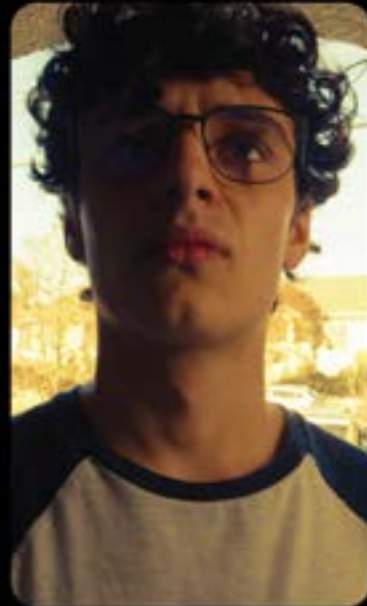


MVFF EDUCATION



CURRICULUM GUIDE
GRADES: 9-12

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Dear Educators,

Thank you for attending the 48th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of *Shorts, Tomorrow is Forever, Youth Produced Works*. 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

- Which short film in this program had the biggest emotional impact on you, and why?
- Was there a particular scene or moment that resonated with you?
- What issues or questions does this collection of films raise about the world we live in?
- Did anything in the films connect with your own life or perspective?

The Uniqueness of Youth-Produced Works

- How are the films in this program different from other movies, cartoons, or videos you've seen?
- Do you think youth-produced films are more unconventional or experimental in their subjects, stories, and styles?
- What creative choices - storytelling, visual, music, editing - make these films feel special or personal?
- Can you see the filmmakers own voices, feelings, or experiences come through? How?
- Did the films feel raw or honest in ways that surprised you or touched you?

Social Relevance & Impact

- What are some of the main messages or ideas that emerged from this collection of youth-produced films?
- How do these stories help you understand the filmmaker's experiences or the experiences of others?
- Whose perspectives are being featured in these films, and why might that matter?
- Could any of these films inspire action, change, or reflection in the audience? How?

Potential & Growth

- What strengths of craft stood out in this collection?
- What aspects of these filmmakers' work show promise for future projects?
- Where do you see room for growth in storytelling, technical skill, or originality?
- If you were mentoring a young filmmaker, what notes would you give to help them to develop their craft further on their next short?



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**

COMPARE | INTERPRET | WRITE

Interpretive Analysis & Evaluation: Analyze how youth filmmakers use voice and authenticity to tell stories differently from mainstream cinema.

Comparative Option #1: Compare two youth-produced films. How are their stories, styles, or messages similar or different?

Comparative Option #2: Compare a youth-produced short with a professional short - animated or documentary. How does age or experience affect storytelling choices?

Opinion Editorial: Write an op-ed about one of the youth-produced shorts featured in this program that addresses the question: What is this documentary really about and why does it matter?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CAFILM | Summer Film | Cinema Arts Workshops for Ages 11-18

<https://www.cafilmedu.org/summerfilm/>

Into Film | Youth Made Films

<https://www.intofilm.org/films/filmmaking/youth-made-films>

Into Film | High School Benefits of Filmmaking

<https://www.intofilm.org/news-and-views/articles/ifcotm-preston-lodge-high-school-benefits-of-filmmaking>

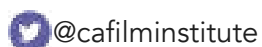
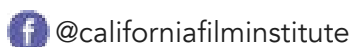
Indeed | Why Filmmaking is Important

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/why-filmmaking-is-important>

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



STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards ELA-Literacy

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the texts says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.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.RL.9-10.3

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

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.9-10.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

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 PROGRAM

From scheming teens and high school daydreams to magical VHS tapes and acts of courage, this youth-produced shorts program celebrates inventive storytelling and imaginative worlds. These shorts explore the humor and heart of their characters, capturing moments both whimsical and profound.

FILMS FEATURED IN THIS PROGRAM



THE BUTTERCUP MAFIA

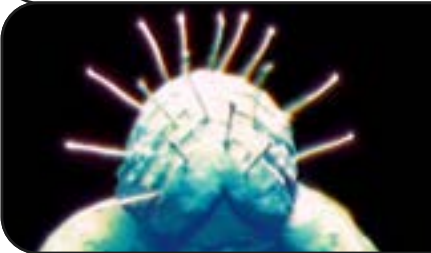
Director: Noam Rignault Clement | US 2025

A trio of childish teens under the name "The Buttercup Mafia" find success in intimidating bullies in exchange for cash.

EGGS BENEDICT

Director: Johnny White | US 2024

A story of love, eggs, and betrayal.



HYPNOS: THE MORPHING

Director: Yilian Ma | China 2025

In Chinese and English with English subtitles.

A high school student dozes off in class and enters a dream world to participate in the "Lucky Nap Raffle," but the three draws leave her with a stiff neck, dizziness, and even more drowsiness.

404: AN INTERNET ARCHIVE DOC

Director: Jacob Stoelting | US 2025

This documentary film explores the mission and impact of the Internet Archive, spotlighting Brewster Kahle and Mark Graham, and their Wayback Machine as a powerful tool for preserving the ever-changing digital landscape.



LUISA

Director: Kiyomi Dallas Kidd | US 2025

Overwhelmed by the discord of her parents' arguments, a little girl, Luisa, uses her imagination to help heal her fractured family.

HOW IT SHOULD BE

Director: Natalie Yerelekian | US 2025

A determined 17-year-old, dreams of breaking free from her traditional "American housewife" life that is pushed upon her by an omnipotent narrator.



SELF PORTRAIT II

Director: Paula Benu | Romania 2024

Mixed media animation self-portrait of the artist.

FILMS FEATURED IN THIS PROGRAM



SHRIMP WIGGLE

Directors: Mason Barnhardt, Jade Kelly | US 2024

Shrimp Wiggle was your average mediocre garage band, but after a fight regarding the drummer's lack of commitment to the band leads to his death, a strange VHS tape suggests that necromancy isn't that immoral.

I REMEMBER, I FEEL, I SEE, I AM SEEN

Director: Collective Work | Romania 2024

An animated journey about memories, sensory experiences, and other ways we connect with each other in a world rich with emotion and sensation.



WHITE CROW

Director: Ruslan Khromin | US 2025

A young woman in Stalin's Russia faces a life-or-death choice after carrying out a daring act of protest.

DANCING IN THE STARS

Director: Lazar Jovanovic | Serbia 2025

In Serbian with English subtitles.

An unexpected incident reunites two estranged brothers, urging them to revisit their past and rethink their future, in a single day spent together.



FIND ME IN THE VOID

Director: Denver Humphrey | US 2025

A teen Black girl uses astral projection and the support of her childhood best friend to solve her own case.

THE SCENE

Director: Ramina Rezaie | Iran 2025

In Persian with English subtitles.

Azadeh is a young girl who loves acting, and in order to get a small role in a movie, she forces herself to do things that jeopardize her daily routine and family tradition.



BEFORE VIEWING

HEAD | HEART | HANDS

Introduction:

Every film made by a young storyteller brings together three essential elements - head, heart, and hands. Your head is where the ideas live, your heart brings emotion, perspective, and meaning, and your hands turn vision into reality.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

Before we watch these youth-produced films, take a moment to think about what matters most to teens today. This activity will help you tune in to your own thoughts, feelings and ideas for action.

HEAD What's on your mind? What issues, questions, or ideas do you think about most as a teen?	HEART How do these topics make you feel? What emotions come up when you think about them?	HANDS What would you do about these issues? What actions, big or small, could make a difference? If you had the tools, what story would you put on screen and why?



BEFORE VIEWING

PERSONAL CONNECTION | THINK LIKE A FILMMAKER

Introduction:

The films you are about to watch are peer-reviewed and youth-produced. They showcase storytellers who are redefining humor in comedies, personal stories in documentaries, and murder in thrillers. It's an inspiring display of emerging young talent. Before watching the films featured in this program, reflect on and respond to the following questions.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

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

- What qualities do you think a young audience values most in a film? What qualities do other young people look for when assessing a short film for selection in a film festival?
- What limitations do young filmmakers have compared to filmmakers in Hollywood and other professional productions? What advantages do young filmmakers have that big budget productions do not have?

Journal Entry

Doodle Notes

DURING VIEWING

SUBJECT | STORY | STYLE | VOICE | CONNECTION

Introduction: Youth-produced films are different from commercial or professional productions because they come directly from young people's perspectives, experiences, and creativity. These works may not have big budgets or polished Hollywood techniques, but that's what makes them powerful - they offer raw, honest, and often overlooked stories. They can highlight issues that matter to young people, experiment with style, and give voice to identities and communities that aren't always seen on screen. The films in this program carry unique perspectives that challenge, inspire, and open new ways of seeing the world.

How to use this Thinking Routine: As you watch, pay close attention to what the film is about, but also how it's made and why it matters. Use the notecatcher to track your observations about subject, story, style, voice, and connection.

SIGNPOSTS | WHAT TO NOTICE | WHAT TO NOTE

Subject What topic or idea did the youth filmmaker choose? Why might it matter to them?	Story How did the filmmaker tell their story - personal narrative, fiction, experimental? Did it feel authentic?	Style What creative risks or unique choices stood out - editing, visuals, humor, rawness?
Voice How does this film represent a youth perspective that adults might overlook?	Connection Did this film inspire you to tell your own story? If so, how?	

THE BUTTERCUP MAFIA

Subject	Story	Style
Voice	Connection	

DURING VIEWING

SUBJECT | STORY | STYLE | VOICE | CONNECTION

EGGS BENEDICT

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

HYPNOS: THE MORPHING

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

404: AN INTERNET ARCHIVE DOC

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

DURING VIEWING

SUBJECT | STORY | STYLE | VOICE | CONNECTION

LUISA

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

HOW IT SHOULD BE

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

SELF PORTRAIT II

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

DURING VIEWING

SUBJECT | STORY | STYLE | VOICE | CONNECTION

SHRIMP WIGGLE

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

I REMEMBER, I FEEL, I SEE, I AM SEEN

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

WHITE CROW

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

DURING VIEWING

SUBJECT | STORY | STYLE | VOICE | CONNECTION

DANCING IN THE STARS

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

FIND ME IN THE VOID

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

THE SCENE

Subject

Story

Style

Voice

Connection

AFTER VIEWING

WHAT STUCK | WHAT STIRRED | WHAT SHIFTED

Introduction:

Short films are more than stories on a screen. They can spark new thoughts, stir strong emotions, and even shift the way we see the world.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

To help you engage thoughtfully after screening the youth produced films in the program, recall and reflect on emotional, intellectual, and social impact moments.

Film	What Stuck? Memorable Moment or Image, A line of dialogue, a shot, a transition, a sound, or a specific moment that stays with you.	What Stirred? Emotional Reaction A feeling that arose: discomfort, joy, sadness, tension, excitement, curiosity.	What Shifted? Thought, Belief, or Perspective Something you now see differently, a new question you're asking, or a bias you noticed in yourself.
THE BUTTERCUP MAFIA			
EGGS BENEDICT			
HYPNOS: THE MORPHING			
404: AN INTERNET ARCHIVE DOC			
LUISA			

AFTER VIEWING

WHAT STUCK | WHAT STIRRED | WHAT SHIFTED

HOW IT SHOULD BE			
SELF PORTRAIT II			
SHRIMP WIGGLE			
I REMEMBER, I FEEL, I SEE, I AM SEEN			
WHITE CROW			
DANCING IN THE STARS			
FIND ME IN THE VOID			
THE SCENE			

AFTER VIEWING

BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS

1. Which film in this collection of youth works had the most compelling story with the broadest social, cultural, or political impact? Why?

2. Which of the stories in the films featured in this collection do you think will have the most influence on individuals? Which of the films will leave a lasting impression on audiences? Why?

3. Do any of the films in this collection of youth produced works inform, inspire, or motivate change by sharing vital information or creating an emotional connection to a subject? Which ones? How?

4. How do the stories featured in this collection allow filmmakers to connect with their audience on a deeper level by creating a meaningful and more immersive experience with the subject?

5. Do any of the films in this collection demonstrate how young filmmakers are prioritizing ethics by focusing on collective or progressive movements? Which films? How or why?

AFTER VIEWING

ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY | SIX WORD REVIEW

Introduction:

Short films pack a full story into a small frame of time. Each one is its own world - sometimes sharp, sometimes subtle, always purposeful. Because they are so concise, they challenge us as viewers to notice details, pick up on themes quickly, and reflect on meaning long after the screen goes dark.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

After viewing each short film write a one-sentence summary and a six-word review.

- One-Sentence Summary - Capture the essence of the film in a single, complete sentence. Focus on the central idea, conflict, or emotional impact.
- Six-Word Review - Distill your reaction into exactly six words. This can be reflective, evaluative, or even playful.

THE BUTTERCUP MAFIA

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

EGGS BENEDICT

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

HYPNOS: THE MORPHING

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

AFTER VIEWING

ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY | SIX WORD REVIEW

404: AN INTERNET ARCHIVE DOC

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

LUISA

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

HOW IT SHOULD BE

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

SELF PORTRAIT II

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

SHRIMP WIGGLE

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

AFTER VIEWING

ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY | SIX WORD REVIEW

I REMEMBER, I FEEL, I SEE, I AM SEEN

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

WHITE CROW

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

DANCING IN THE STARS

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

FIND ME IN THE VOID

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

THE SCENE

One-Sentence Summary

Six-Word Review

AFTER VIEWING

MIRRORS & WINDOWS

Introduction:

The world looks different depending on who and where you are. Film has the power to transform human experience and reflect it back to us. In that reflection we can sometimes see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Film also offers views of worlds that are unfamiliar to us and has the power to provide us with insight into perspectives different from our own.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

This collection of youth produced films showcases storytellers who are redefining humor in comedies, personal stories in documentaries, and murder in thrillers. Of the films in this collection, which one was the best mirror and which one was the best window? Use the chart below to record your response. Be sure to include specific details and examples from the films to support your response.

MIRROR

Of the films in this collection of youth produced shorts, which one was the best mirror: a story that reflected your own life, and gave you a way to see your own lived experience from a new perspective? What was relatable about the story? What was unique about the way the filmmaker chose to tell it?

WINDOW

Of the films in this collection of youth produced shorts, which one was the best window: a story with insight into a world, identity, or lived experience you were unfamiliar with? What was different about the story? What was unique about the way the filmmaker chose to tell it?

AFTER VIEWING

EXIT TICKET | TOMORROW IS FOREVER

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.

- How do short films allow young voices to be heard in ways other forms of media might not?

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

ROLE SWAP | FILM FESTIVAL CAPSTONE

Instructions:

Watching a collection of short films is witnessing the creativity, courage, and vision of filmmakers who bring their stories to life on screen. The fact that these films spark ideas, emotions, and conversations is a testament to their power. By going beyond the act of viewing, you celebrate not only their inspiration, but also your own ability to respond as an engaged audience member and creative thinker.

Introduction:

Review the list of extension activity choices and select one activity that resonates most with you. Complete the activity thoughtfully and submit your work as your festival artifact.

1. Festival Wall | Shared Space
 - Create a classroom wall or a digital bulletin board titled: Short Film | Big Impact.
 - Each student adds a card or sticky note answering:
 - o One word that captures what short films can do.
 - o One image or symbol (drawn or described) that stayed with them from the screenings.
2. Voice Collage | Spoken Word
 - As a group, compile one-sentence reflections that answer this question: If I had a camera, I'd tell a story about . . . Then arrange them into a spoken-word performance or a visual wall display.
3. Film Critic Letter
 - Write a letter directly to one of the youth filmmakers. Tell them how you connected with their film, what you learned, and what you would love to see them make next.
4. My Short Film | The Pitch
 - Each student creates a 1-minute pitch for a short film they'd like to make. Present these pitches verbally, sketch a quick movie poster, or record a 30-second trailer.
 - o Title & Logline.
 - o Subject: What it's about.
 - o Story: How it would be told.
 - o Style: Animation, live action, documentary, experimental.
 - o Impact: What feeling or change you want to spark in the audience.
5. Micro Short
 - Create your own 30-60 second phone-filmed story (fiction, nonfiction, or experimental).
 - Focus: one clear subject and a creative style choice.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

MY PLACE | MY STORY | PERSONAL ESSAY FILM

Instructions:

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.

Introduction:

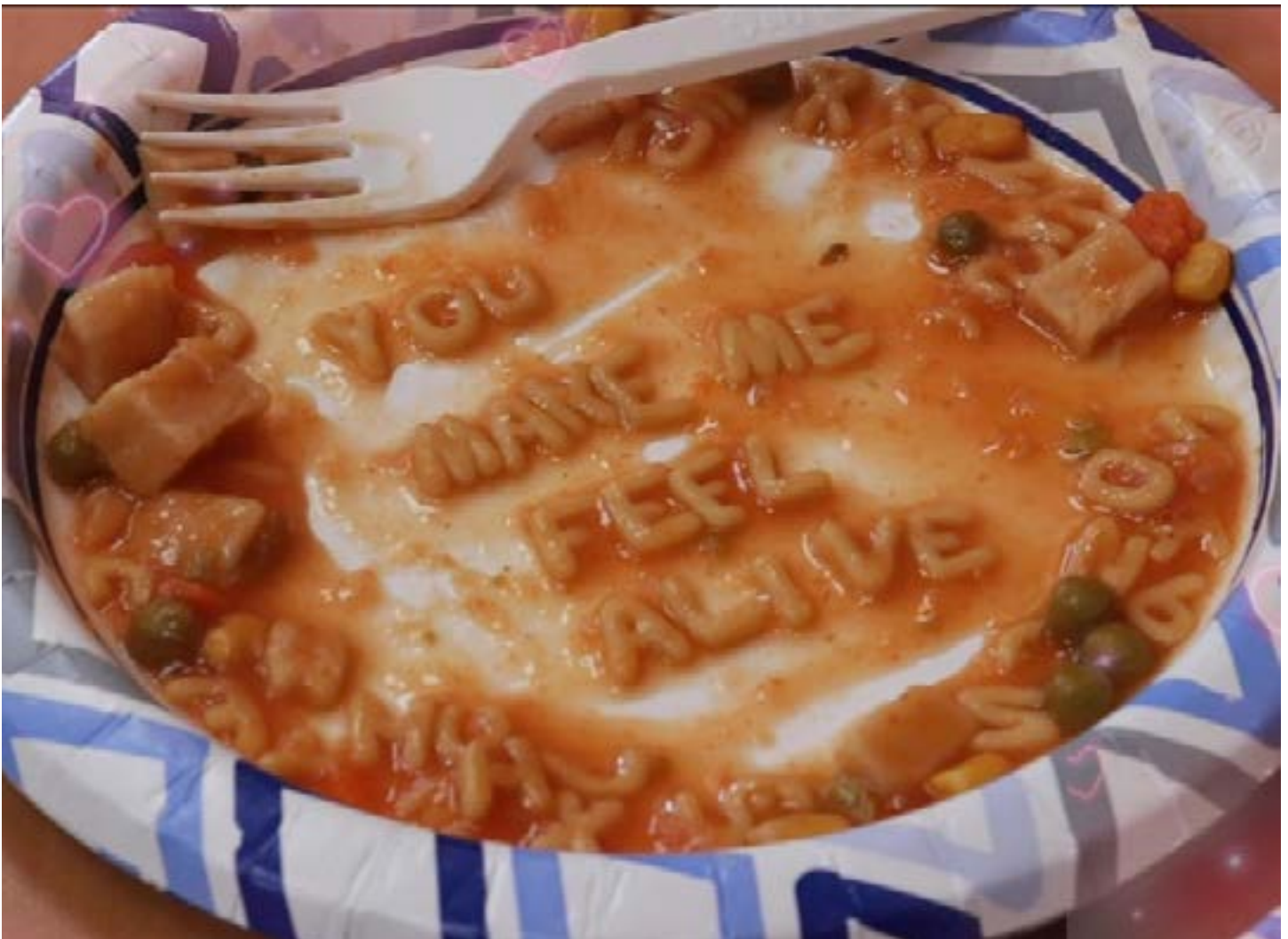
In this extension activity, you will learn a basic production approach for creating a 3-minute personal essay film, combining scripted narration with symbolic video imagery to tell a story from your own life.

MY PLACE | MY STORY

Foundations of Filmmaking and The Personal Essay Film online course.

<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.

©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

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