

MVFF EDUCATION



CURRICULUM GUIDE
GRADES: 8-12

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Dear Educators,

Thank you for attending the 48th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of the Documentary Feature, *Runa, Simi*. We are excited to return in our 2025 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

Movie Moments that Moved Me

- Describe a moment or a scene in the film that you found particularly surprising, disturbing, moving, conflicting, or confusing.
- What made this moment so powerful or compelling for you? Was it the story, the acting, the dialogue, the visuals, the soundtrack, or something else?
- How did this moment change the way you saw a character, situation, issue, or theme in the movie?
- How does the moment connect to bigger ideas?
- If you were explaining this moment to someone who hasn't seen the film, how would you describe why it matters?

Language & Identity

- What new insights about language, culture, and identity does this film offer?
- How does the film highlight the importance of preserving endangered languages?
- What new insights did you gain about why dubbing a film into Quechua matters for identity, tradition, or cultural pride?
- Can a popular film like *The Lion King* carry new meaning in a different cultural or linguistic context?

Global Influences & Local Traditions

- How might a global film take on new meanings when placed in a local, indigenous context?
- How does the film complicate the relationship between the global influences of Disney and the local traditions of Quechua?
- What parallels can you draw between the Quechua experience in the film and the experiences of other marginalized groups around the world?
- What role should popular culture play in preserving or transforming cultural traditions?
- How can global media like Disney movies help protect local languages and cultures?

Storytelling & Reading One Film Through Another

- What parallels between *The Lion King* and *Runa*, Simi felt strongest to you? Why?
- What does this project reveal about the power of storytelling to both unify and differentiate cultures?
- What are the risks and benefits of using a global pop-culture story to interpret an indigenous community's reality?
- Does the film change the way you think about *The Lion King*? How or 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

Directions: Select one discussion question from the list of topics we talked about from the film.

- Language & Identity
- Global Influences & Local Traditions
- Storytelling & Reading One Film Through Another

Write an essay that answers the question and explains your ideas.

In your essay, make sure you:

- Share your opinion about what the film is saying about the topic.
- Use examples from the film - like a scene, a character's action, or the way something was shown on screen - to support your ideas.
- Connect the film's message to bigger ideas we discussed in class, or to real-world issues.
- Show that you've thought about the film by explaining why the topic is important or how different people might see it in different ways.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Life is all Hakuna Matata but in Quechua

https://www.hollywoodsoapbox.com/interview-for-augusto-zegarra-life-is-all-hakuna-mata-ta-but-in-quechua/#google_vignette

Film Utah | Alum Augusto Zegarra | Chasing a Dream

<https://www.film.utah.edu/fmad-news/chasing-a-dream-alum-augusto-zegarra-on-his-first-feature-film>

NBP | Runa, Simi

<https://nextbestpicture.com/runa-simi/>

The Language of the Lion King

<https://www.languagetrainers.ca/blog/the-languages-of-the-lion-king/>

GVIUSA | Quechua: The Surviving Language of the Inca Empire

<https://www.gviusa.com/blog/quechua-the-surviving-language-of-the-inca-empire/>

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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

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

Filmmaker Augusto Zagarra makes a powerful debut with this engrossing documentary about fatherhood, identity, and the soul of a language. The film follows Fernando, a single father and radio host in Cusco, Peru, who shares a modest yet endearing hobby with his son: dubbing classic animated clips into Quechua, an Indigenous language spoken by a relatively small number of people. When one of their dubs unexpectedly goes viral, a private passion transforms into something far more ambitious and meaningful. What began as a playful bonding activity becomes a remarkable act of cultural preservation—and a compelling journey in its own right.

With a deft and subtle touch, Zagarra allows the emotions to unfold naturally, avoiding grandstanding or dramatic speeches. The winner of the Albert Maysles Award at the Tribeca Film Festival, *Runa Simi* is a quiet story that speaks volumes, reminding us that language is more than a tool for communication; it is a vessel for memory and identity.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

AUGUSTO ZEGARRA

Augusto Zegarra has a Bachelor's degree in film and media arts from the University of Utah. He participated in the 2012 Sundance New Directors/New Screenwriters Lab as PA/Boom operator. He became a grantee from the DFP from Sundance in 2020. His first short film, *Winaymanta*, won the Ministry of Culture National Prize for Best Short Films in 2014. In 2015 the film won an honorable mention in Filmcorto, the Short Film section of the FEstival de Lima. In 2017, Zegarra started research on his upcoming documentary and first feature-length film *Hakuchu Munayta: Searching for Disney*. In 2018 he received a grant from the Peruvian Ministry of Culture and began production in 2019. He also participated in the 2020 DocsBarcelona Industry Market.



ECHOES OF AN EPIGRAPH

"Every kid in the world has the right to entertainment. And when it's in their own language, it's even better."

FIRST ECHO | BEFORE VIEWING

- Read the epigraph aloud.
- What strikes you first?
- What does this quote seem to suggest or warn?
- If this were a headline, what story might follow?
- Jot down quick responses, predictions, or connections to your own life, current events, or prior texts or films.

SECOND ECHO | DURING VIEWING

- As you watch, listen for moments that echo or contradict the epigraph.
- Where does the film live up to this idea?
- Where does it complicate it?
- Keep a running note.

THIRD ECHO | AFTER VIEWING

- Return to the epigraph.
- How has its meaning deepened or shifted for you?
- Which scenes or characters embody this quote? Which resist it?
- If you had to rephrase the epigraph to match the film's message, what would you write?

RIPPLES | STRETCH THE IDEA

- Create a visual or verbal echo - a drawing, headline, tweet-length version - that shows how the epigraph reverberates beyond the film and into society, history, or personal experience.

BEFORE VIEWING

ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Introduction:

An anticipation guide for a film is a pre-viewing activity for you to respond to statements related to the film's themes, then revisit your responses after watching to see how your perspectives have changed based on new information and critical thinking.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

Read each statement carefully. Mark whether you agree or disagree. Be prepared to dig a little deeper into one topic or theme in a previewing extension activity.

Agree	Statement	Disagree
	A movie is the same no matter what language it's in.	
	When a language disappears, a culture disappears too.	
	Dubbing a film into another language changes the story.	
	Children should be able to enjoy global movies in their own indigenous language.	
	Indigenous languages carry not just words, but worldviews worth preserving.	
	Movies are both universal and particular to culture.	

BEFORE VIEWING | EXTENSION ACTIVITY

THE THREE WHYS

Introduction:

The film you are about to watch includes topics and themes from the statements included in the anticipation guide.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

Dig a little deeper into one of the topics or themes you have something more to say about. Consider the three why questions to elaborate your position and clarify your thinking

Statement Copy the statement of your focus for digging a little deeper.	
Why might this topic matter to me?	
Why might this topic matter to people around me: family, friends, community?	
Why might this topic matter to the world?	



BEFORE VIEWING

PERSONAL CONNECTION | STORIES & SUBTITLES

Introduction:

The act of writing helps us think about a topic. The film you are about to watch tells the story about the project of dubbing Disney's *The Lion King* into Quechua, an indigenous language spoken by millions of people. At first glance, it might seem like just a translation project, taking a global blockbuster and putting it into another language. But the film asks you to think about how language is tied to culture, memory, and identity.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

Respond to the prompt using a journal entry style of writing. Feel free to add doodle notes or images to support your words.

- Have you ever watched a movie dubbed into another language or with subtitles? Did it change the way you experienced the story?

Journal Entry

Doodle Notes

DURING VIEWING

STORY MAP | WORLDS, WONDERS, & WISHES

Introduction:

This guided viewing routine encourages students to interpret the documentary as a film within a film using the narrative and themes of *The Lion King* as a framework for analyzing the indigenous experience represented in *Runa, Simi*.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

In small groups, activate your prior knowledge by recalling the main parts of the story in *The Lion King*. Record your notes in the chart below. Then, reflect on the themes in the story. These details will help you use a comparison chart while viewing the documentary.

ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE | REMEMBERING THE LION KING

What happens to Simba?	
What does Mufasa mean by saying "Remember who you are?"	
What happens when Scar rules the kingdom?	
What is "the circle of life?"	
What roles do characters like Rafiki or Nala play? How do they contribute to the story?	

THEME TRACKER

Big Themes to Keep in Mind Before viewing, focus on one or two themes that stand out to you and discuss your ideas with a partner.	Example from <i>The Lion King</i> Where do you see this theme in <i>The Lion King</i> ? Think of a scene, character, or moment from the film.	Prediction for <i>Runa, Simi</i> How do you predict this theme might show up in <i>Runa, Simi</i> ?
- Family and Ancestry - Exile and Return - Memory and Identity - Loss and Renewal - Tradition and Change - Voice, Language, and Identity		

DURING VIEWING

COMPARISON CHART | NOTICE & NOTE

<i>The Lion King</i>	<i>Runa, Simi</i>
Simba's Exile and Return	Notice: Experiences of indigenous language suppression and revitalization.
"Remember who you are" Mufasa's Message	Notice: Elders reminding younger generations of identity through language.
Scar's Reign Community Imbalance Harm	Notice: External pressures (colonialism, modernity, erasure of culture)
Circle of Life	Notice: Cultural survival through language transmission.
Rafiki's Wisdom Rituals	Notice: Indigenous oral traditions, ceremony, or storytelling.

DURING VIEWING

ELEMENTS OF A DOCUMENTARY

Introduction:

Documentaries create an impactful film by carefully balancing and blending narrative storytelling, visuals, sound, and point of view with factual information. The best documentary filmmakers use these creative tools, not to manipulate the truth, but to make complex realities relatable and deeply resonant for audiences. 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.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

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. After viewing, you will be asked to analyze which of the elements were used most effectively in this film and how blending and balancing these elements made the story relatable and resonant.

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.

From CAFILM Education Resources: Documentary Film Analysis Toolkit
[CAFILM Documentary Analysis Toolkit](#)

AFTER VIEWING

RELATABLE & RESONANT

Balance & Effect

Consider how the filmmaker blends interviews, visuals, and sound throughout the documentary.

- How does the balance of these elements influence the way the message is received?

Persuasive Impact

Consider which elements - like narration, interviews, or archival footage - stood out the most.

- How does their combination persuade or inform the audience?
- How might the message change if one element were emphasized more or less?

Intentional Choices

Analyze the choices the filmmaker made in blending different documentary techniques.

- How do these choices shape your understanding or emotional response to the film's message?

AFTER VIEWING

THAT'S SO META | WHY MOVIES ABOUT MOVIES MATTER

Introduction:

One of the most fascinating parts of *Ruma, Simi* is how it sometimes reveals itself as a film, reminding us that the magic of movies is also about the movies themselves.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

Choose one scene or moment from the documentary where you notice the film drawing attention to itself, through editing, framing, performances, or commentary.

DESCRIBE THE SCENE	ANALYZE THE EFFECT	GO META YOURSELF
• What happens on screen? • How do you know the film is being meta or self-aware here?	• How does this moment change your experience of the story? • Does it make the documentary feel more authentic, stages, playful, or critical? Why?	• Imagine you could add one new self-reflexive moment into the film. • What would you show (crew, camera, editing, audience reactions)? • How would this addition change the way viewers understand the film?

IF I WERE DIRECTING THE DIRECTOR | THE SOUND DUBBER

- Imagine one additional meta scene you would add to *Rumi, Sima*.
- What more would this scene reveal to the crew, the audience, the community?

REFLECTION

- If the magic of movies is about the movies themselves, what responsibility does a documentary have to show us its own making?
- Write a short reflection connecting *Ruma, Simi* to your own experience as a media consumer.

AFTER VIEWING

BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS

1. What was the most important message or theme you took away from this film? Why?

2. How did the film make you feel, and why do you think it had that effect on you?

3. What do you think the film wants its audience to do, think, or feel after watching?

4. Were there any parts of the film you disagreed with, questioned, or wanted to know more about?

5. In two or three sentences, how would you explain this film to someone who hasn't seen it?

AFTER VIEWING

EXIT TICKET | LANGUAGE & REPRESENTATION

Instructions:

As a check for understanding and feedback on the film, respond to the following question and write your response (2-3 sentences) in the space provided.

- What new insights about language, culture, and identity did this film offer you? What role should popular culture play in preserving or transforming cultural traditions?

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

TRANSFORMING STORIES

Instructions:

This activity goes beyond imagining or adapting a scene from a movie. It centers on preserving indigenous languages and why they matter. By engaging with language, students connect to identity, culture, community, traditions, and history and how these languages carry meaning across generations. Practicing this helps ensure that new generations understand the value of stories and the heritage that's embedded in language.

Directions:

Select one of the following options and create an artifact that reflects the task.

- **Cultural & Linguistic Traditions:** Think about your own cultural and linguistic traditions - songs, sayings, foods, rituals - that connect to identity. How might these feel different if expressed in another language?
- **Cultural Poster:** Design a mini-poster campaign promoting why it's important to preserve indigenous languages, using images and slogans inspired by Ruma Simi.
- **Translation Challenge:** Pick a favorite English movie line and translate it into a local dialect, family phrase, or symbolic form. You don't need to know another language, just try to capture how translation can add cultural nuance and value.
- **Think Like a Filmmaker:** Choose one familiar film, TV show, or story. Imagine how it might be received differently if told in another language, cultural tradition, or worldview.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY CONT.

MEDIA-MAKING | RE-DUBBING PROJECT

Instructions:

The main purpose of dubbing a film is to make it accessible to a wider, global audience by replacing the original dialogue with a translation in another language, allowing viewers to experience the film in their preferred language. Dubbing sometimes also creates a more natural and immersive viewing experience than subtitles, preserving the emotional impact and allowing for cultural adaptations. The objective is to reinterpret and adapt stories, making choices that require reflective thinking about characters, themes, and cultural context.

Directions:

Select a short clip from a well-known film (Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Studio Ghibli) and imagine how it would change if dubbed into another language or told through a different cultural lens.

- Write a short presentation on how the story's themes, humor, or meaning might shift.
- Write a new script for the characters, drawing from a different cultural perspective. Script a short re-dub scene, substituting lines that carry the voice, values, or world view of another culture or community.
- Record voice-over lines (in English or another language you know) to replace the original dialogue.
- Present the before-and-after versions to the class and explain how your re-dub changes the message or the mood.

REFLECTION

After presenting, write a short reflection explaining what cultural values you emphasized and how your version changes the audience's understanding of the scene.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

FILM REVIEW

Directions:

After watching the documentary feature *Runa, Simi*, review the film in writing using the industry standard format of this genre.

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 subject and story).
2. **Interpret** the film/filmmaker's 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

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.

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.



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/>.