



WHAT SETS THEM APART,  
BRINGS THEM TOGETHER.

# OKAY!

THE ASD BAND FILM



**JAKE'S HOUSE PRESENTS AN EDELMAN PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH ESCARPMENT FILMS**

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PRODUCERS MARK BONE GREG ROSATI LINE PRODUCER AMALIE BRUNN STORY BY ANDREW SIMON WRITTEN BY GREG ROSATI DIRECTED BY MARK BONE

**CURRICULUM GUIDE**  
**GRADES: 8-12**

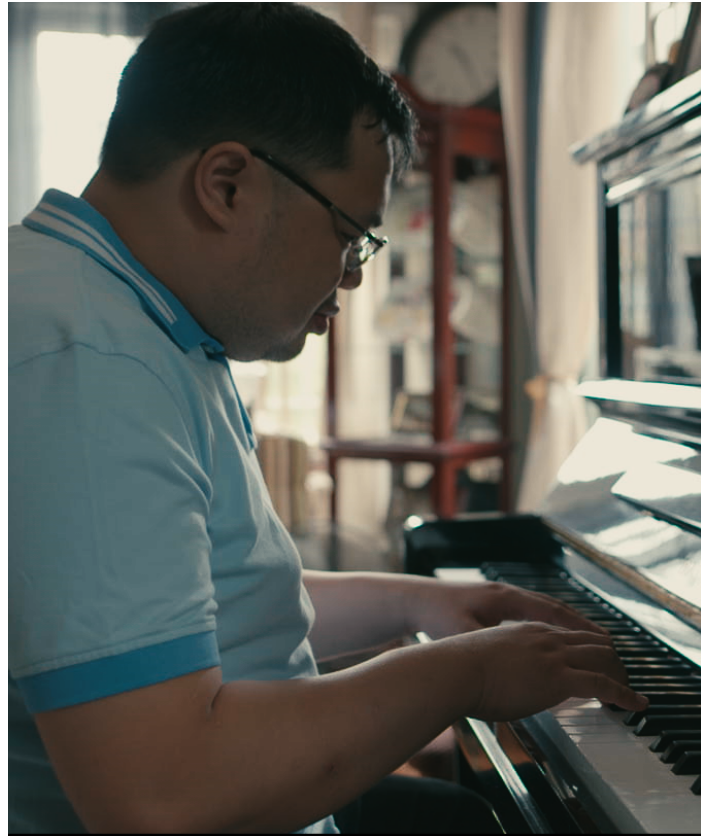
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Dear Educators,

Thank you for attending the California Film Institute's DocLands screening of *OKAY! (The ASD Band Film)*.

We believe this film will be a powerful and engaging text to use in your classroom, and these curricular materials are designed to get students to engage deeply with film by the common-core aligned skills of developing an evidence-based interpretation of a text.

The discussion questions on the following page offer a variety of options for fostering small-group or whole-class dialogue. If your students are already familiar with a process of writing evidence-based interpretive essays, consider using the suggested essay prompt for a short writing piece. Additionally, individual handouts for before, during, and after viewing are provided as stand-alone activities to be used individually or in sequence.

Thank you so much for your tireless work!

Sincerely,

The CAFILM Education Team

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the central issues addressed in this documentary? What has changed between the start and the end?
2. What are some surprising facts you learned from this film? How do these facts shape your understanding of the central issue of the film?
3. Does this documentary feel objective and/or balanced in its presentation of the issues? Why or why not?
4. What did you see in this film that reminds you of other stories from your life or other stories you know?
5. Were there any perspectives relevant to the central issues of the documentary that were not included? How would those voices have changed the film?
6. What are some background details you noticed in this film? How do these details provide information about the time or place in which this film was made?
7. Consider other films you've seen. What makes this film unique or important? What are some connections between this film and other films?
8. What is the significance of the title *Okay!?* How does it relate to the film's themes?
9. What were some of the ASD Band members' other interests/talents? Why do you think the director chose to include these details?
10. What difficulties did the ASD Band face during the process of writing and recording their album? How did they surmount these?
11. What does the film suggest about the role of creativity in overcoming societal barriers?

## INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPT

1. One song by the ASD Band uses the expression "different, but not less" to convey their experiences as autistic people. Compare and contrast the experiences of the ASD Band to another band, artist, or individual who you think also embodies the expression "different, but not less."

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### ASD Band

<https://www.instagram.com/asdbandofficial>

The official Instagram page for the ASD Band.

### Jake's House

<https://www.jakeshouse.ca>

Jake's House is a charitable organization that provides events, workshops, workforce development and housing resources for people and families impacted by autism.

### What is Autism? | Quick Learner

<https://youtu.be/TJuwHClQQTs>

A two-minute explainer video on autism spectrum disorder, produced by Duke University.

## STANDARDS

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

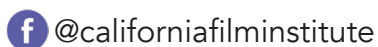
### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. summary of the text.

## ABOUT CAFILM

The nonprofit California Film Institute celebrates and promotes film as art and education through year-round programming at the independent Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, presentation of the acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival, as well as cultivation of the next generation of filmmakers and audiences through CAFILM Education programs.

### Follow the California Film Institute on social media





## ABOUT THE FILM

“Life is a play, and everybody has the script but you.” This is how one member of The ASD Band, featuring four talented autistic individuals, describes what’s it like when you’re on the spectrum. Through a shared love of music, Rawan, Jackson, Spenser and Ron shatter the stigma of those with autism as loners, coming together to express themselves through song. *OKAY!* follows the members of the ASD Band as they embark upon the difficult journey of writing and recording their first album—and ultimately performing their first public show. As they learn to navigate a world that is foreign to them, they find strength in others who share the same challenges.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR: Mark Bone

Mark Bone is a passionate, award-winning, documentary director based in Toronto, Canada. He has helmed numerous documentaries, including *58 Hours*, which chronicles the heroic rescue of Jessica McClure and the fallout from that event; *Rescate*, following the heroics of volunteer paramedics in the Dominican Republic; *No Country is an Island*, a first-hand look at the tragic Easter Bombings in Sri Lanka; and *Battleground* which was awarded a Vimeo Staff Pick Premiere. His work focuses on characters in the midst of conflict or crisis, capturing their story with a dynamic cinematic verité style.



## AN INTERVIEW WITH MARK BONE

Q: What drew you to this project?

A: I'm most fascinated working on films that involve people who's lived experience is drastically different than that of my own. I do also have extended family members who are on the autism spectrum and I know their lives in a neurotypical society haven't always been easy to navigate. Having the chance to both explore the journey of a group like the ASD Band and, in a way, pay homage to the efforts of the families I know with members on the spectrum, all in one film, has been incredible.

Q: What is the theme of the film?

A: I set out to explore how families sacrifice and sustain an environment of care and support to foster the talents and interests of their children on the spectrum. Throughout filming, that idea has expanded to include a theme that can be summed up in one of the lyrics by ASD band; "Different, but not less."

Q: Is there a particular moment that stood out in filming?

A: There have been too many amazing moments to just pick one, but most of the band's writing sessions were sensational. Being a creative collaborator myself, I was amazed at the ease and lack of ego in the creation of ASD's original music. Not only did their savant-like musical abilities help, but in a way, their autistic social traits created an environment of positivity that benefited the creative process rather than inhibited it.

Q: Why is this such an important story to tell?

A: When you hear about autism, you can often think of all the things someone can't do, or what they struggle with. This film looks to go against that assumption and highlight not just the difficulties but when given the chance, how those on the spectrum can do things far past our own imagination.

Q: What was it like working with the families?

A: Simply put, it was lovely. They were full of grace and were so easy to film. They embraced an open and vulnerable relationship to the documentary process, which allowed us to capture many beautiful moments. I couldn't ask for a more pleasant cast to work with.

### Questions to Consider:

1. After reading this interview with director Mark Bone, what are you wondering about or curious to see in the film?
2. Have you heard the expression "different, but not less" before? What does that phrase mean to you?

# BEFORE VIEWING: ANTICIPATION GUIDE

## Directions:

Use this guide to think about your current understanding/perception of autism. Read each statement below and place an X on the line below it indicating how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Then, write one or two sentences explaining why you placed the X where you did.

Strongly Agree

Autistic people can be independent and have successful careers.

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

Autistic people have difficulty forming social relationships.

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

Autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning that it affects people in different ways and to varying degrees.

Strongly Disagree

# DURING VIEWING: NOTECATCHER

## Directions:

The film you are about to watch follows the four members of the ASD Band, all of whom have autism spectrum disorder. As you watch, fill out the notecatcher to increase your understanding of each band member.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Instrument \_\_\_\_\_

What are some ways autism informs their life?

Record an interesting quote from them that resonates with you:

“ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

What are some ways autism informs their life?



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Instrument \_\_\_\_\_

Record an interesting quote from them that resonates with you:

“ \_\_\_\_\_ ”



# DURING VIEWING: NOTE CATCHER



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Instrument \_\_\_\_\_

What are some ways autism informs their life?

Record an interesting quote from them that resonates with you:

“ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

What are some ways autism informs their life?



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Instrument \_\_\_\_\_

Record an interesting quote from them that resonates with you:

“ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

# AFTER VIEWING: RESPONSE QUESTIONS

**Directions:**

Respond to each question, referring to specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your interpretation.

1. What is Jake's Room? What was its purpose and how did the ASD Band form from it?

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2. What were some of the early signs to the band members' parents that their children had ASD? How did autism shape their childhood and upbringing?

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3. What challenges do the ASD Band members face during the process of writing and recording their album? How do they overcome these challenges?

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4. What are some of the ways in which the ASD Band members challenge stereotypes about either autistic individuals or rock bands? Give specific examples from the film.

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5. Revisit your responses on the Anticipation Guide. Has your opinion on any statement changed? Explain what details from the movie either changed or affirmed your earlier understanding of autism.

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# AFTER VIEWING: FOUR C'S

## Directions:

Respond to each prompt in complete sentences, citing specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your response.

### CONNECTIONS

What connections do you draw between the film and your own life or your other learning?

### CHALLENGE

What ideas, positions, or assumptions do you want to challenge or debate in the film?

### CONCEPTS

What key concepts or ideas do you think are important and worth holding on to from the film?

### CHANGES

What changes in attitudes, thinking, or action are suggested by the film, either for you or others?

Adapted from Harvard Project Zero's Thinking Routine Toolbox:

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/resources/the-4-cs>

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY: WRITE YOUR OWN SONG

### Directions:

In *OKAY!*, the members of the ASD band write songs to express their unique experiences with autism. In this extension activity, create an original song or musical composition that reflects the themes of the film by expressing something unique about the way *you* experience the world.

1. Pick a unique aspect of your own identity and, either individually or with a partner, write the lyrics for an original song of your own. If you play an instrument, you can compose the music for it too. If not, consider writing new lyrics to an existing song (you can search online for karaoke versions of songs that have instrumental tracks without vocals).
2. Using your understanding of the songwriting process depicted in the film, create lyrics or music that express and affirm your unique identity and experience.
3. Try performing the song live or recording it as a studio track using free software, such as Audacity (<https://www.audacityteam.org/>).
4. After creating your song, reflect on the process and your learning by writing a short artist's statement that addresses the following questions:
  - How did the experiences of the ASD Band members inspire your own creative process?
  - What challenges did you encounter while creating your song? How did you overcome them?
  - How did your creative process compare to that of the ASD Band?
  - What message or themes did you hope to convey through your song?
  - How might your song inspire others to think differently about people they don't understand?



# ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

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## What is a film festival?

A film festival is an event in which multiple movies are presented over the course of one or several days. Depending on the size of the festival, all of the screenings may take place in a single theater or may involve multiple venues throughout a city. Festivals also include special events like panel discussions with filmmakers and actors. Typically, filmmakers submit their works to a festival, where a team of curators selects the best entries for inclusion in the festival. For independent and international filmmakers, festivals are often an important way to raise awareness of a film, generate an audience, and/or attract a studio to purchase the rights to distribute a film in a wider release. Acceptance into a major festival can add significant prestige to a film, with some festival awards (such as the Cannes Film Festival's Palme d'Or) considered among the highest honors a film can receive.

There are many film festivals through-

out the world, with some focusing on particular themes, such as highlighting LGBTQ films/filmmakers, specific cultural groups, or particular genres. While some of the more famous festivals may be in distant locations, there are hundreds of small festivals spread through every corner of the world and, increasingly, festivals are using streaming access to make it easier for the public to view their curated programs.

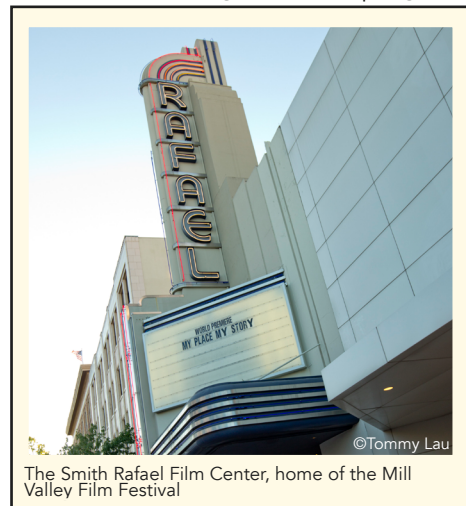
## History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

Since founding the Mill Valley Film Festival in 1977, Executive Director Mark Fishkin has shepherded this once small, three-day showcase into an eleven-day, internationally acclaimed cinema event presenting a wide variety of new films from around the world in an engaged, community setting.

The festival has an impressive track record of launching new films and new filmmakers, and has earned a reputation as a filmmakers' festival

by celebrating the best in American independent and foreign films, alongside high-profile and prestigious award contenders. The relaxed and non-competitive atmosphere surrounding MVFF, gives filmmakers and audiences alike the opportunity to share their work and experiences in a collaborative and convivial setting.

Each year the festival welcomes more than 200 filmmakers, representing more than 50 countries. Screening sections include world cinema, US cinema, documentaries, family films, and shorts programs. Annual festival initiatives include Active Cinema, a forum for films that aim to engage audiences and transform ideas into action; Mind the Gap, a platform for inclusion and equity; and ¡Viva el Cine!, a showcase of Latin American and Spanish-language films.. Festival guests also enjoy an exciting selection of Tributes, Spotlights and Galas throughout the program.



The Smith Rafael Film Center, home of the Mill Valley Film Festival

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## Questions to Consider:

1. What is the purpose of a film festival? What are the benefits for filmmakers? For the audience? For the community?
2. How might the films at a festival differ from the films available to watch at your local movie theater?
3. What qualities do you think festival curators might look for in a film? If you are watching a festival film with a class/school group, what aspects of the film do you think made it appealing to the curators?

## Get Involved!

Many film festivals, including the Mill Valley Film Festival, have student film categories. If you are a filmmaker, explore FilmFreeway ([www.filmfreeway.com](http://www.filmfreeway.com)) for a database of worldwide film festivals where you can submit your film. The call for entries for MVFF opens in late February and closes in June. Youth filmmakers do not have to pay an entry fee. MVFF also offers many opportunities for volunteering. Find out more at <https://www.cafilm.org/volunteer/>.