# MVFFEEDUCATION



CURRICULUM GUIDE GRADES: 10-12

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Dear Educators,

Thank you for attending the 48th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of the Documentary Feature, *State of Firsts*. 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?

### **Politics & Representation**

- How does Sarah McBride balance her role as an elected representative with her identity as a trans activist?
- In what ways does the film highlight the difference between establishment and activist strategies for social change?
- How are political systems portrayed as reinforcing or challenging the experiences of marginalized communities?
- How does the film address the overlap between McBride's personal journey and broader trans rights debates happening on the national stage?

### Filmmaking & Form

- What is the impact of using all access footage and behind-the-scenes moments, like family gatherings or reaction to the election night call from Biden? How does this intimacy shape your sense of Sarah McBride as both a politician and a person?
- How do archival clips of news footage and social media contribute to framing the broader political context or emotional weight of her campaign?
- In what ways does the film balance traditional documentary structure with more participatory or autobiographical moments?

### **Power & Ethics**

- Does the film allow audiences to think rather than coach them toward a certain conclusion? How might that reflect in scenes or the editorial choices made by the filmmaker?
- How does presenting an historic milestone first trans congressional member alongside very real threats and transphobia invite critical reflection rather than celebration alone?
- What ethical considerations arise when documenting both a public figure and a vulnerable subject? Does the film's approach uphold dignity while exposing political violence?

### 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.

- Politics & Representation
- Filmmaking & Form
- Power & Ethics

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

Opinion | Sarah McBride and why the Left lost on Trans Rights https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlbNFsAGFRc

Gender Fight Breaks Out at Congress Hearing | Introduction of Sarah McBride https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4FZuuEIKU0

National Center for LGBTQ Rights https://www.nclrights.org/

Human Rights Campaign | One Million Voices for Equality https://www.hrc.org/

### **ABOUT CAFILM**

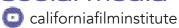
The nonprofit California Film Institute celebrates and promotes film as art and education through year-round programming at the independent Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, presentation of the acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival, as well as cultivation of 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.RI.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.2

Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3

Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1

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.11-12.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a 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.W.11-12.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1

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.11-12.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

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

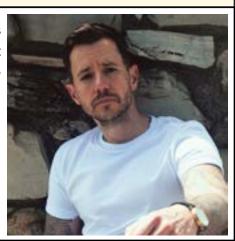


### ABOUT THE FILM

In a groundbreaking victory, Sarah McBride became the first transgender person elected to Congress—in the same year Donald Trump returned to power on a campaign that featured a chilling anti-trans platform. This provocative and powerful doc brings us directly into McBride's experience, following closely as she knocks on doors across Delaware, sharpens her message (and her elbows) to keep the focus on the issues that matter most to her constituents, shares a bittersweet election-night call with Joe Biden, and steps into her first year in office with Republicans banning her from using restrooms in the Capitol before she even arrives. Battling tirelessly on all fronts despite shocking mistreatment, McBride hangs on to her equilibrium as she demonstrates the power of choosing hope, taking action, and making the most of the opportunities for which she will fight like hell, for herself and all who will follow in her fearless footsteps.

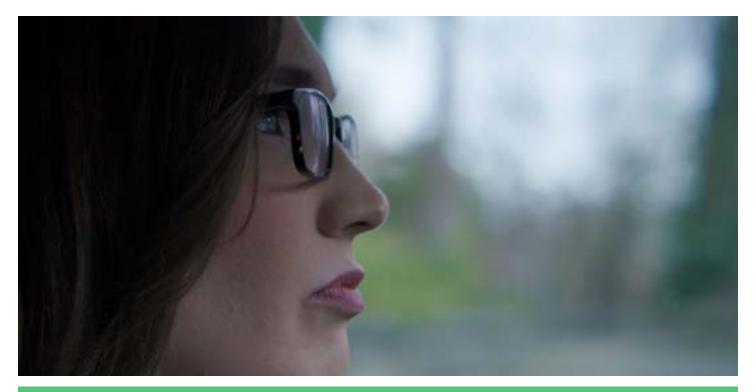
### ABOUT THE FILMMAKER CHASE JOYNT

Chase Joynt is a non-fiction filmmaker and writer who works at the edges of genre. His documentary feature Framing Agnes was named a Best Movie of the Year by The New Yorker after premiering at Sundance where it won two awards. Chase co-directed No Ordinary Man, which was presented at Cannes Docs-in-Progress before premiering at TIFF, and most recently The Nest which premiered at Hot Docs 2025.



### THE GENESIS OF THE STORY

Trans people have long been at the center of US culture wars, positioned as both red herrings and scapegoats for broader socio-political anxieties and debates. I approached this film understanding that Sarah McBride's run for Congress would reveal the pressures and contradictions of working within systems destined to – and designed to – fail minoritized communities. State of Firsts is a reckoning with the tensions between establishment and activist strategies of social change, and a summons to consider the possibilities and pitfalls of identity-based organizing. We could not have anticipated the force with which Sarah herself would become the central target of transphobic assaults in the rise of Trump's second presidency. It is from this intimate position within her campaign that we consider the enduring impact of the personal and political contexts shaping the future of trans life.



### **ECHOES OF AN EPIGRAPH**

"There are people that say representation doesn't matter at all. And there are people who think that it will solve everything. And it's somewhere in the middle."

<ul> <li>FIRST ECHO   BEFORE VIEWING</li> <li>Read the epigraph aloud.</li> <li>What strikes you first?</li> <li>What does this quote seem to suggest or warn?</li> <li>If this were a headline, what story might follow?</li> <li>Jot down quick responses, predictions, or connections to your own life, current events, or prior texts or films.</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>SECOND ECHO   DURING VIEWING</li> <li>As you watch, listen for moments that echo or contradict the epigraph.</li> <li>Where does the film live up to this idea?</li> <li>Where does it complicate it?</li> <li>Keep a running note.</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>THIRD ECHO   AFTER VIEWING</li> <li>Return to the epigraph.</li> <li>How has its meaning deepened or shifted for you?</li> <li>Which scenes or characters embody this quote? Which resist it?</li> <li>If you had to rephrase the epigraph to match the film's message, what would you write?</li> </ul>	
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
	Only people from majority groups can successfully hold political office.	
	Representation in government is important because it influences policy decisions.	
	Personal identity should not affect someone's ability to do their job.	
	LGBTQ+ politicians face more challenges than other politicians because of their identity.	
	Political activism is more effective outside of government, than within it.	
	Being the first in any field comes with extra pressure and scrutiny.	
	Laws and policies should reflect the diversity of the people they govern.	

### 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?	All work has dignity, no matter the type of job.
Why might this topic matter to people around me: family, friends, community?	Domestic workers (maids, nannies, cleaners) are often invisible, even though they make everyday life possible for others.
Why might this topic matter to the world?	Social class determines how people are treated.



### **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.

**Directions:** 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. After viewing, 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	Interviews Interviews are the recorded conversations with a person who has	Animations/Reenactments  Documentaries will sometimes use animation or staged recreations of
facts, identify people, and present additional information.	some connection to or knowledge about the subject of the film.	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?	
<ul> <li>Intentional Choices</li> <li>Analyze the choices the filmmaker made in blending different documentary techniques.</li> <li>How do these choices shape your understanding or emotional response to the film's message?</li> </ul>	

# AFTER VIEWING VALUES | IDENTITIES | ACTIONS

#### Introduction:

When we watch a documentary, we are not just learning facts - we are also being invited to think about people, perspectives, and choices. This thinking routine is for exploring the rich civic aspects of documentary film by reflecting on three key dimensions.

### How to use this Thinking Routine:

The questions encourage you to move beyond just summarizing what happened and instead consider why people make the choices they do, how identity and representation matter, and what possibilities for action the film opens up for us as viewers.

#### **VALUES**

#### What values does this film invite you to think about?

 Values are kinds of things that people cherish - fairness, justice, safety, respect, traditions, a nation or group a person belongs to, creativity, freedom of expression, anything like that.

#### Dig a little deeper with any of these questions:

- What principles, beliefs, or priorities seem to guide the people or communities you see in the film?
- What values is the filmmaker highlighting?
- Are these your values?
- Does the film affirm or challenge or raise questions about these values?





A Thinking Routine Adapted from Harvard Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education <a href="https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines">https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines</a>

# AFTER VIEWING CONT. VALUES | IDENTITIES | ACTIONS

IDENTITIES		
<ul> <li>Who is this film speaking about? And who is the film trying to speak to?</li> <li>This is not necessarily the same person or group of people.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Dig a little deeper with any of these questions:</li> <li>How do individuals or groups see themselves, or how are they represented?</li> <li>What aspects of identity (race, gender, culture, profession, etc.) shape their experiences?</li> <li>Is anyone left out of the story that should be in it?</li> <li>Do you fit in, or not so much for this story? How, or why?</li> </ul>	

ACTIONS		
<ul> <li>What actions might this film encourage?</li> <li>Actions could include doing something concrete, refraining from doing something, just learning more, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Dig a little deeper with any of these questions:</li> <li>What actions are taken (or not taken) in the story?</li> <li>What actions are suggested or called for in response to what the film addresses?</li> <li>What actions can you take?</li> </ul>	

# AFTER VIEWING BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS

1.	What political issues, events, or figures are being represented? What is the film's central political argument?
2.	What historical or contemporary conflicts are at play? How does the film connect to current debates, policies, or civic life?
3.	Did the documentary give representation to multiple perspectives? Whose voices are amplified? Whose are missing? Where is the line between persuasion and propaganda?
4.	Were there any parts of the film you disagreed with, questioned, or wanted to know more about?
5.	What do you think the film wants its audience to do, think, or feel after watching?

### **AFTER VIEWING**

EXIT TICKET | VOICES OF POWER, PROTEST & POSSIBILITY

#### 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 does the documentary encourage viewers to consider where personal identity and institutional politics collide?

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE



# EXTENSION ACTIVITY VOICES OF POWER, PROTEST, & POSSIBILITY

#### Instroduction:

This activity centers on youth voices of power, protest, and possibility. The creative options offer students the opportunity to explore and express their perspectives, ideas, and visions for change, showing that young people have the insight and agency to shape their communities and the world around them. By engaging in these options, students see that their voices truly matter and can make a difference.

#### Directions:

Use your voice, creativity, and ideas to explore power, protest, and possibility. Pick one or more of the options below to create a project that connects to real-world issues or social change. Include a short reflection explaining your choices.

VOICE OF PROTEST   CREATIVE EXPRESSION	<ul> <li>Make Your Message Seen &amp; Heard!</li> <li>Make a Protest sign.</li> <li>Create a wearable symbol like a bracelet, pin, or mask.</li> <li>Craft a spoken word piece or poem.</li> <li>Create a playlist or soundscape conveying hope and resistance.</li> <li>Create a digital campaign, a PSA, or a short video.</li> <li>Draw a political cartoon or a comic strip showing someone standing up to injustice.</li> <li>Craft an interactive display or mini-exhibit.</li> </ul>
ARTIFACT OF POSSIBILITY   PROTEST IN A BOX	<ul> <li>Turn Your Ideas into Something Tangible! Put together a collection of items that capture the essence of a particular protest moment or movement.</li> <li>Physical objects like signs, banners, flyers, and clothing.</li> <li>Media coverage including photographs and videos taken by participants or observers.</li> <li>Digital content such as social media posts, articles, and other materials related to the moment or movement.</li> <li>Personal stories from people who participated in the protests.</li> </ul>
POLICY & SYSTEM CHANGE   REAL WORLD IMPACT	<ul> <li>Reimagine the Rules.</li> <li>Draft a policy proposal or petition.</li> <li>Write a letter to lawmakers, the school board, or community leaders.</li> <li>Redesign an entire system: school, city, nation.</li> <li>Visualize and reimagine a future law or policy that addresses inequity.</li> </ul>

# EXTENSION ACTIVITY CONT. VOICES OF POWER, PROTEST, & POSSIBILITY

POLITICAL STORYTELLING & RESEARCH	<ul> <li>Learn from the Past &amp; Connect to Today.</li> <li>Research and create a timeline of activists and movements.</li> <li>Interview a community member or peer on an issue.</li> <li>Create a short oral history video essay.</li> <li>Create a digital story map of a protest moment or movement.</li> </ul>
MOCK CAMPAIGN OR ACTION PLAN	<ul> <li>Organize and Inspire Others!</li> <li>Create a social media campaign for change.</li> <li>Design a mock election with slogans and speeches.</li> <li>Create a toolkit for activism with t-shirt designs, fliers, hashtags, talking points, and social media accounts.</li> <li>Put together a mini-awareness event like a silent protest, a walkout, or a visual display.</li> </ul>

### **REFLECTION PROMPTS**

- How does your project amplify voices or challenge power?
- What change or possibility does it imagine or inspire?
- How could it connect to your school, community, or society?

# EXTENSION ACTIVITY DEBATE | ETHICS IN DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

#### Instroduction:

Truth and ethics in documentary filmmaking is a topic of debate. In this activity students will examine how filmmakers make choices about what to show, what to leave out, and how to represent real people and events, exploring the responsibilities of storytellers and the impact their work has on audiences. Engaging in this debate helps students think critically about honesty, perspective, and the ethical power of the media.

#### Directions:

Explore the ethical dilemmas in documentary storytelling by engaging in a structured debate.

- 1. Split into two groups:
- Group A: Documentaries must prioritize factual truth over narrative impact.
- Group B: Documentaries must prioritize audience engagement and impact of strict neutrality.
- 2. Research the topic and prepare your arguments.
- Use the film as a central point of reference.
- Understand the resolution. Analyze the debate topic fully to grasp the central concepts, potential areas of conflict or disagreement, and different angles you can argue.
- Research both sides. To build a robust case, you must understand your opponent's position as well as your own. This will help you anticipate their points and prepare strong rebuttals.
- Use credible sources. Support your claims with evidence from reliable sources such as academic journals, reputable news outlets, and expert analysis. Be critical of your sources to avoid misinformation.
- Gather diverse evidence. Collect a variety of evidence, including real-life examples, and expert opinions to make your points more convincing.
- 3. Conduct a debate following the structured format:
- Opening Statements: Each team presents their case, explaining their stance and addressing potential counterarguents.
- Cross-Examination and Questions: The moderator or audience members ask clarifying or challenging questions to the debaters.
- Closing Arguments: EAch team delivers a concise closing statement to summarize their position and make a final appeal.
- 4. Audience Vote:
- Audience members cast an initial vote before the debate, and then a final vote after the debate to gauge how effectively the debaters delivered their message and swayed their opinions.
- 5. Reflection:
- Which arguments were most convincing and why?
- How do filmmakers balance truth and persuasion ethically?

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY FILM REVIEW

#### **Directions:**

After watching the documentary *State of Firsts*, 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 <a href="https://www.cafilmedu.org/curriculum-resources/">https://www.cafilmedu.org/curriculum-resources/</a>

# EXTENSION ACTIVITY FILM REVIEW

My Film Review	

### **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.



#### **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 (<a href="www.filmfreeway.com">www.filmfreeway.com</a>) 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 <a href="https://www.cafilm.org/volunteer/">https://www.cafilm.org/volunteer/</a>.