

# MVFF EDUCATION

 **MSNBC FILMS**

PRESENTS

# PERIODICAL



**IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE STATUS FLOW.**

MSNBC Films presents an XTR production "PERIODICAL" edited by JESSICA POTTER directors of photography BANCA CLINE EVAN CARTER LAUREN GUTERAS  
original music by MADAME GANDHI co-executive producer MATTHEW CHERCHIO executive producers RASHIDA JONES AMANDA SPAIN KATHLEEN FLOOD KATHRYN EVERETT JUSTIN LACOB BRYN MOISER  
produced by PECAN FARAHMAND directed by LINA LYTE PLOP LYTE



**XTR**



## **CURRICULUM GUIDE** **GRADES: 7-12**

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Dear Educators,

Thank you for attending the 46th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of *Periodical*. We are excited to return in our 2023 fall season with a combination of both in-person screenings for local school and online screenings for those of you joining us from afar.

This year, our film selections for MVFF Education screenings continue to focus on increasingly relevant issues of global empathy and active citizenship, and we believe this film will be a powerful and engaging text to use in your classroom. 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 prompts for a short writing piece. Additionally, individual handouts for before and after viewing are provided as stand-alone activities to be used individually or in sequence, with a particular emphasis on social-emotional learning. We have also included a handout that provides some context for the film festival experience, which may help to introduce your screening experience.

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 new insight did you gain from the beginning to the end of the film?
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. Describe a moment or a scene in the film that you found particularly disturbing or moving. What was it about the scene that was especially compelling for you?
5. What did you learn from this film you wish everyone knew? What would change if everyone knew it?
6. If you could require one person (or one group) to view this film, who would it be? What would you hope their main takeaway would be?
7. Were there any perspectives relevant to the central issues of the documentary that were not included? How would those voices have changed the film?
8. What is the menstrual movement, and how did it come about? How is it connected to the politics at play around women and menstruation?
9. What historical, cultural, and/or religious factors have contributed to the stigmatization of the menstrual cycle?
10. Why is it important to truly understand the menstrual cycle, overcome the stigma, and celebrate the power of this vital sign of a woman's life?
11. How has sex education lacked completeness in America? What are the issues at stake for access and equity, agency, advocacy, and bodily autonomy?

## INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. How does the film take a critical look at how periods have been portrayed on screen in the past? How has the media perpetuated the historical ignorance, the social stigma, and the cultural myths of the female menstrual cycle?
2. How is menstruation a microcosm of some of the larger issues we're fighting for today? What are those larger social, political, or cultural issues, and how are they connected to the female menstrual cycle?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### More about the Tampon Tax

<https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org/tampon-tax/>

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/tampon-tax-explained-definition-facts-statistics/>

Menstrual items are taxed around the world. Here's what you should know.

### Historical Media Representation

A critical look at how periods have been portrayed on screen in the past and how the media has perpetuated the historical ignorance, the social stigma, and the cultural myths of the female menstrual cycle.

- **Molly Grows Up (Charles Larance, 1953) 16 min**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8W14YssL\\_Cs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8W14YssL_Cs)  
Molly anxiously awaits her first sign of menstruation, which means that she'll be able to date and go dancing. The school nurse explains exactly what menstruation is to her, by using diagrams.
- **Carrie (Brian De Palma 1976)**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12wHDwNXBL0>  
"You're a woman now."
- **Contemporary Media Representation**  
<https://time.com/4362473/fight-period-stigma/>  
"London Marathoner Who Bled Freely: Fight Period Stigma" | Time.

## 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



# STANDARDS

## Common Core State Standards ELA-Literacy

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7

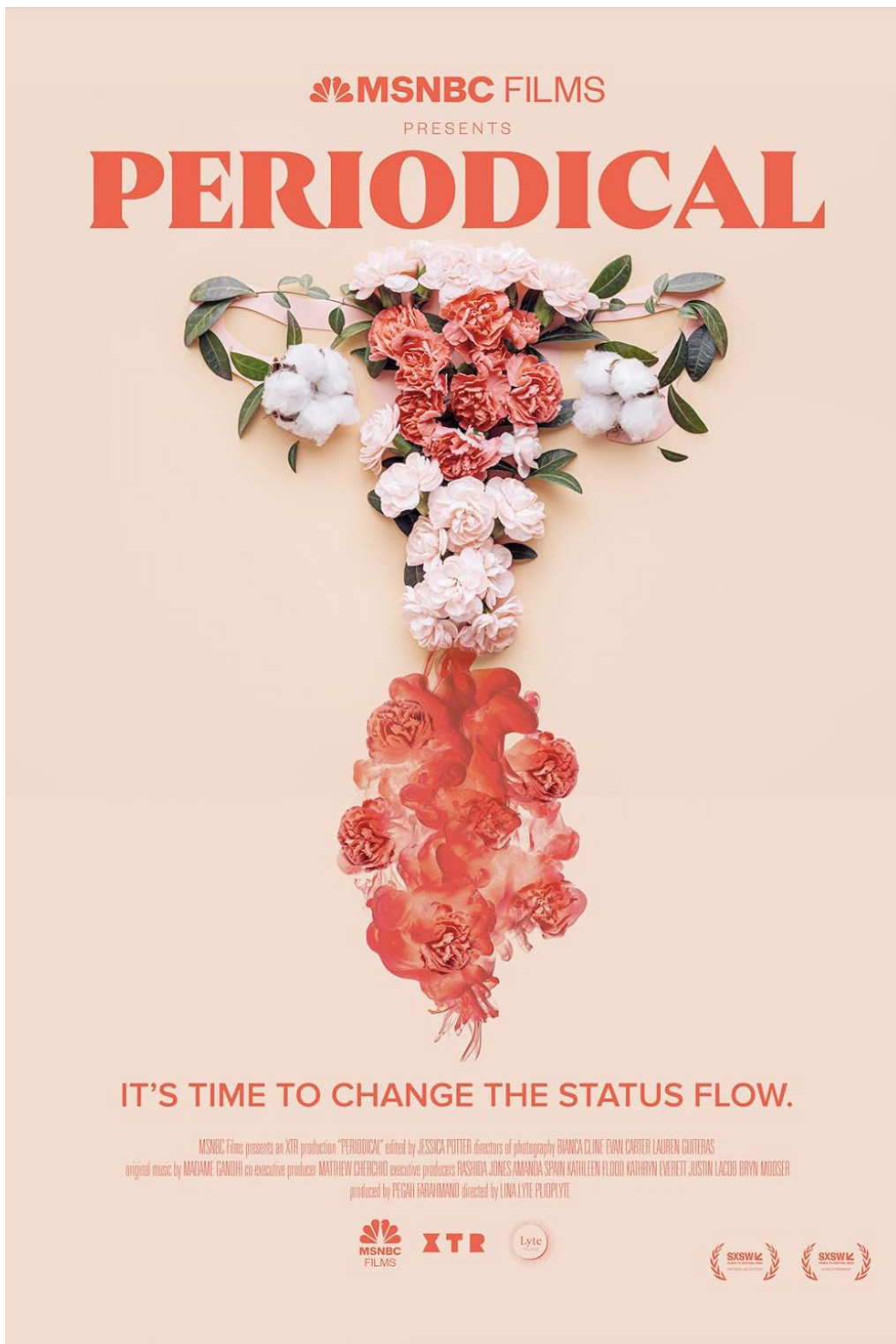
Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

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.



## ABOUT THE FILM

*Periodical* is an eye-opening documentary that examines science, politics, and the mystery of the menstrual cycle, through the experiences of doctors, athletes, movie stars, journalists, activists, and everyday people. This is not a typical middle or high school sex-education class, but rather an innovative mixed media film that reveals shocking truths, challenges taboos, and celebrates the end of centuries of societal-enforced stigma around the female period.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKER LINA LYTE PLIOPLYTE



Lina Lyte Plioplyte is a Lithuanian-born filmmaker and camera person with an Emmy, Silver Lion and Clio award to her name. Her work has been shown on MTV, PBS, in the Venice Biennale and various film festivals, including Hot Docs, MIFF and IDFA. Lina's feature-length directorial debut, *Advanced Style*, is currently streaming on Amazon after a successful run on Netflix. In her projects, she explores themes of womanhood, freedom, and the mystery of life. Lina believes in integral filmmaking by hiring women, gender-expansive people, and under-represented groups, mentoring young filmmakers, and making her film sets plastic-free.

## FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

My first feature, *Advanced Style*, looked into aging as a life stage of celebration. With *Periodical*, I look at menstruation, or "the curse" as it's still called in some places, as a curious and fascinating event, trying to dismantle the existing taboo using curiosity, science and mystery of menstruation. In the film we weave personal stories and bodily science, history and cultural approach to the female body, creating a landscape of uterine awe. The film's editor, Jessica Potter, and I have approached the film as an educating entertainment, using pop culture, funky archival metaphors and current body politics to shape the story.



# BEFORE VIEWING ANTICIPATION GUIDE

## Directions:

Before watching the film, respond to this anticipation guide to consider some of the themes in the film. Read each statement below. If you agree with the statement, explain why in the left-hand box under the Agree column. If you disagree, explain why in the box under the Disagree column.

**AGREE**

**STATEMENT**

**DISAGREE**

One of the most political things in the United States and the world is the female body.

The bodily functions of the female body are the subject of great debate.

The female menstrual cycle is dirty and taboo.

The stigma surrounding the female menstrual cycle is enforced by society.

Menstruation is just a microcosm of some of the larger issues we're fighting today.



# AFTER VIEWING THE FOUR A'S

## Directions:

In *Periodical*, we follow the experiences and stories of doctors, athletes, movie stars, journalists, activists, and everyday people through the marvel and mystery of the menstrual cycle from first period to last. Respond to each prompt in complete sentences, citing specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your response.

### ASSUMPTIONS

What assumptions does the film make about society, the audience, and the issue?

### ASPIRATIONS

How does the film challenge you to aspire to new ideas or to take a new position on the issue?

### AGREE

What key concepts or ideas do you fundamentally agree with?

### ARGUE

What key concepts or ideas from the film do you want to argue with?

# AFTER VIEWING STICKING POINTS

## Directions:

Look closely and critically at the four facets of issues addressed in the film: Facts, Values, Interests, and Policies. Use the chart below to record your responses, citing evidence and examples from the film.

<b>FACTS</b> What facts do people differ on? What facts do they agree on?	
<b>VALUES</b> What values do people differ on? What values do they agree on?	
<b>INTERESTS</b> What practical interests (e.g. investments, group loyalty) do people differ on? What practical interests do they share?	
<b>POLICIES</b> What policies (i.e., general actions to take) do people differ on? What policies do they agree on?	

# 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 are the two main tropes in portrayals of menstruating women in popular culture narratives?

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2. What is the period tax, and how is it discriminatory?

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3. What is period poverty, and who does it affect? What would period equity look like?

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4. What are the political issues surrounding sex education and menstruation?

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5. Why is it important to make policy changes around the period tax? How can policy change lead to systemic change?

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# EXTENSION ACTIVITY

## TAKE A STAND, PART ONE

### Directions:

Since the production of this film, New Mexico, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, and Texas have eliminated their tampon tax. Twenty-one states still tax period products. Where do you stand on the taxing of period products?

1. **Your View.** Individually, consider your thoughts on the period tax. What's your view?
2. **Share.** In small groups or as a class, share your individual perspective(s) about the issue, and listen to the perspectives of your fellow students.
3. **Look Again.** Individually, look again at your original response. What had you not considered that other people brought up? Have you changed your perspective, and if so, what changed? How has your thinking shifted after hearing your classmates' perspectives – even if you haven't changed your mind?
4. **Look Beyond.** Finally, look beyond this specific issue or case. Consider: How does the issue remind you of other situations you've seen, heard about, or experienced?

### ISSUE

Since the production of this film, New Mexico, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, and Texas have removed their tampon tax. Twenty-one states still tax period products. Take a stand on the taxing of period products.

### TAKE A STAND

**On your own:** What do you think? Explain your perspective.

### STAND BACK

**As a group:** Where do your classmates stand? Listen to their perspectives.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

### TAKE A STAND, PART TWO

#### LOOK AGAIN

**On your own:** Look again at your original response. What had you not considered that other people brought up? Maybe you changed your mind, maybe you didn't—that's OK! Either way, you heard other views. How has your thinking shifted after hearing your classmates' perspectives, even if you haven't changed your mind?

#### LOOK BEYOND

**As a group:** Look beyond this specific case. How does this issue remind you of other situations we've explored in class or that you've seen, heard about, or experienced?

# EXTENSION ACTIVITY IF MEN COULD MENSTRUATE

## Directions:

1. Read "If Men Could Menstruate" by Gloria Steinem, *Ms. Magazine*, October 1978  
**If Men Could Menstruate**  
<https://menstrualhygieneday.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/if-men-could-menstruate.pdf>
2. Consider what you have read, and use the chart to make your thinking visible.

<b>CONNECT</b> How are the ideas and information in this article connected to what you already know?	<b>EXTEND</b> What new ideas did you get that broadened your thinking or extended it in different directions?	<b>CHALLENGE</b> What challenges or puzzles emerged for you?

# EXTENSION ACTIVITY

## GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION

### Directions:

Today, millions of women and girls around the world are stigmatized, excluded, and discriminated against simply because they menstruate. Menstrual Hygiene Day is powered by more than 910 partner organizations that drive advocacy and action for menstrual health and hygiene all over the world. This partnership is committed to making menstruation a normal fact of life by 2030.

1. Visit the website. <https://menstrualhygieneday.org/>
2. Add your voice to the MH Day campaign using the Menstruation Bracelet.
3. Share a photo of yourself online featuring a digital menstruation bracelet.



Image Source: <https://menstrualhygieneday.org/>

# ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

©Tommy Lau

## 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

## 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/>.