

MVFF

EDUCATION GROW EXPLORE CONNECT DISCOVER

October 6-16



# THE YOUNG VOTE

a film by Diane Robinson

**CURRICULUM GUIDE**  
GRADES: 6-12

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Instructor Resources

A Letter to Educators	ii
Discussion Questions	iii
Interpretive Essay Prompts	iii
Additional Resources	iv
Standards	iv
About CAFILM	iv

## Student Handouts

About the Film	1
Contextual Information	2
Viewing Activities	3
Extension Activities	8
About Film Festivals	10



Dear educators,

Thank you for attending the 45th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of *The Young Vote*. We are excited to return in our 2022 fall season with a combination of both in-person screenings for local schools and online screenings for those of you joining us from afar.

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 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, during, and after viewing are provided as stand-alone activities to be used individually or in sequence. 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 main events that occur in this film? What has changed between the start and the end?
2. What are the primary emotions you felt during this film? What are some secondary emotions?
3. Consider the editing and the tempo of this film. Did things move quickly or slowly? How come?
4. What do you see in this film that reminds you of other stories from your life or other stories you know?
5. 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?
6. Consider other films you've seen. What makes this film unique or important? What are some connections between this film and other films?
7. Were there any voices or perspectives you thought you were missing from this film? If so, how might the inclusion of those perspectives have changed the film and its message?
8. What were some of the frustrations that the people in the film experienced around elections? How did they respond?
9. Which voter suppression issues do you think are most prevalent or have the greatest risk of occurring in your community?
10. Should states be allowed to determine their own policies to regulate voting? Or would it be better for all states to follow the same procedures? Why?
11. What was the central message of this film? Is this a message your generation needs to hear?

# INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. What makes the youth voice so important in contemporary elections, and what can young people do to influence elections?
2. What practices must continue, and what kind of reforms must occur, to ensure democracy prevails in the United States?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Civics Unplugged

<https://www.civicsunplugged.org/>

Civics Unplugged is a 501(c)(3) social enterprise founded in 2019 that empowers leaders of Gen Z with the training, funding, and network they need to become civic innovators that build a brighter future for humanity.

### Students for Open Primaries

<https://studentsforopenprimaries.org/>

A project of the Open Primaries Education Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization that conducts research, advances litigation, and educates the public and policymakers on the benefits of electoral reform.

### Mi Familia Vota

<https://www.mifamiliavota.org/>

Mi Familia Vota's mission is to build Latino political power by expanding the electorate, strengthening local infrastructures, and through year-round voter engagement. They are also training the next generation of leaders by opening opportunities through their Youth Development Programs and through their Mi Familia Vota work.

### Mobile Voting Project

<https://mobilevoting.org/>

Mobile Voting is a campaign launched by Tusk Philanthropies that seeks to increase voter turnout by making voting more convenient and accessible. This nonprofit, nonpartisan initiative is working to expand voting options across the country by adding mobile voting for all voters.

## 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.9-10.9.B

Apply grades 9-10 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., "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").

## 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.

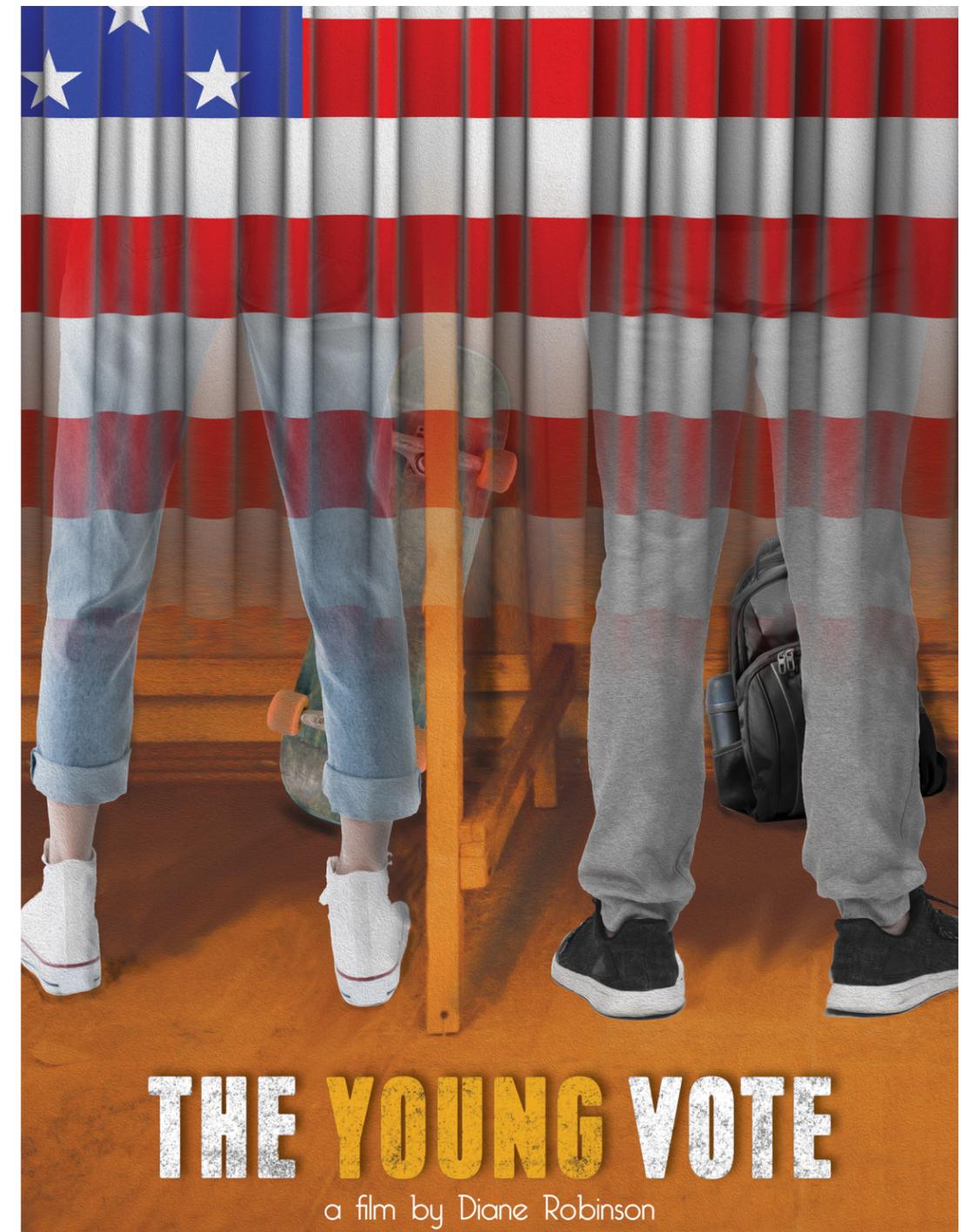
The California Film Institute and Mill Valley Film Festival are located in Marin County, California, on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary homelands of the Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples. This includes the Southern Pomo and Graton Rancheria Tribes. These tribes were removed or displaced from their lands. We recognize this history and the harm to present-day Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples and to their ancestors. The California Film Institute commits to moving forward from a place of authenticity and working with present-day tribes to elevate their stories, history, and present-day legacy through film.

### Follow the Mill Valley Film Festival on social media

 @millvalleyfilmfest  @MillValleyFilmFestival

 @mvfilmfest  californiafilminstitute #MVFF45

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## ABOUT THE FILM

*The Young Vote* is a documentary that follows a group of activists during the 2020 election season in the US as they dedicate themselves to mobilizing young voters during a global pandemic and unprecedented social unrest. During the film, they dedicate their energy to the most successful Get Out The Vote effort in the history of the country and reveal the challenges facing many young voters across the country. The film gives insight into what drives these young people to and away from the polls and proposes solutions to getting more young people involved in our democracy.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

### Diane Robinson

Diane Robinson is a filmmaker and movement builder since her early days on the front lines as a teacher and non-profit leader in low-income communities. Robinson earned her bachelor's degree from Vassar College, a master's degree from California State University, and a Doctorate in Education Leadership from Harvard University. She began her career in education as a first-grade bilingual teacher in Compton, California in 1994.

After teaching successfully for four years and holding senior leadership with organizations like Teach For America, the KIPP Foundation, Global Nomads Group and Teach For All for decades, Robinson embarked on a career as a filmmaker—to make films that tell the stories of the students and communities that she served for decades. She started Yard Girl Productions in 2019, and *The Young Vote* is her first film.



## KEY VOCABULARY

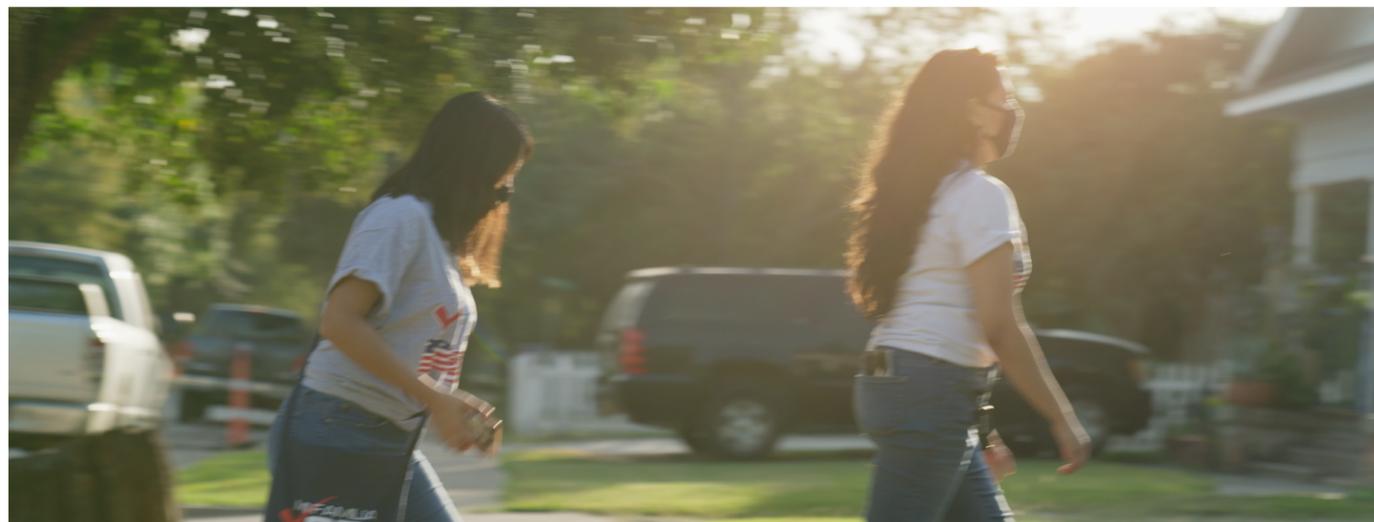
**Citizens United:** Used to refer to *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, a 2010 Supreme Court decision which ruled that corporate donations and funding for political campaigns are protected from government restriction under the First Amendment free speech clause

**DACA:** Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (abbreviated "DACA" and pronounced "dah-kuh") is a program that postponed deportation of immigrants who had arrived illegally in the United States while still children. These immigrant youths are sometimes referred to as "Dreamers"

**gerrymandering:** the process of redrawing the boundaries of electoral districts, frequently used as a tactic to increase the chance of a party winning an election by drawing lines to maximize the concentration of that party's voters within districts

**nonparty affiliate:** a voter who has not registered as a member of the Democratic, Republican, or another qualified political party. Sometimes referred to as No Party Preference Voters, nonparty affiliates are sometimes ineligible for certain party-specific primary elections

**redlining:** the practice of limiting services, rights, or access for housing to someone based on one's race or ethnicity



## BEFORE VIEWING: ANTICIPATION GUIDE

### Directions:

For each statement below, draw an X on the spectrum line indicating how much you agree with the statement. Then, write two to three sentences to explain your reasoning. If there is time, compare your responses with a peer's.

*The United States has fair, democratic elections that accurately represent the will of the people.*

← Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree →

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*Restricting voting to in-person polling places is the simplest way to ensure secure, accurate, and equitable access to voting.*

← Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree →

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*By limiting the voting age to 18 and above, teenagers are effectively kept out of participating in the democratic process.*

← Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree →

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## DURING VIEWING: NOTEATCHER

### Directions:

As you watch the film, pay attention to the various individuals working to reform voting practices and influence elections. Fill out each box to keep track of the people, their opinions, and the actions they take to engage with democratic institutions.

	What do you know about this person's background?	What events got them interested in becoming an activist?	What changes do they hope to create in their community?	What tactics, strategies, or actions do they use to advance their goals?
<b>Sophia</b> 				
<b>Ariana</b> 				

## DURING VIEWING: NOTEATCHER

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<b>Liz</b> 				
<b>Daniel</b> 				
<b>Elena</b> 				

## 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 were some methods of voter suppression analyzed in the film? What groups of people are most affected by voter suppression?

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2. Of all the people in the film, whose tactics and actions do you think are most likely to influence voters or change the voting system? Why do you think so?

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3. If you could do anything to change the election process to make it more fair or accessible, what would you do?

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4. What factors do you think are most likely to get people your age to participate in elections? What actions could someone take to encourage people to vote as soon as they are eligible?

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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 other learnings?

### 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 Think Routine Toolbox:

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

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY: DIRECT ACTION LETTER WRITING

Though you may not yet be of voting age, as *The Young Vote* shows, you are not too young to start participating in democracy. Use this activity to engage in a direct action to communicate your opinion on voting rights.

### What is direct action?

Direct action refers to the political tactics and methods used to raise awareness or force discussion on an issue. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., nonviolent direct action “seeks to dramatize the issue [so] that it can no longer be ignored.” Like voting, direct actions, which include protests and sit-ins, are an essential part of a democracy. Unlike voting, however, direct actions can happen at any time, and anybody in a society can initiate a direct action—not just those of voting age.

### Letter Writing

Letter writing is a simple, but highly effective, direct action for engaging in a democracy. The purpose of a letter writing campaign is to raise awareness and sway opinion on a particular issue. Often, letters for political action are addressed to legislators and elected officials who are in a position of power to act in a way that can change the issue, by passing legislation or supporting a particular cause. Anyone can write a letter, even people who aren't of voting age, making it an excellent tool for making your voice heard.



## EXTENSION ACTIVITY: DIRECT ACTION LETTER WRITING

### Instructions

#### Step 1: Research the issue

Effective direct action always starts with a solid understanding of the issue you are trying to address and the community you are trying to reach with your message. First, understand both sides of the issue. Then figure out what you are trying to say and, just as importantly, who you are trying to say it to. Are you addressing people who feel differently from you to raise their awareness of your perspective? Or are you addressing people who agree with you, to create a feeling of solidarity?

#### Step 2: Find a recipient

It's important that you direct your letter to the right person. If you are trying to raise awareness about an issue in your community, often the best people to contact are your local representatives and legislators, whose job is to listen to the people in their communities and consider their voices when writing and voting on legislation. You can use the website [www.commoncause.com](http://www.commoncause.com) to find your representatives based on where you live.

#### Step 3: Draft your letter

In your letter, introduce yourself, the issue you're writing them about, and why you think your reader needs to address this issue. If you have a specific action you want them to take (such as passing legislation or increasing funding for a particular cause), then make sure to mention specifically how they can help. Include a couple of important facts that support your claim. Lastly, keep it brief: half a page to a page is appropriate.

#### Step 4: Revise your letter

At the very least you'll want to run a spell check on your letter. Or try reading your letter aloud to make sure everything sounds the way you want it to. Even better, have a trusted adult look it over.

#### Step 5: Send it!

Make your voice heard! The great thing about writing letters is that there are few barriers between you and your intended audience. For maximum impact, coordinate with friends or classmates to create a campaign in which you all write to the same person on the same issue. This helps show the size of your movement and encourages your reader to take your message seriously.



# 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.

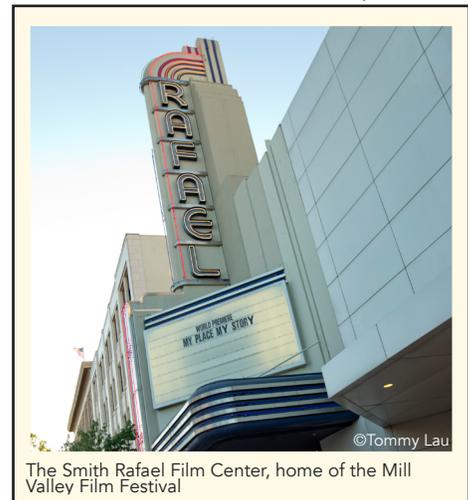
## History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

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

©Tommy Lau

## 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/>.