

THE LAKE MERIBITT MONSTER



COMING SOON

A FILM BY BENJAMIN MULHOLLAND

FILMMAKERS GO TO SCHOOL



ABOUT THE FILM

The Lake Merritt Monster
Benjamin Mulholland | US 2022 | 16 min |
Grades 4-9

When Ollie's mother is attacked by a monster hiding in the depths of Lake Merritt, he sets out on a mission to find her—discovering instead a hidden network of monster hunters tasked with protecting Oakland from its own dark underbelly.

"It was a monster. A leviathan sent by the gentrifier to swallow up the homeless. But some of you are all going to get gobbled up too. Soon, there'll be no escape for anybody. The rich, the poor, the weak, the strong, black or white, the Lake Merritt monster is going to come for us and for all of Oakland. The monster is the shadow. Oakland's strife. Greed, division, come to life."

IMPACT

Who are the monster hunters of the City of Oakland? Mulholland's film *The Lake Merritt Monster* challenges its character Ollie to ponder what it means to believe in otherworldly forces entering reality, and how to work collaboratively to combat them. This fictional adventure offers a fun opportunity for students to imagine their own superpowers and explore how they might help protect the beauty of their city.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Ben is an award-winning Oakland based writer and director, who has been turning small budgets into engaging motion pictures; most notably, *The Lake Merritt Monster* and the *M.O.A.B* series of shorts. Ben's films seek to explore our collective secret mythologies, joys, politics and mysticisms. Ever delving deeper and expounding on his love affair with Sci-Fi, Shamanism and Taoism, while enjoying the fun and thrill that only movies can provide. He loves building worlds that transport the viewer from the archetypal world that they know to a mystifying adventure that will engage the heart and mind... because this is the journey he is on. Ben is currently at work on developing the feature version of *The Lake Merritt Monster* and writing two new films.



VIEWING GUIDE: MONSTERS, METAPHORS AND READING BENEATH THE SURFACE

How to Use this Thinking Routine: The film you are about to watch reminds us that monsters are rarely just monsters. Instead, they might signify deeper fears, social issues, historical traumas, and cultural conflict. Note what you notice in each of the focus areas about how these creatures, worlds, and distortions, invite us to look beyond the literal and ask ourselves what we are really afraid of and what we will learn about ourselves if we have the courage and commitment to confront a monster.

The Monster What type of monster is being portrayed? What does it look like, sound like? What does it feed on? How does it behave?	
Community Characters Who denies or resists the monster? Who enables the monster? Who gets erased or empowered?	
The Upside Down or Shadow World What rules govern this space? How does it mirror or distort reality?	
Cultural Vampires Are there any outsiders consuming or exploiting culture without respecting or preserving the people who created it?	
Symbols and Metaphors What objects, places, or repeated imagery carry meaning?	
Sounds and Visuals How do light, sound, and setting enhance the message?	
Ethics and Empathy What moral choices are presented? Are there moments when you feel conflicted? How did the film make you feel about what is happening in real-life communities?	

BEHIND THE LENS

WHAT WERE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

How to Use this Thinking Routine:

Partner Prompts: Imagine you could step into the mind of the filmmaker for just a moment. Based on what you saw, what do you think they were trying to say?

Write a Short Reflection that Includes:

- **The message you think the filmmaker was trying to communicate** - in one sentence.
- **One choice they made** (visual, audio, character, pacing, etc.) that helped communicate this message.
- **Whether or not that message came through clearly for you** - and why.
- **One follow-up question** you'd ask the filmmaker about their intent, especially if it felt complicated, subtle, or surprising.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal 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.

Optional Challenge: Turn this activity into a mini-debate or discussion. Students can take different positions based on their interpretations and evidence from the film.

- Did the filmmaker succeed in getting their message across?