the L.A. public library—their unique and usual meeting spot—the Ghost Team learn from Eva that Leimert Park used to be a lively and open space with drumming circles. But all that changed when the fence went up. The Ghost Team speculates that Sonya’s ghost is a drummer, and after interviewing the badgering boogeyman, they learn of the vibrant and rich musical history of their neighborhood park.

### **Viewing Questions**

- When Eva takes viewers on a tour of her Leimert Park neighborhood, what are some of the places we see? How would you describe the neighborhood?
- Why does Sonya teach children poetry? What is she hoping they will get from the experience?
- Who gets bothered by the loud late-night drumming? And what does Eva do to reconcile this conflict?
- How does Barbara Morrison, the owner of the Jazz and Blues Museum in Leimert Park, describe the area before the fence was built around the park?
- After the Ghost Team surmise the ghost is a drummer “looking for people to dig on its beat,” what do they advise Sonya to do?
- How would you describe Darryl Moore, aka JMD or Jam Messenger Divine, the ghost?
- How does JMD describe what a cypher is?
- When Sonya advises visitors to Leimert Park (or any place) to understand that the space is older than you, and that visitors must learn “community consciousness,” what do you think she means?

### **Additional Resources**

## Read

[Desmond Cole Ghost Patrol: Ghosts Don't Ride Bikes, Do They?](#) by Andrés Miedoso, Illustrations by Victor Rivas

[Ghosts](#) by Raina Telgemeier

[The Graveyard Book](#) by Neil Gaiman

## Listen

[Interview with Elizabeth Ito, creator of \*City of Ghosts\*](#)

## Watch

[Casper \(1995\)](#)

[Coco \(2017\)](#)

[Muppets Haunted Mansion \(2021\)](#)



## This Week's Recommendations for Older Viewers

## **Disney Launchpad Series: Maxine (2023)**

*Recommended for Grades 8+*

*Available on Disney+*

*Launchpad*, Disney's pipeline program for new filmmakers, recently kicked off its second season with six live-action shorts produced by up-and-coming writers and directors from underrepresented groups. *Maxine*, a tender and touching story that celebrates the courage of asserting your true self, centers on Allie, a young Chinese American girl who came out to her parents but still fears introducing them to her girlfriend, Maya. To prepare for the Hungry Ghost Festival, a holiday like Mexico's Día de los Muertos but celebrated in East and Southeast Asian countries, Allie's family looks through a shoebox of photos selecting the deceased ancestors that will join them for the special dinner. Allie finds a photo of Maxine, a distant cousin her parents hardly remember. "She looks kinda gay," Allie remarks. To which her mom admonishes Allie to not be rude as her father affirms, "Not everyone is gay." Later that night she places Maxine's photo by her bedside, and in the morning is startled to find her dead relative snacking in her bedroom. Allie learns that Maxine is also gay, but that Maxine left this world estranged from her parents. Allie worries that her parents and even herself are not ready to bring Maya home to meet them. Maxine offers her short life as a cautionary tale, acknowledging that although she lived an amazing life with few regrets, there is one deep sorrow she carries with her still. Later as the spiritual and earthly family gathers, Maxine and Allie find peace within the mystical enchantment of reconciliation and the potent magic of love.

### **Viewing Questions**

- What reason does Allie give for not inviting Maya to her family's Hungry Ghost Festival dinner? How do you think Maya feels about that?
- How does Allie's family "invite" their deceased relatives to the festival dinner?
- What fascinates Maxine, who died in the 1980s, as she walks through our modern society of 2023?
- Why is it recommended not to wear red? What happens to shoppers in the market who wear red when Maxine is around?
- What is Maxine's only regret in life? And how does she advise Allie not to make the same mistake?
- What happens at dinner when Allie's girlfriend, Maya, arrives?
- Why is Maxine afraid to come to dinner and meet her parents?

- How does the dinner end and what are some lessons learned about self-doubt and acceptance?

## Additional Resources

### Read

*I Am Alfonso Jones* by Tony Media, illustrated by Stacey Robinson and John Jennings

*Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds

*What the Dead Want* by Norah Olson

### Watch

*The Haunting* (1963)

*Spirited Away* (2001)

*Lockwood & Co.* (2023)

As always, if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out to us at [eduny@paleycenter.org](mailto:eduny@paleycenter.org).

Happy viewing,

**Rebekah Fisk**  
**Director of Education**

**Carlos Pareja**  
**Manager of Education**

Photos—*City of Ghosts*: Netflix; *Maxine*: The Walt Disney Company

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SUMMER  
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teen transmitters

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We are proud to present the culminating projects of our last Teen Transmitters internship cohort—eight podcasts and one short film. Using documentary and nonfiction narrative to explore personal stories, each audio piece was researched, written, produced, and edited by members of the group. All of the projects explore topics that resonate deeply with the young producers. We hope you enjoy them as much as we do!

Teen Transmitters is made possible by support from **Con Edison**, the **National Endowment for the Arts**, and the **Nielsen Foundation**.

The Paley Center for Media graciously thanks **The Pinkerton Foundation** for its inaugural support of the Teen Transmitters program.

**LEARN MORE**

In addition, our Teen Transmitters continue to shape the public narrative producing their own stories and engaging in dialogue with journalists about cultural and social issues that impact them.

Please [check out this short radio story](#) by **Ella Smith**, TT '22 & '23, about the production of *Frida Libre* taking place at her school, Northwestern University.

And [enjoy this episode of the \*Decoder Ring\* podcast, "The Fast Decline of the Slow Dance,"](#) featuring an interview with **Jordan Armstead**, TT '23!

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