



DOCLANDS

EDUCATION

APRIL 28 - MAY 2

SPEAK



CURRICULUM GUIDE
GRADES: 6-12

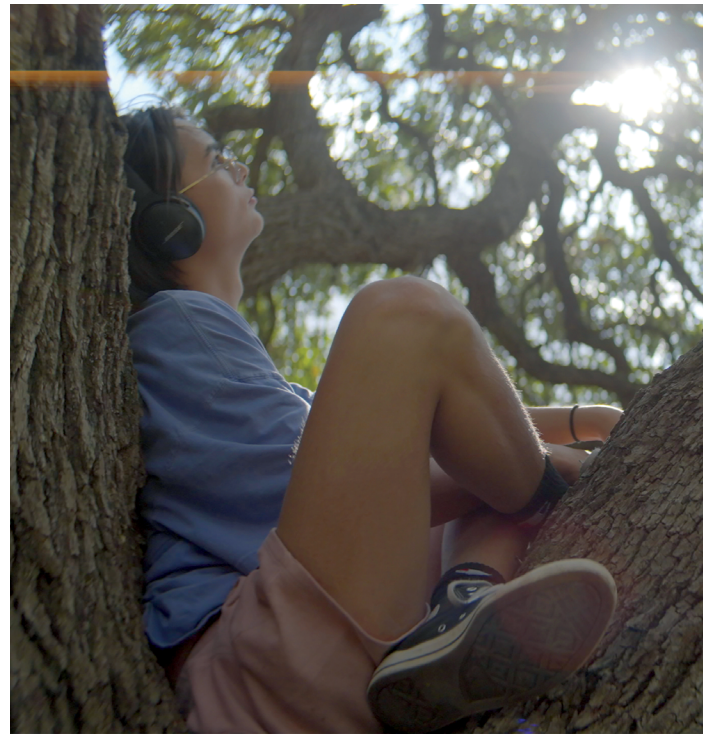
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Dear Educators,

Thank you for attending the 9th Annual DocLands Documentary Film Festival screening of the documentary feature film *SPEAK*. We are excited to return in our 2025 spring season with a combination of both in-theater 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 in 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 the 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. What emotions did the documentary evoke in you? Did it change your perspective on public speaking?
2. What makes a speech powerful, memorable, or influential? Can you think of a speech that had an impact on you?
3. The film showcases speakers with different styles. Did any particular speaker's approach resonate with you? Why?
4. How does public speaking influence society and create change? Can you think of historical or modern examples?
5. The documentary highlights the fears and challenges that speakers face. What do you think is the biggest obstacle in public speaking - fear, content, or delivery? Why?
6. The speakers in the documentary talk about personal transformation through public speaking. How can learning to speak publicly change someone's confidence or leadership skills?
7. What new insights did you gain about the topics addressed in the speeches that were showcased leading up to the national competition?
8. The orators in *SPEAK* share personal and emotional stories. How did the unique, personalized anecdotes infuse each speech with humanity? Why do you think storytelling is such a powerful tool in public speaking?
9. Have you ever had an experience where you had to speak in front of a group? How did it feel, and what would you do differently after watching *SPEAK*?
10. In what ways can public speaking be used beyond competitions - such as in social movements, careers, or personal relationships?
11. Public speaking competitions focus on delivery, but also on message. Do you think competition makes speakers better, or does it put too much focus on winning rather than meaningful communication on a particular message?
12. If you had to give a speech on something you're passionate about, what would it be and why?



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. Voice as Power: How can teenagers use original oratory to influence social change, and what rhetorical strategies make their messages more impactful? Support your argument with historical or contemporary examples of young people who have shaped public discourse.
2. Speaking Truth in a Noisy World: In an era of social media and digital communication, what unique role does original oratory play in amplifying teenage voices? How can a well-crafted speech cut through misinformation, apathy, or resistance to inspire action? Support your argument with examples from the film.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The National Speech and Debate Organization

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

National Speech and Debate National Tournament 2025

<https://www.speechanddebate.org/national-tournament-2025/>

The Art and Science of Original Oratory Textbook PDF

<https://www.speechanddebate.org/wp-content/uploads/Original-Oratory-Textbook.pdf>

Original Oratory: Choosing a Topic

<https://pbcfl.net/wp-content/uploads/Choosing-a-Speech-Topic.pdf>

YR Radio: NPR

A national network of young journalists and artists creating content for this generation

<https://www.npr.org/series/4692815/yr-media>

Amanda Gorman Reads Inauguration Poem “The Hill We Climb”

WATCH: Amanda Gorman reads inauguration poem, ‘The Hill We Climb’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055illiN4>

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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californiafilminstitute

STANDARDS

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 central idea of a text and analyze 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.9-10.6

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

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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

Name: _____



ABOUT THE FILM

Five top-ranked high school oratory students spend a year crafting spellbinding spoken word performances with the dream of winning one of the world's largest and most intense public speaking competitions. Directors Jennifer Tiexiera and Guy Mossman take viewers behind the scenes of the prestigious competition that's seen Oprah, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, Josh Gad, and Brad Pitt compete. The film provides a heartfelt glimpse into the lives of five competitors - raising prized pigs, managing TikTok fame, dating dreamy boyfriends, and navigating complicated family dynamics - all while handling the immense pressure of striving for a championship title.

Tiexiera and Mossman skillfully blend moments of youthful levity with the weight of urgent social issues tackled in their speeches, from anti-LGBTQ+ legislation to the epidemic of school shootings. These students aren't just driven competitors. They're grappling with real-life problems, but their passion and ambition offer hope that the next generation of leaders is ready to rise to the challenge of an increasingly fraught world.

SPEAK captures the passion, joy, and courage of unforgettable teens using their voices to change hearts and minds. This film is the perfect antidote for these fraught times in America - intense, funny, and most of all, hopeful.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

JENNIFER TIEXIERA – DIRECTOR

Teixeira is an award winning documentary director, producer and editor who most recently helmed the Emmy-nominated series, Unveiled: Surviving La Luz del Mundo for HBO and the feature length documentary, Subject, which made its debut at the 2022 TriBeCa Film Festival. In 2020, she completed P.S. Burn this Letter Please, which debuted at the 2021 TriBeCa Film Festival and won the Audience Award for Documentary Feature at the 2020 OutFest Film Festival.

Previously, she edited 17 Blocks, which was awarded Best Editing in a Documentary Feature Film at the 2019 TriBeCa Film Festival, and other highlights include editing and producing the documentaries, A Suitable Girl, winner of the Albert Maysles Award at the TriBeCa Film Festival and Waiting for Hassana, official selection of the Sundance, SXSW, and Toronto Film Festivals.

Other career highlights include editing the documentary Salam Neighbor and the 2011 SXSW Documentary Grand Jury Winner, Dragonslayer.



GUY MOSSMAN – CO-DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Mossman is an American cinematographer and director who made his first short film in 2000 in Paraguay. In 2002, he was awarded a prestigious Park Fellowship at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to pursue an M.A. in Journalism and Documentary Filmmaking. Since then, Mossman has dedicated himself to lensing documentary films, non-fiction television and commercials. His love of character and vérité storytelling, and an eye for light and composition, has been acknowledged by critics and directors alike.

Mossman is best known for his dramatic photography on the Oscar short-listed documentary film, Buck, which also won the Audience Award at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, Mariachi High, Bending The Arc, the 2020 Sundance Film Festival Special Jury Award-winning Feels Good Man, and Discovery Doc's The Lost Lincoln — EP'ed by Mark Wahlberg.

In 2022, Mossman co-directed the critically acclaimed documentary The Human Trial with his wife, Lisa Hepner. His camera work on Buck was singled out in the Los Angeles Times for being 'both beautiful and evocative'; and the LA Times TV critic Robert Lloyd said of Los Jets, 'he gives every element its due; the clamor, the quiet, the details of décor and decoration, the richness of the landscape, the look of air under floodlights.'



FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

Another mass shooting. Unprecedented storms and wildfires. Tragic war plaguing our international communities. And a convicted felon re-elected as President of the United States. These are just some of the issues that keep us up at night.

As a society, we've lost the art of the argument and the effectiveness of the compromise. We've lost our ability to question beyond party lines. We've lost our ability to connect, listen, and understand one another and this loss is creating a mental health crisis.

Is there a way out? Is there an antidote to these fraught times?

Enter the world of competitive speaking- a sport where middle and high school students find their voice while learning to listen to and respect one another. Over the course of a year, students write, practice and hone a powerful 10 minute speech inspired by their own personal and lived experiences, their "heart story." These brave and passionate teens then perform in front of thousands of people in tournaments across the country, touching the hearts and souls of each person they come into contact with.

When we discovered the world of speech in 2019, we too were blown away by these eloquent and passionate teens. Gen Z gets a bad rap these days, but it's time we sit up and listen. Over four years of development and filming, we saw how competitive speaking can shape and motivate young visionaries, no matter what communities they come from and in turn, better all of us who are lucky enough to experience their performances.

We hope our film will ignite conversations and pose the question: Why can't every public school district in America offer a competitive speech program just like they might offer football or soccer? In our deeply divided world that faces historic challenges, these programs foster creative thinking and the open exchange of ideas in an inclusive, fun and competitive environment. They nurture the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs, artists and judges who may be the bridge to deeper understanding and empathy. They are our future.

SPEAK up. SPEAK out.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL SPEECH AND DEBATE ORGANIZATION

The mission of The National Speech and Debate Organization is to connect, support, and inspire a diverse community committed to empowering students through competitive speech and debate. As the national authority on public speaking and debate, the National Speech & Debate Association provides the infrastructure for speech and debate competitions around the world. We create a platform for youth voices to be heard and celebrated, which culminates with an annual National Tournament, the pinnacle of public speaking.

Fostering the belief that speech and debate changes lives, NSDA membership builds confidence, boosts classroom performance, improves communication, and increases critical thinking skills to prepare students for college. Their activity provides life skills vital to a young person's success in the future.

JOURNAL ENTRY

THE POWER OF SPOKEN WORDS

Directions:

The act of writing helps us think about a topic. The film you are about to watch is about the power of oratory, or a long, powerful speech. Answer each of the following questions in the form of a short journal entry.

How does powerful oratory inspire action and shape society, and what qualities make a speech truly memorable and influential?

Who are some famous orators and what speeches have had a lasting impact on history?

BEFORE VIEWING

ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Directions:

The film you are about to watch showcases five American teenagers as they prepare and perform to win a national oratory contest. For each statement, decide whether you Agree or Disagree, then write a one or two sentence explanation for your opinion.



STATEMENT	AGREE/DISAGREE	EXPLANATION
Teenagers can make a real difference by using their voices to advocate for change and inspire others.		
Public speaking is a life skill that is vital to a young person's success in the future.		
Speech and debate has the power to change lives.		
Maybe people can't handle the truth. But there will be a point in each of our lives when we can no longer choose blissful ignorance.		
Youth is not a phase, it's a revolution waiting to happen.		




WHILE VIEWING

INDIVIDUALS, ISSUES, & IMPACTS

Directions:

SPEAK follows a year in the life of five American teenagers as they prepare and perform to win the best original oratory in a national competition. As you watch the film, track each of the five orators and listen to their speeches. As you follow their individual journeys, consider the speaker's identity, the issue they are addressing, and the impact their words have on a wider audience.

Esther 	Identity How does their identity shape their message?	
	Issue What issue are they addressing and why is it significant?	
	Impact What impact does their speech have on the audience, both in its immediate delivery and its broader implications?	
Noor 	Identity How does their identity shape their message?	
	Issue What issue are they addressing and why is it significant?	
	Impact What impact does their speech have on the audience, both in its immediate delivery and its broader implications?	

<p>Sam</p> 	<p>Identity</p> <p>How does their identity shape their message?</p>	
	<p>Issue</p> <p>What issue are they addressing and why is it significant?</p>	
	<p>Impact</p> <p>What impact does their speech have on the audience, both in its immediate delivery and its broader implications?</p>	
<p>Noah</p> 	<p>Identity</p> <p>How does their identity shape their message?</p>	
	<p>Issue</p> <p>What issue are they addressing and why is it significant?</p>	
	<p>Impact</p> <p>What impact does their speech have on the audience, both in its immediate delivery and its broader implications?</p>	
<p>Mfaz</p> 	<p>Identity</p> <p>How does their identity shape their message?</p>	
	<p>Issue</p> <p>What issue are they addressing and why is it significant?</p>	
	<p>Impact</p> <p>What impact does their speech have on the audience, both in its immediate delivery and its broader implications?</p>	

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. While viewing, use the chart below to record impactful moments and scenes from the film in the appropriate box based on what element of documentary filmmaking is used. Then, after viewing, briefly analyze which of the elements were used most effectively in this film.

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.
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.

Which of the elements of documentary filmmaking were used most effectively in this film?

Explain Your Reasoning.

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

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. The film opens by showcasing a number of actors and activists who participated in speech and debate during their own high school years. Recall some of the people featured. How do you think their involvement in oratory has helped shape their future success?

2. What is the “pyramid” of competition? How do competitors arrive at the “superbowl” of original oratory, or the National Speech and Debate Association’s (NSDA) National Competition?

3. According to the students and coaches, what are some of the “dos” and “don’ts” of original oratory?

AFTER VIEWING RESPONSE QUESTIONS

4. The topics the students choose to write about are political and social hot-button issues. Why do you think these orators risk addressing somewhat controversial topics?

5. What is the overall tone of the documentary? How does it leave you feeling at the end of the competition?

6. Revisit your responses on the Anticipation Guide. Has your opinion on any statement changed? Explain what details from the film either changed or affirmed your prior knowledge and beliefs.



AFTER VIEWING MIRROR OR WINDOW?

How to Use this Thinking Routine:

Sometimes when responding to film or literature, you might hear texts described as either mirrors or windows. Mirrors are those stories that reflect your own world, showing an experience that is familiar or relatable, while providing a fresh perspective. Windows, on the other hand, are those stories that let us look into a new and unfamiliar world, a world beyond our own lived experience. Think about these terms in relation to the speech topics by each of the five teenagers competing in best original oratory. Respond to the following prompts, using evidence from the film to support your writing.

1. Of the speeches featured in the documentary, which one was the best mirror: a story that reflected something you see or have experienced in your own life, and gave you a way to see your own experience from a new perspective? What was relatable about this issue and what was unique about the way the orator chose to address the issue?

2. Of the speeches featured in the documentary, 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 issue, and what was unique about the way the orator chose to address the issue?



AFTER VIEWING

VALUES, IDENTITIES, ACTIONS

Directions:

This thinking routine is for digging a little deeper into the rich, civic aspects of documentary film. Take some time to reflect more deeply on *Standing Above the Clouds*. Use the chart below to record your responses, citing evidence and examples from the film.

VALUES	
<p>What values does this film invite you to think about?</p> <p>Values are a person's principles, standards of behavior, or one's judgment of what is important in life (e.g. culture, tradition, fairness, justice, safety, respect, a nation or group a person belongs to, creativity, anything like that).</p>	
IDENTITIES	
<p>Who is this film speaking about? Who is this film trying to speak to? These are not necessarily the same people?</p> <p>Dig a little deeper with these questions. Is anyone left out of the story that should be in it? Do you fit into this story, or not so much? How or why?</p>	
ACTIONS	
<p>What actions does this film encourage?</p> <p>Actions could include doing something concrete or refraining from doing something, and just learning more about the issue. Dig a little deeper with these questions. Whose actions are already involved or could be: yours, others, what others? How or why?</p>	

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

RHETORICAL APPEALS IN ORIGINAL ORATORY

Directions:

Students will analyze and evaluate how speakers use ethos, logos, pathos, and kairos in original oratory to persuade their audiences.

Select a Speech

Choose a well-known original oratory speech: TED Talk, political speech, commencement address, movie monologue, or one of the speeches from the documentary to analyze and evaluate.

Identify and Analyze the Appeals

- **Ethos (Credibility):** How does the speaker establish credibility or authority? Are credentials, personal experiences, or reputable sources used?
- **Logos (Logic):** What logical arguments or evidence does the speaker use? Are facts, statistics, or reasoning present?
- **Pathos (Emotion):** How does the speaker appeal to emotions? Are personal stories, vivid language, or evocative imagery used?
- **Kairos (Timeliness):** How does the speech connect to the moment in which it was delivered? Is there urgency, relevance, or a call to action based on the timing?

Write a Response (1-2 pages)

- Summarize the speech's purpose and audience.
- Provide examples of each rhetorical appeal and explain how they contribute to the speech's effectiveness.
- Reflect on which appeal was most persuasive and why.

Creative Option

- Craft a short speech (2-3 minutes) incorporating all four appeals and present it to the class.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

YOUTH MEDIA CHALLENGE | PERSPECTIVES

Directions:

People don't always agree with everyone's perspectives, but it is important to recognize a diversity of perspectives and try to see how they got there.

The KQED Youth Media Challenge empowers students to share their ideas through audio, video, and images. Engage student voice and choice with project-based learning that challenges students to use media to have their say, share what they know, or tell their own stories. The Challenge is open to middle and high school students. KQED welcomes submissions year-round, from classrooms, after-school programs, and summer camps. Student submissions are published on the KQED Youth Media Challenge Showcase. Select pieces may be shared on KQED digital and broadcast channels and via PBS and NPR stations around the country.

Choose from three free standards-aligned projects, complete with ready to use, modifiable curricular supports.

CALL FOR CHANGE	SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW	FIRST PERSON
Project Description: In the Call for Change commentary project, students combine a personal connection to an issue with research-based evidence, then express their ideas for how to make the world a better place.	Project Description: In the Show What You Know project, students share what they have learned or understand about any topic, concept, scientific phenomenon, or event they think is important for others to learn about.	Project Description: In the First Person personal narrative media project, students share a powerful message, memory, story, value, or life lesson about themselves or their community.
Artifact: Students create an audio or video commentary or an editorial cartoon.	Artifact: Students create a podcast, mini-documentary, or infographic.	Artifact: Students create an audio essay, short film, or photo essay.
<p>Link to Teacher Toolkit https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WvznUfLJRMlcmpajJ5MxGXCngh4SJSwQ7Uro1BGMz8U/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.gw4sejxoug8q</p> <p>Includes Quick Start Guide and Project Curriculum</p>	<p>Link to Teacher Toolkit https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UC0IHJ6ogBjeV04ajXo8-o14gmWfUaVwwfUNo7kOCI/edit?tab=t.0</p> <p>Includes Quick Start Guide and Project Curriculum</p>	<p>Link to Teacher Toolkit https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CpPR1CPoeS-RwmJQoWiZlhMJekXXQEoLWml0OHhbLs/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.gw4sejxoug8q</p> <p>Includes Quick Start Guide and Project Curriculum</p>

Curriculum borrowed from Youth Media KQED
<https://youthmedia.kqed.org/>

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

MY PLACE | MY STORY

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 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 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 and food culture.

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.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

FILM REVIEW

Directions:

After watching the narrative feature *SPEAK*, write a review of the film.

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]

ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

What is a film festival?

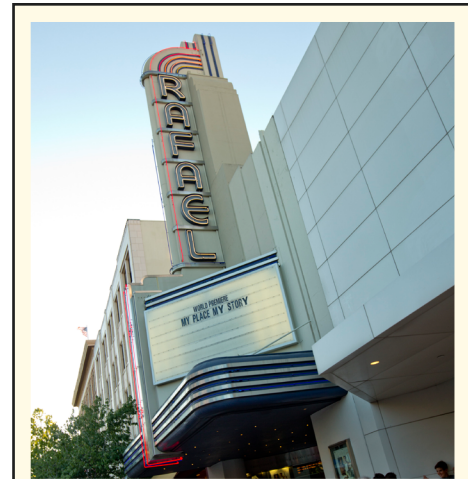
A film festival is an event in which multiple movies are presented over the course of one or several days. Depending on the size of the festival, all of the screenings may take place in a single theater or may involve multiple venues throughout a city. Festivals also include special events like panel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