

RECOMMENDED FILM

Courses:	BACCALAUREATE
Skill:	SELF-ESTEEM
Film:	Mostly Martha
Month:	November

b!Character
Programme for the development of
habits and strengths

FILM INFO

Title: Mostly Martha

Director: Sandra Nettelbeck

Year: 2001

Warning: -

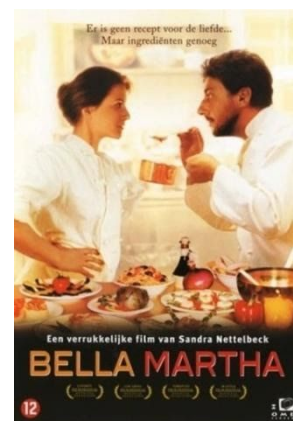
Duration: 105 minutes

Production: Germany

Genre: Romantic comedy

Music: David Darling; Keith Jarrett; Arvo Pärt

Streaming services where available:



SYNOPSIS:

Martha is a chef at LIDO, a sophisticated French restaurant in Hamburg. She is young, single, and lives for her job. She doesn't go out or have friends. She is a magnificent cook, but she finds it difficult to manage her life. She visits a psychiatrist who tries to help her to overcome her personality problems.

Her world is limited, but she has got used to it. Her sister, a single mother, dies in a traffic accident and she has to look after her eight-year old niece, Lina, who is stubborn and who creates problems for Martha.

Problems also arise in the kitchen, when the restaurant owner hires Mario, an Italian chef to help her. Mario's personality is totally different to that of Martha's.

The influence of these two people on her life, result in a total change for Martha. At first she believes that her perfect world will fall apart, but she gradually realises that many things were missing in her life. Her pride and sense of self-sufficiency begin to diminish in a series of unforeseen events.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS

1. MARTHA:

- She has recipes for everything apart from love. Analyse how she tries to find an easy solution to win Lina over. She is not diplomatic and is too direct.
- Compare Martha's personality with that of Mario; a Latin character and a Germanic personality.
- Does she go to the psychiatrist only because her boss tells her to? Or does she need someone to listen to her?
- Why does she often seek solace in the walk-in fridge?

- Could she be described as being timid? Does she know how to express the feelings she has inside?
- Talk about some of her personality limitations: she doesn't like to sit on the ground and eat, she doesn't like to have fun.
- When she goes to eat but can't, because of the noise the neighbour makes. Talk about her lack of normal behaviour in the way she deals with her neighbour.
- I am not intense, I am precise. What's the difference?
- *If you've got talent, but you can't deal with logistics, forget about gastronomy.* Talk about this idea. Harmonising ingredients, proportions and time.
- When she finds out about the death of her sister she tries not to show her emotions. Is this good, or normal? Wouldn't it be more logical to talk about it with her colleagues?
- What does Lina bring to Marta's life? Does she act as a mirror to get to know herself better after experiencing the girl's irrational reactions?
- What is her relationship like with the old architect?
- When does Martha find herself?
- Why does she push Mario away when he tries to hug her when she is crying while washing the dishes after Lina goes?
- When she wants to go to Italy she goes to see Mario. *I need your help.* Is she actually in love with Mario, or does she regard him as being useful and in the end sees that he is the only chance she has to not be alone?

2. MARIO

- Talk about some of his personality traits: happy, easy going, flexible, affectionate, humane, simple, direct and creative.
- He is understanding with Lina, he gains the affection of both Lina and Martha. Real love for Martha. What do you think?
- He goes to see her in the walk-in fridge. *I like to work and they appreciate me.* Is she really willing to leave her job or is it just a trick?

3. LINA

- Talk about the three-way relationship of the main characters, her linking role between Mario and Martha. Without Lina there would have been no connection between the two. See how negative circumstances, such as the death of Martha's sister can have unexpected and beneficial results in the long run.
- The reaction of Lina in assimilating the death of her mother.
 - Talk about the scene with the dish of spaghetti, sometimes it is easier to get things done with a dose of humour than with reasoning and bad vibes. *Hey, leave something, will you.* Sometimes to put things right we need an excuse,

even one that is meaningless or accidental. Don't put people into a corner, always leave an escape route open, respect their freedom without forcing negotiations, and try to persuade without being imposing.

4. GIUSEPPE

- How do you rate Giuseppe as a person?
- *Marta, if only I had known... I'm very sorry. I would have liked to have met Lina in other circumstances.* – Are these words sincere? Talk about the situations that might occur to single mothers, like for example, if they don't want to get married, separation might be preferable until the children are grown up.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR FILM GROUP

1. This film deals with the themes of personality, devotion to work, love, generosity towards others, feelings and commitment.
2. The restaurant kitchen is the main setting of the film. The excellent soundtrack and the happy music softens the seriousness of some dramatic elements in the film.
3. Martha is obsessed with order: everything has to be planned and clean. Talk about what constitutes perfectionism.
4. Work as an end in itself, or as a means to an end. The contrast between work as an objective and personal self-affirmation, or as a way of serving. Tension in the kitchen, stress, exaggerated reactions with respect to some clients.
5. The 'apron ritual'. The importance of rituals, formalities at work that lend confidence.