

Mille

Mille was produced by the Danish television channel, DR Ramasjang, for children 7-12 years old. It follows 12-year-old Mille as she deals with losing her best friend Marie in a traffic accident. Following the funeral Mille is numb and has a hard time coming to terms with the tragedy. But with determination and help from a therapist she starts to deal with her sorrow. At school Mille has difficulty concentrating and wants to be left alone. But when a friend shares his experiences with loss, Mille is finally able to let go of Marie and move on with life. While Mille learns to open up to other people, her mother struggles to keep the family's cafeteria from bankruptcy and Mille's romantic grandmother searches for love. The series follows three generations of women, who each believe that they do not need help from others. They gradually learn to reach out and accept a helping hand.

International experts' opinions

The international experts were unanimous in their opinion that the program was successful in showing how a child copes with a painful issue like death. Mille handled her grief of losing her best friend very well, "like Mille – there are steps in going through the pain. It is really a process of letting go" (male expert, Germany). "Although it is about grief and it is about losing, it is a healthier way of dealing with it" (female expert, Brazil). "I think she gave a really good performance for someone that young" (female expert, USA).

They liked the way the story was told in a sensitive manner "relying on the pictures and actors telling us the story" (female expert, Germany). "I think it was a very strong drama, a really good actor and very dense character – really good" (male expert, Germany). "I like it very much for the authenticity" (female expert, Malaysia). "I thought it was extraordinary" (male expert, Columbia). They acknowledged that the program was successful in bringing forth the hidden anxieties and trauma that a child had to undergo while dealing with the death of someone very close to her, in this case, Mille's best friend.

The experts appreciated the fact that Mille presented a girl as the main protagonist. "I thought it was spectacularly good. I really liked her a lot" (male expert, Canada). The program had an edge over other similar programs "because of her acting and the whole story would be of interest to both boys and girls" (female expert, Germany).

Several experts pointed out some discrepancy and raised doubts regarding whether a program that dealt with such a complex issue as death should be shown to children of this age group. One expert felt that "this is not a documentary for children. It is about children" (male expert, Columbia). Few experts also questioned the way Mille



Figure 1: Mille and her friend before the accident.



Figure 2: Mille met with an accident.



Figure 3: Mille remembering her friend.



Figure 4: Mille in grief.



Figure 5: Mille at the funeral of her friend.



Figure 6: Mille listening to the old man in a café.

changed after her one encounter with an elderly man in a café. “Children of Mille’s age are not that attentive to a character that is much older than her own father” (male expert, Pakistan). One of the producers from Danish broadcasting television, who produced this film who was present in the discussion explained that there was a lot of debate in Danish media whether to air a series that talked so openly about death to children (female expert, Denmark). She justified it by saying that it was important to talk with children about things that were part of life and “death is a part of living.” She explained that despite the fact that the program attracted a lot of attention in the media because of the way it handled death, a lot of children liked it in spite of its slow narrative.

An interesting aspect of the discussion was that experts were able to contextualize the way children were able to deal with the concept of death within their own country. “In Italy now we live in a situation where most of our television is fiction. I think it is very important to find out that somewhere there are still people working with this kind of subject” (female expert, Italy). Others argued that “you cannot show those kinds of programs that speak about death so directly” (male expert, Spain). And yet another lamented, “I wish I could see that kind of television for this age group in the US” (male expert, Columbia).

International Youth Jury’s Opinions

In 2010 the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE included the votes of an international youth jury, organized in co-operation with broadcasters worldwide. Teens between 12-15 years of age in seven countries discussed and judged 16 programs in the 12-15 year-old-category. Here is a summary of their discussions on the program *Mille*.

The youth jury members from **Canada** had mixed reactions to the program *Mille*. They really appreciated the story and the acting of the various characters in the program: “Very well directed, very professional. I especially liked the introduction, the drawings, and all the characters” (male). “The actors were really good so it helped to keep the interest.” A female youth jury member quipped that it was the best program she had seen on death. There were few exceptions in the opinion of the youth jury members. Some thought that the story was not interesting. “The story was OK but a little bit too predictable and I missed the surprise” (female).

The youth jury members from **Georgia** loved the program without exception. They thought that it was like a real movie with “very organized story-telling and editing.” They also found the actors to be quite professional.

Almost all the youth jury members of **Ghana** liked the program for its passionate and emotional topic. “I found the movie very emotional and it teaches us how to handle depression properly when we lose a friend” (female). The jury members were particularly impressed with the way the program

handled the issue of death as faced by a teenager. “It was thought provoking; it made you see the different ways in which teenagers handle depression” (female). The interesting lesson learnt by the jury members after watching the program was to accept loss and move on with life as “life is a journey and that we should make the best out of it” (female). “We should rather move on in remembrance of the loved one, and it also means that we should accept help when we need it” (male). Only one male jury member thought that the movie was boring and aimed only at girls.



Figure 7: Mille, in the end, letting go her emotions.

The youth jury members from *Lebanon* had mixed reviews about Mille. Some appreciated the fact that the program had a clear message that was to “move forward in life” (male). Another message that the youth jury members gathered was to build on older people’s experience during the time of crisis: “Always reach for the help of older people because they are wiser than us and we have to always listen to them” (male). Few youth jury members, however, thought that the story was very fast and “depressing” (female). “Though the acting of the girl was strong, the program was a bit too much” (male).



Figure 8: Most of the experts appreciated the acting of the young girl, Mille.

Screenshots from Mille © DR Ramasjang

All the youth jury members from *Italy* loved the program. They understood the pain of losing a best friend. “The message is important and I think the author wanted to say that you don’t have so many good friends so when you lose one it’s a big pain” (male). Many of the jury members appreciated the fact that Mille could communicate with the old man and share her inner most feelings because “in sharing she will find relief of her pain” (male). They understood that sometimes it was better to communicate about your grief to someone unknown and elderly. They liked the fact that the topic of death was treated in a deep way in the program: “That situation is over and one should just move ahead” (female). Some youth jury members however, thought that though families split up, there was no need to show such things in films as “it was not appropriate for a kid’s film” (male). The discussion was ended when a female youth jury member remarked, “There would be no evolution if we were all the same.”

The youth jury members from *Nepal* praised the performance of Mille and the other actors. They liked the subject matter chosen in this series and appreciated the role the therapist had in helping to solve the problems. “We also have so many problems in our life if we could also have a therapist to help solve problems, it will be nice.” They did say, however, that the ending seemed incomplete and they commented on a few things, such as their feeling that the character of the grandmother was unnecessary.

The youth jury members from *Venezuela* appreciated Mille very much. Almost everyone learnt the lesson from the program that it is important to move forward in life in spite of tragedies and hurt. “Life goes on and things happen and we must move forward” (female). “This leaves us with a lesson that even if it hurts we have to overcome, and that things happen for a good reason” (female).

Target Audience 7,7	Idea 7,4	Script 7,3	Realization 7,7
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2010			