

**DOCUMENTARY SHORTS:
SWEET DREAMS**

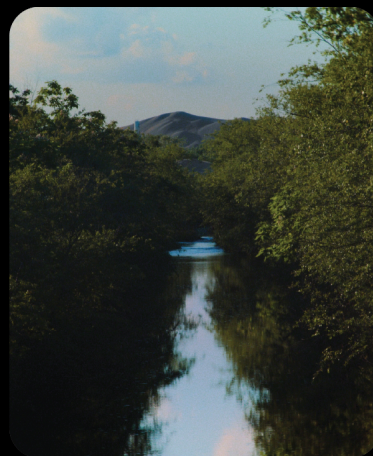


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Dear educators,

Thank you for attending the 47th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of Documentary Shorts: Sweet Dreams. We are excited to return in our 2024 fall season with a combination of both in-person screenings for local schools and online screenings for those of you joining us from afar

As media educators, we support film as the literature of the twenty-first century. This powerful medium sits in a critical part of human culture, at the intersection of art, industry, technology, and politics. It is a universal language that lets us tell stories about our collective hopes and fears and gives us the opportunity to make sense of the world around us and the people in it. This year, our film selections for school 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 the film by the common-core aligned skills of developing an evidence-based interpretation of a text both orally and in writing.

The discussion prompts have been crafted to offer students the opportunity to grapple with questions of ethics and social justice through representations of culture on film. They offer a variety of options for fostering small-group or whole-class dialogue by addressing the film industry in general and this film in particular. 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, or consider the film review format as an alternative. Additionally, student handouts for a variety of thinking routines are provided for before, during, and after viewing the film with a particular emphasis on social-emotional learning. Extension activities offer further creative opportunities for students to consider the cultural impact of the film as both an art form and a political platform. 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! Enjoy the film!

Sincerely,
The CAFILM Education Team

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which film in the collection of documentary shorts had the most compelling story with the broadest social, cultural, or political impact? In other words, which film did the best job of bringing awareness to an important, often unknown story, and handled the topic in a different way than other news media? How or why?
2. How do each of the films, with their unique subjects and stories, empower underrepresented voices, or give marginalized groups a chance to use their voices?
3. Which of the films in this collection do you think will have the most influence or impact on individuals? Which film inspires action and contributes to changes on issues related to gender equality, cultural diversity, global empathy, current affairs, or basic human rights?
4. How do each of the films featured in this collection educate audiences and help viewers understand the world around us?
5. How do the films in this program encourage empathy and social awareness? How do each of the films bridge the gap between theory and action?
6. Which of the films in this collection was most effective in provoking thoughtful discussion with classmates, friends, or family? In other words, which film do you want to continue to discuss? Why?
7. What do you think is important about nonfiction filmmaking? How does documentary filmmaking continue to expand our vision? How do these films teach us to see the world differently, or help us to see the world around us in new ways?
8. 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?
9. How do documentaries challenge traditional assumptions about the form and the questions it raises about objectivity, authenticity, and immediacy?
10. Can documentaries be just as powerful as a Hollywood blockbuster for entertaining as well as educating viewers on a subject of greater importance than just the story?
11. Short films have a unique ability to capture the essence of a subject or 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?
12. What is the significance of the program title, *Sweet Dreams*? How do each of the films represent an individual or collective dream?

DISCUSSION NOTECATCHER

Directions:

Use this notecatcher to record what you take away from discussing the questions above.

IDEAS I HEARD DURING DISCUSSION

MIND-POP IDEAS

Ideas that came to my mind during discussion.

ONE IMPORTANT THING I LEARNED DURING DISCUSSION

INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. Documentary film is a powerful vessel and tool for advocacy, making it possible for aspiring creatives to bring awareness to their causes. Write an essay in which you show how one of the films in this collection brings awareness to a cause and advocates for getting involved or effecting social, cultural, or political change.
2. Documentary films provide multiple lenses for dialogue. Think about how you see the world through your own lenses. Then, recall and reflect on how each of the films in this collection of shorts helped you to better understand 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. Write an essay in which you show how one, or all, of the films in this collection left you with a sense of involvement, hope, excitement, indifference, despair—or maybe with a mixture of such feelings.
3. Arguments about truth in documentary filmmaking—how real a film is or isn't—are inherent to the form, or how the subject, story, and style demand both honesty and manipulation through the craft of the filmmaker. But are a film's insights and revelations about a subject any less untrue as a result of its craft? Can a creatively-biased, and purposefully crafted perspective be true? Write an essay in which you show how one, or all, of the films in this collection are telling the truth.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

International Documentary Association

<https://www.documentary.org/creators/resources>

Resources for Documentary Filmmakers and Creators

International Documentary Association

<https://www.documentary.org/feature/where-truth-lies%E2%80%94or-not>

Where the Truth Lies – Or Not.

Sense of Cinema

<https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2018/book-reviews/subjectivity-spectatorship-and-social-change-the-act-of-documenting-documentary-film-in-the-21st-century-by-brian-winston-gail-van-stone-and-wang-chi/>

Subjectivity, Spectatorship, and Social Change: The Act of Documenting: Documentary Film in the 21st Century.

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

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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.RI.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.9-10.3

Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4

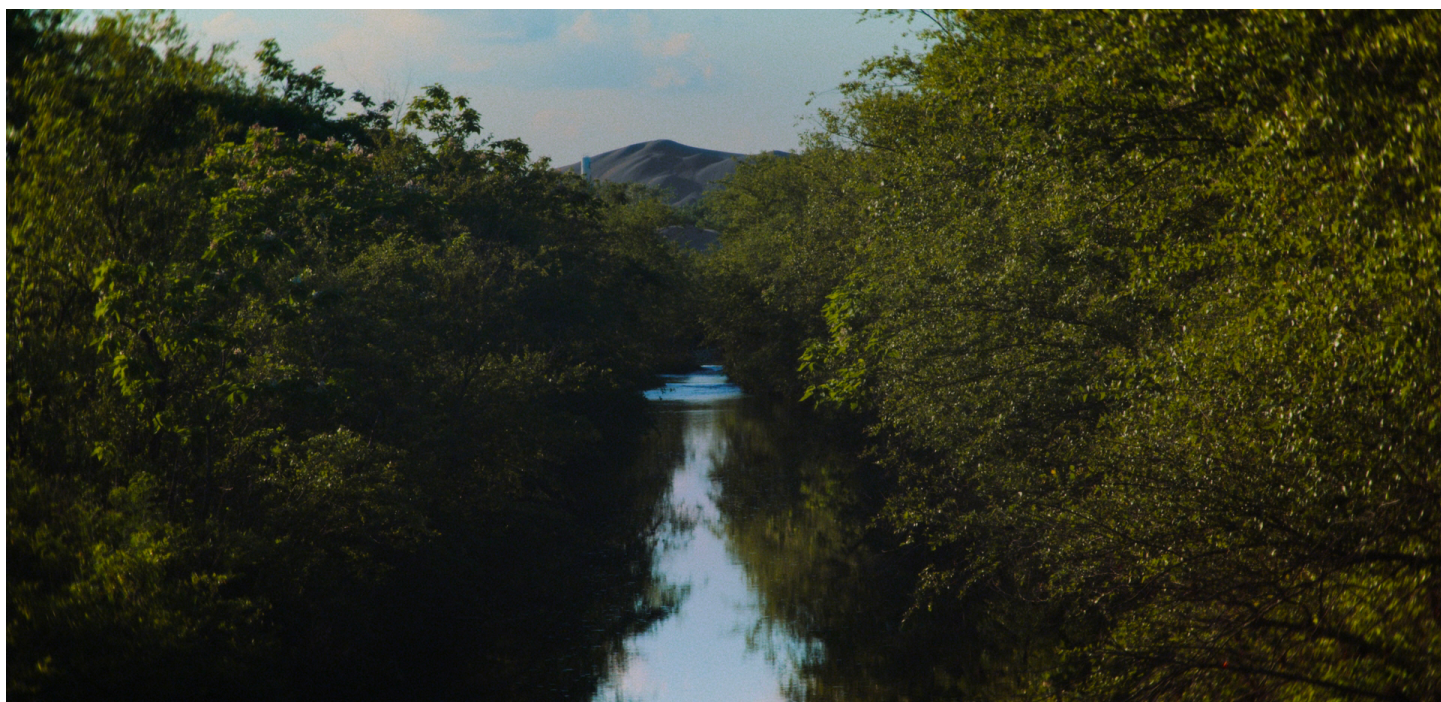
Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance the point of view or purpose.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

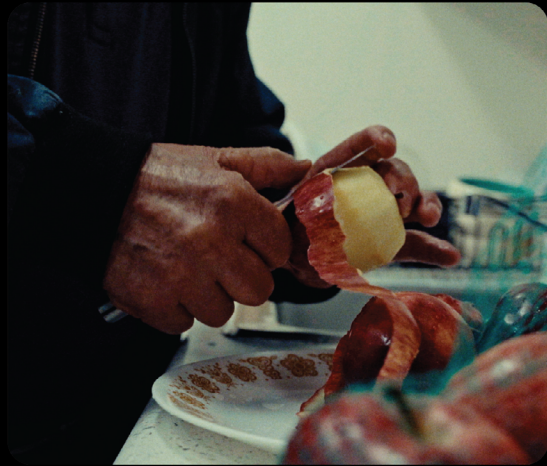
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

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.



Name: _____



DOCUMENTARY SHORTS: SWEET DREAMS



ABOUT THE FILMS

"Can you hold my hands and be my guide? Clouds filled with stars cover your skies." This documentary shorts program reflects on the value of intergenerational community, love, and activism.

KEY THEMES

HISTORY, INDIGENOUS CULTURE, SOCIAL STUDIES, ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURE, PSYCHOLOGY, LGBTQIA+, SEL, ACTIVISM, SOCIAL JUSTICE

ABOUT THE FILMS

FILMS INCLUDE:

SUNCHONG

Yoontaek Hong | US 2024 | 14 min

An 89-year-old Korean immigrant who volunteers at a senior center reflects on his life's journey with his beloved wife.

WE RIDE FOR HER

Prairie Rose Seminole and Katrina Lillian Sorrentino | US 2023 | 18 min

An Indigenous women's motorcycle group rides to end the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women while a member of their community searches for a missing sister.

THE BIRD RESCUE CENTER

Derek Knowles | US 2023 | 13 min

A window into a northern California bird sanctuary and the people who give wildlife second flight.

MEET ME AT THE CREEK

Loren Waters | US 2023 | 9 min

What happens to the water happens to us. Without it, we cannot move culture forward and we cannot exist here. Meet Me at the Creek tells a story of interconnectedness and Cherokee values through the lifelong fight of Rebecca Jim, a Cherokee Nation citizen and Waterkeeper Warrior, as she leads the effort to restore Tar Creek.

WOULDN'T MAKE IT ANY OTHER WAY

Hao Zhou | US 2024 | 20 min

Having built a colorful queer life in an American prairie town in Iowa, an aspiring costume designer visits their island homeland, Guam, to make costumes for a children's theater and reconnect with distanced parents.

BEFORE VIEWING

REFLECT & RESPOND

Directions:

At the heart of every impactful documentary, lies a carefully chosen topic that resonates with both the filmmaker and the audience. This 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?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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? What is the significance of where the story takes place?



DURING VIEWING

SUBJECT, STORY & STYLE

SUNCHONG

Yoontaek Hong

SUBJECT	
STORY	
STYLE	

WE RIDE FOR HER

Prairie Rose Seminole and Katrina Lillian Sorrentino

SUBJECT	
STORY	
STYLE	

THE BIRD RESCUE CENTER

Derek Knowles

SUBJECT	
STORY	
STYLE	

DURING VIEWING

SUBJECT, STORY & STYLE

MEET ME AT THE CREEK

Loren Waters

SUBJECT	
STORY	
STYLE	

WOULDN'T MAKE IT ANY OTHER WAY

Hao Zhou

SUBJECT	
STORY	
STYLE	



DURING VIEWING

ELEMENTS OF DOCUMENTARY NOTECATCHER

Directions:

The elements of documentary are the different types of sound and image used to explore the subject of the film. There are six basic elements that can be found in all documentaries, though a film might not use all of them.

In this collection of documentary shorts, observe how each of the filmmakers used different types of sound and image to explore the subject of the films. Use the notecatcher to record the details you notice while viewing so you can interpret how the elements are effectively combined to tell the story and create the meaning of a compelling story.

Narration

Narration is the spoken word heard throughout a film. Sometimes the narrator is a person in the film, and sometimes it is a disconnected observer.

Actuality Footage

Actuality footage refers to the unscripted footage recorded in the making of the documentary.

Archival Materials

Archival materials are the pieces of film, video, photographs, documents, and sound recordings that were created for other uses prior to the documentary.

DURING VIEWING

ELEMENTS OF DOCUMENTARY NOTECATCHER

On-Screen Text

Text is often used throughout a documentary to provide important facts, identify people, and present additional information.

Interviews

Interviews are the recorded conversations with a person who has some connection to or knowledge about the subject of the film.

Animations/Reenactments

Documentaries will sometimes use animation or staged recreations of situations and events in order to tell a story.

In which film were the elements of documentary filmmaking used most effectively?

Explain Your Reasoning.

AFTER VIEWING RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Directions:

When watching documentary films, you can ask yourself questions about content, your experience as a viewer, and the film's presentation. Recall, reflect, and then respond to each question, referring to specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your response.

1. Of the documentary shorts featured in this collection, which film did you find the most original, unique, or inspiring? Why?

2. How did these documentary shorts give you access to important information about social, cultural, political, or even global issues you might not otherwise be exposed to?

3. What universal themes or bigger ideas connect each of the films in this collection of documentary shorts?

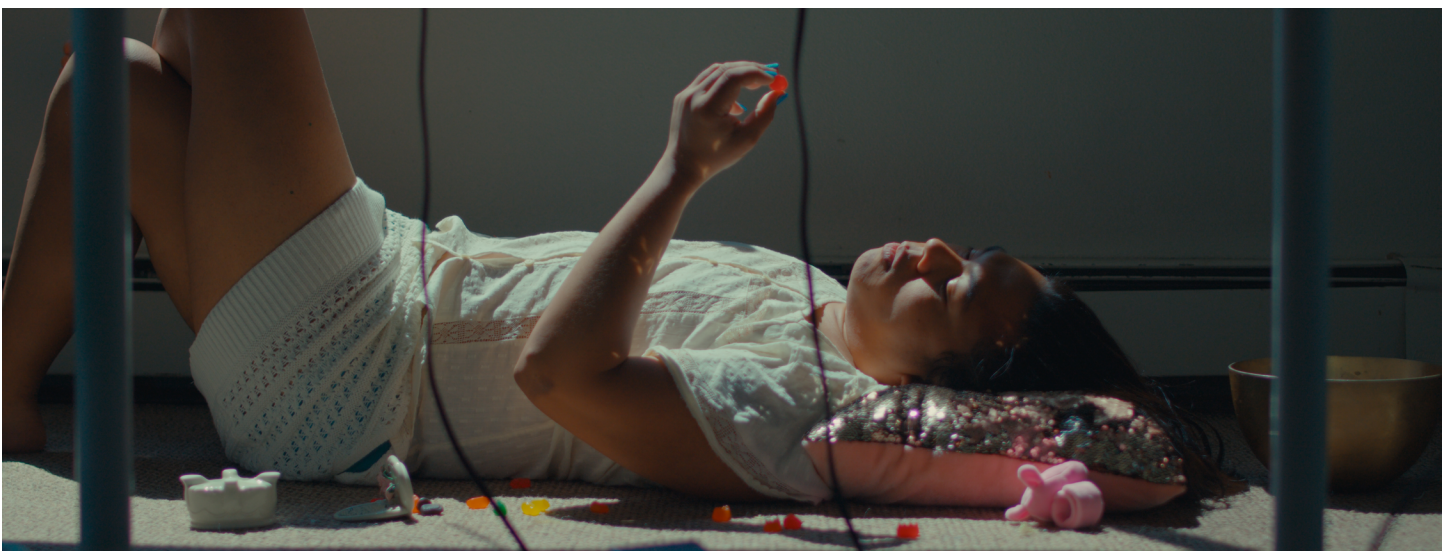
4. Which story did you most connect with? How or why?

5. Which story has the broadest social or cultural relevance? Which story has the most cultural influence or impact? How or why?

AFTER VIEWING RESPONSE QUESTIONS

6. 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?

7. Did the film succeed in helping you to understand the cultural beliefs or practices of another group in its own cultural context? How?



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 the filmmaker's style by writing a six-word review of each film.

SUNCHONG

Yoontaek Hong

My Six-Word Review:

WE RIDE FOR HER

Prairie Rose Seminole and Katrina Lillian Sorrentino

My Six-Word Review:

THE BIRD RESCUE CENTER

Derek Knowles

My Six-Word Review:

MEET ME AT THE CREEK

Loren Waters

My Six-Word Review:

WOULDN'T MAKE IT ANY OTHER WAY

Hao Zhou

My Six-Word Review:

AFTER VIEWING

SAME, DIFFERENT, CONNECT, ENGAGE

How to Use this Thinking Routine:

This thinking routine is for looking through different 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 this collection of documentary shorts. What did you notice? Make a list of observations that set the films apart from each other, or connect them on some level.</p>	
<p>CHOOSE A LENS</p> <p>Think about how you see the world through your own lenses. These could be related to your role in your family or community, your age, your culture, your social location, your race or ethnicity, your gender or sexuality, or anything else about your identity. 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 that might help you to better understand 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 subject and stories of each of the films in this collection of documentary shorts. 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 in small groups, exchange perspectives and look through other lenses. Record highlights of your conversation here.</p>	

A Thinking Routine Borrowed from Harvard Project Zero's Think Routine Toolbox:

<https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

FILM REVIEW

Directions:

After watching the selection of Documentary Shorts: Sweet Dreams, select one film to review in writing.

While a film review is an evaluation of a movie, it is not simply a viewer-response expressing the writer's feelings about the film. Instead, a film review attempts to do three things for the reader:

1. **Summarize** what the film is about (the story)
2. **Interpret** the film/filmmakers' intended meaning (the themes and claims)
3. **Evaluate** whether the film is successful in expressing the intended meaning (its effectiveness in conveying the themes and claims)

A review will support its perspective with evidence from the film, such as descriptions of important moments, characters, and scenes.

Suggested Structure

Introduction

- Introduce the film: title, director, and any relevant credentials (award wins for the film, other films by the director, origins for the film's story, etc.).
- Summarize what the film is about - briefly, and without any "spoilers" that give away plot twists and surprises.

Body

- Offer an interpretation of what the film/director is trying to say through this story. In other words, what is the film's theme, message, or primary claim?

Conclusion

- Evaluate whether the film is successful or not in conveying its intended message.
- Identify who the intended audience is and how effective the film is in meeting their needs. Is the film for a particular age group or social group?

Final Tip: Make sure to include some critical appraisal of the film in the first and last sentence, but try to weave it throughout the review as well.



From CAFILM Education Resources: Narrative Film Analysis Toolkit
<https://www.cafilmedu.org/curriculum-resources/>

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

FILM REVIEW

My Film Review

[illegible]

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

FILM REVIEW

Introduction:

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 is not 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 this extension activity, 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.

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



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley 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 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.

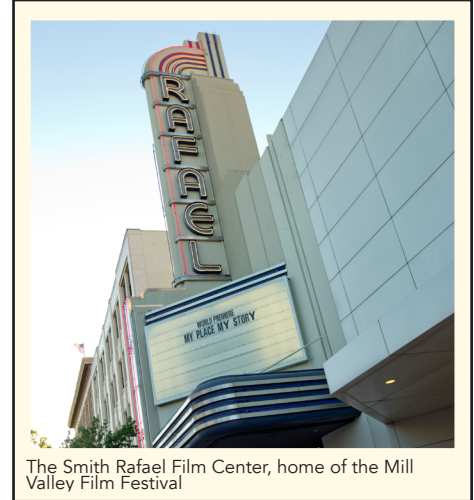
History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

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.



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) 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/>.