



DOCLANDS

EDUCATION



**DOCLANDS EDUCATION
DOCSHORTS**



CURRICULUM GUIDE
GRADES: 8-12

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Dear Educators,

Thank you for attending the 8th Annual DocLands Documentary Film Festival screening of Documentary Shorts. We are excited to return in our 2024 spring season with a combination of both in-theater screenings for local schools and online screenings for those of you joining us from afar.

This year, our DocLands Education film selections 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. Of the documentary shorts featured in this collection, which film did you find the most original, unique, or inspiring? Why?
2. How did the documentary shorts succeed in showcasing a wide range and diversity of unique and compelling subjects? Which story resonated the most? Which story has the broadest societal relevance?
3. What did you see in these films that reminds you of other stories from your own life or other stories you know?
4. Which film had the most unique or interesting visual style? What was unique about it? How did the style impact the subject and the story?
5. What do you think is important about nonfiction filmmaking? How did these documentary shorts showcase powerful stories that are important for instilling a sense of awareness and understanding of a social, political, or cultural issue?
6. Short films have a unique ability to capture the essence of a subject or a story. They can provide a glimpse into a much larger world. How do the films in this collection allow the viewers to experience a taste of something crucial for connecting with the human experience?

INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. Select one of the five short documentary films and analyze how the subject had the most societal relevance and why the story can be an inspiration for us all.
2. Select one of the five short documentary films and analyze how the style of the documentary creatively and effectively represented the subject and told the story.

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 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 FILMS

At the heart of every impactful documentary, lies a carefully chosen topic that resonates with both the filmmaker and the audience. This year's collection of documentary shorts showcases a cohort of storytellers whose passion and creativity compelled them to explore unique topics and share them with the world. Each film has broader societal relevance that demands attention and will spark meaningful conversations and resonate deeply with the viewer.

From a backyard in San Francisco to a drag queen's memorial celebration, this DocLands Education documentary shorts program encompasses complex and joyful portraits of community leaders, family dynamics, and an iconic family-owned business. Featuring mainly Bay Area filmmakers and offering distinct styles with unflinching directorial voices, these short films allow us to step into other realities and appreciate the power of documentary filmmaking.

ABOUT THE FILMS

Small Steps, Big Future

Director: Luca Capponi

In San Francisco, a bilingual preschool driven by community-building and inclusivity highlights the transformative power of education.

This film contains references to domestic violence

I Would've Been Happy

Director: Jordan Wong

An attempt to map a fraught relationship through the use of intricately coded pictographs and schematic abstractions applied onto glazed ceramic tiles and quilted cyanotype fabric. The aesthetics of architectural language are used to reconstruct memories of family domestic spaces in the hope to uncover logic to a broken home.

BENKYODO: The Last Manju Shop in J Town

Directors: Akira Boch & Tadashi Nakamura

Ricky and Bobby Okamura wrestle with closing their beloved family-owned manju shop after serving the San Francisco Japantown community for 115 years. While the film showcases the handmade perfection of the shop's popular selection of traditional Japanese confection of manju, mochi, and more, it also reminds the viewer that the Japanese American experience is so much more than food.

Don't Cry For Me All You Drag Queens

Director: Kristal Sotomayor

Don't Cry For Me All You Drag Queens pays homage to the legendary Mother Cavallucci by weaving together the present and past to provide a striking portrait of belonging and memory. Joseph "Josie" Cavallucci (aka Mother Cavallucci) is a legendary New Hope drag queen that would host annual wedding celebrations in the 70s and 80s that served as fundraisers and a community party. Poetically merging archival photographs and present day footage from a community drag show, the film sparks conversation about the modern day issues Mother Cavallucci revolutionized.

To Be Invisible

Director: Myah Overstreet

Every week for the past three years, Alexis and Kellie have stood outside Durham County's child welfare agency to demand the return of their children. With the help of a former social worker turned parent advocate, Alexis and Kellie embark on a journey to reunite with their children after they were removed from their homes.

BEFORE VIEWING JOURNAL RESPONSE

Directions:

At the heart of every impactful documentary, lies a carefully chosen topic that resonates with both the filmmaker and the audience. This year’s collection of documentary shorts showcases a cohort of storytellers whose passion and creativity compelled them to explore unique topics and share them with the world. Each film has broader societal relevance that demands attention and will spark meaningful conversations and resonate deeply with the viewer.

If you were going to make an impactful documentary short film, what story would you be compelled to tell and why? What creative filmmaking ideas do you envision for telling this story?

DURING VIEWING SUBJECT, STORY & STYLE

Directions: Documentaries use facts, evidence, and first hand accounts to tell compelling stories. The style of the documentary, whether observational or participatory, affects how the story is presented. Objectivity and credibility are crucial, as are accuracy and transparency. Visuals, audio, and storytelling techniques create a personal and emotional connection with the audience, allowing viewers to empathize with the subject or issue presented.

While viewing each of the films in this collection of documentary shorts, use the notecatcher to record details about the subject, the story, and the style in order to dig a little deeper after viewing with interpretive analysis work.

Subject
What is the subject of the film? This is the person or event the film discusses, describes, or deals with. What do you learn about the subject of the film? Record specific details as they are covered or revealed in the film.

Story
At its simplest level, a plot is the sequence of events that make up a story. It's the structure that holds the documentary together and guides the audience through the journey of the people involved. In contrast, a story is the overarching narrative that encompasses the themes and emotions of the film. What story does the film tell?

Style
The documentary short is a genuine, dynamic genre that narrates, exhibits, and probes a subject and demonstrates, investigates, questions, or challenges an important social, political, or cultural issue. What style does the filmmaker use to treat the subject and tell the story? How does the filmmaker uniquely or creatively provide a medium for the viewer to discover and understand the subject?

Small Steps, Big Future

Director: Luca Capponi

Subject	
Story	
Style	

DURING VIEWING

SUBJECT, STORY & STYLE

I Would've Been Happy

Director: Jordan Wong

Subject	
Story	
Style	

BENKYODO: The Last Manju Shop in J Town

Directors: Akira Boch & Tadashi Nakamura

Subject	
Story	
Style	

DURING VIEWING

SUBJECT, STORY & STYLE

Don't Cry For Me All You Drag Queens

Director: Kristal Sotomayor

Subject	
Story	
Style	

To Be Invisible

Director: Myah Overstreet

Subject	
Story	
Style	

AFTER VIEWING SIX-WORD REVIEW CHALLENGE

Directions: The documentary short takes its lineage and influences from some of the most acclaimed films of all time. The genre needs to continuously grow and evolve in order to stay interesting. Films that showcase real people, real events, and real issues need a real creative vision behind them in order to be compelling for a wider audience. Share your critical response to each of the films with your overall thoughts on the subject, story, and filmmaker's vision by writing a six-word review of each film.

Small Steps, Big Future

My Six-Word Review:

I Would've Been Happy

My Six-Word Review:

BENKYODO: The Last Manju Shop in J Town

My Six-Word Review:

BENKYODO: The Last Manju Shop in J Town

My Six-Word Review:

BENKYODO: The Last Manju Shop in J Town

My Six-Word Review:

AFTER VIEWING RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Directions: The world looks different depending on who and where you are. Film has the power to transform human experience and reflect it back to us. In that reflection we can sometimes see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Think of those stories as **mirrors**. Film also offers views of worlds that are unfamiliar to us and has the power to provide us with insight into perspectives different from our own. Think of those stories as **windows**. Think about these terms in relation to the films you've just watched and respond to the following prompts, using evidence from the films to support your writing.

1. Of these films, which one was the best mirror: a story that reflected a story you see in your own life, and gave you a way to see your own experience from a new perspective? What was relatable about this story and what was unique about the way the filmmaker chose to tell it?

2. Of these films, which one was the best window: a story with insight into a world, identity, or experience you were unfamiliar with? What was unique about this story, and what was unique about the way the filmmaker chose to tell the story?

3. Of these films, which film had the most compelling topic with the most broader societal relevance? How or why?

AFTER VIEWING LENSES FOR DIALOGUE

Directions: This thinking routine is for looking through lenses and exchanging perspectives. Respond to each of the prompts by recording your thoughts in the respective boxes. Then, share your ideas with a table partner or in small groups.

<p>SEE</p> <p>Reflect more deeply on each of the films in the collection of documentary shorts. What did you notice? Make a list of observations that set the films apart or connected them on some level.</p>	
<p>CHOOSE A LENS</p> <p>Think about how you see the world: your lenses. These could be related to your role in your family, your race, your ethnicity, your gender, your sexuality, or anything else about you. Choose one lens and write about how you might see or think about the world through that lens.</p>	
<p>PROBE</p> <p>After watching the films in this collection of documentary shorts, ask some questions to understand more about another person's lens and perspectives. This could be the lens of one of the filmmakers or any one of the people involved in the stories.</p>	
<p>REFLECT</p> <p>Think again about the subjects and stories of each of the films in the collection. Do you have any new observations, ideas, or questions? What issues or themes did your lenses invite you to think more deeply about?</p>	
<p>SHARE</p> <p>With a table partner or small group, exchange perspectives and look through other lenses. Record highlights of your conversation here.</p>	

A Thinking Routine Borrowed from Harvard Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education:
<https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

THE PERSONAL ESSAY FILM

Introduction:

At the heart of every impactful documentary lies a carefully chosen documentary topic that resonates with both the filmmaker and the audience. The process of selecting a topic for your own documentary can be challenging. The same is true for the personal essay film.

Personal essay films are a great entry point to filmmaking because of the low barriers. You don't need a big crew. You don't need sets, props, or actors. All you need is a basic camera, simple editing software, and the courage to share your own story. And even the camera isn't necessary if opting for a found-footage approach. With these few ingredients, the personal essay film becomes a powerful tool for communicating your unique perspective to the world in short documentary-like form.

In the extension activity linked below, you will learn a basic production approach for creating a 3-minute personal essay film, combining scripted narration with symbolic video imagery to tell a story from your own life. Enroll for free online to access an online curriculum to guide you through the production process.

MY PLACE | MY STORY

Foundations of Filmmaking and The Personal Essay Film online course

Enroll for Free:

<https://www.cafilmeducationonline.org/courses/foundations-personal-essay>

CAFILM Education's virtual course curriculum for making a personal essay film



ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



A post-screening Q&A at the DocLands Documentary Film Festival.

What is a film festival?

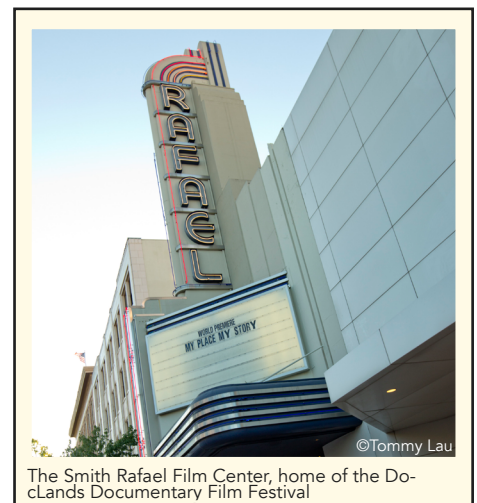
A film festival is an event in which multiple movies are presented over the course of one or several days. Depending on the size of the festival, all of the screenings may take place in a single theater or may involve multiple venues throughout a city. Festivals also include special events like panel 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 wide-

er 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 throughout 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 DocLands Documentary Film Festival

Presented by the California Film Institute, DocLands is a vibrant celebration of nonfiction storytelling held annually in Marin County, California. Expanding upon the exchange of ideas and inspiration through captivating screenings, networking, and engaging conversations, DocLands strives to foster dialogue, inspire connections, and build an inclusive community around the art of documentary filmmaking. DocLands aims to illuminate filmmakers' diverse perspectives and ignite a passion for exploring real-world issues by showcasing compelling stories and the thought-provoking insights behind them. Join us as we embark on a journey to discover, connect, and celebrate the power of documentary cinema.



The Smith Rafael Film Center, home of the DocLands Documentary 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 have student film categories. If you are a filmmaker, explore FilmFreeway (www.filmfreeway.com) for a database of worldwide film festivals where you can submit your film. California Film Institute also offers many opportunities for volunteering at the annual DocLands Documentary Film Festival and Mill Valley Film Festival. Find out more at <https://www.cafilm.org/volunteer/>.