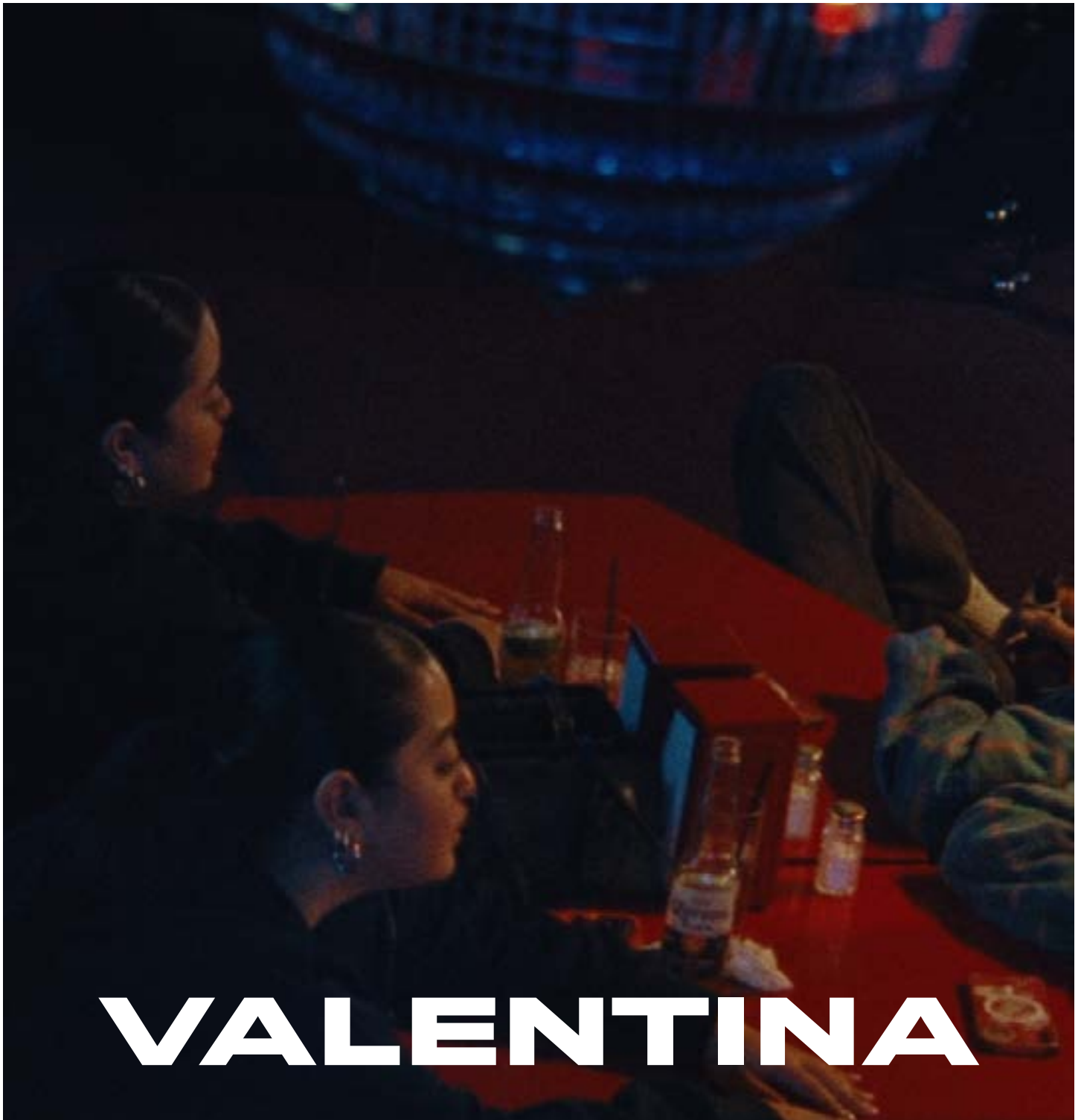


MVFF EDUCATION



VALENTINA

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 Hybrid Documentary Feature, *Valentina*. 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?

Voice & Power

- What does the film suggest about whose voices are heard, and whose are silenced in El Paso's immigrant communities?
- How do small issues, like parking tickets, become larger barriers when combined with poverty or immigration status?
- What responsibilities do local governments have to ensure all voices in a community are treated fairly?

Immigrant Struggle & Systemic Barriers

- In what ways does the film show how everyday struggles like work, housing, tickets, and legal status connect to larger systems of inequality and discrimination?
- How might these stories change viewers' perspectives about immigrants and poverty in America?

Film Form & Impact

- Valentina is a hybrid documentary that blends real footage with reenactments. How does this approach affect the way you understand and feel about the story?
- Do reenactments make the film more powerful, more emotional, or more or less believable? How or why?
- What advantages does a hybrid documentary have compared to a traditional documentary? What risks or challenges might it face?
- How might films like Valentina influence the film community in terms of storytelling style, representation, and responsibility to real communities?

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.

- Voice & Power
- Immigrant Struggle & Systemic Barriers
- Film Form & Impact

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

Scene Now | Arts and Culture | Happy Birthday Chosen as Egypt's 2025 Oscars Submission
<https://scenenow.com/ArtsAndCulture/Happy-Birthday-Chosen-as-Egypt-s-2025-Oscars-Submission>

The Movie Buff | Happy Birthday Review
<https://www.themoviebuff.net/2025/06/happy-birthday-tribeca-review-a-beautifully-ground-ed-portrait-of-classism-labor-and-girlhood/>

Medium | What's the History of Birthdays
<https://medium.com/@QuestionClass/whats-the-history-of-birthdays-99e04006f79d>

Duolingo | Happy Birthday Around the World
<https://blog.duolingo.com/happy-birthday-around-the-world/>

Babbel Magazine | Birthday Traditions Around the World
<https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/birthday-traditions-around-the-world>

Little Passports Blog | Birthday Celebrations Around the World
<https://www.littlepassports.com/blog/world-community/12-birthday-celebrations-around-the-world/?srsltid=AfmBOorMGcaP8UEUgu6S6ypk47qvendSXvYVJ3q7-c9UDJOpkDR81CZ>

Sing Me Happy Birthday Blog | Birthday Song Lyrics Around the World
<https://www.singmehappybirthday.com/blog/happy-birthday-song-lyrics-around-the-world>

Cultural Atlas | Egyptian Culture Core Concepts
<https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/egyptian-culture/egyptian-culture-core-concepts>

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.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

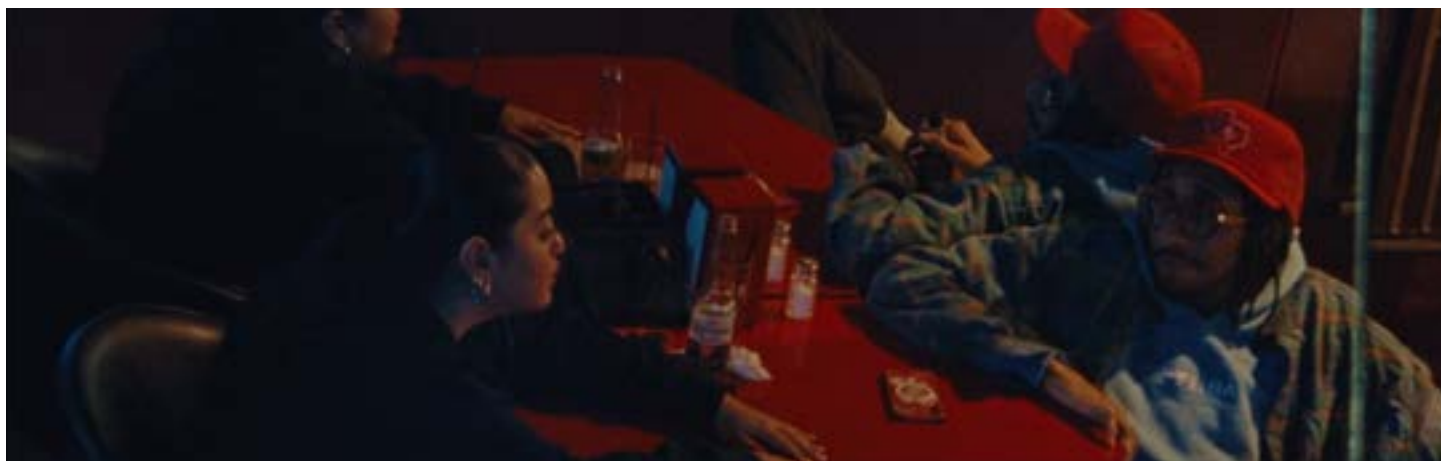
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

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 FILM

In this singular debut, director Tatti Ribeiro leverages the best of hybrid filmmaking to create a comedy-meets-documentary that feels both urgent and slice-of-life all at once. Set against the backdrop of the busiest US-Mexico border crossing, *Valentina* is, at its core, a coming-of-age story. The titular character, played by the ever-magnetic Keyla Monterroso Mejia (*One of Them Days*, *The Studio*), navigates parking tickets, odd jobs, and a perpetually precarious checking account balance. In one moment, *Valentina* cracks jokes about wanting a cosmetic procedure; in the next, she's pointing out just how much time gig workers like herself waste dealing with bureaucracy. By blending real-life news clips and political interviews with a cinema vérité-style approach to capturing *Valentina*'s often-humorous day-to-day circumstances, this wholly original film not only deftly highlights the very real trials of growing up in an American border town, but marks Ribeiro as a talent to watch.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

TATTI RIBEIRO

Tatti Ribeiro is a journalist and filmmaker raised in the Bay Area. She is the founder of franknews, a media organization that creates film, audio, and live programming to give context to a 24/7 news cycle. She is a graduate of the USC School of Cinematic Arts. *Valentina* is her first feature film.



THE GENESIS OF THE STORY

Valentina is a comedy about finding yourself. When I first got to El Paso, I thought I was reporting on outside phenomena - migration policy, border security, local politics. Eventually, I noticed that the city was really reintroducing me to myself, and to the narrative and comedic lens I left for journalism. So much of my writing and reporting was bleak - obviously - but my experience wasn't. It was funny, and wild, and as stupid as it was moving.

When that clicked, I saw the movie start to finish. It is about me, and my immigrant parents, and my attitude problem. But it's also about the arbitrary letter of the law, the people those laws punish, and the maze of day to day life when you're poor and living at the border.



ECHOES OF AN EPIGRAPH

"If you don't talk, it's a lose lose. But if you talk, you might have a chance"

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
	Everyone's voice matters equally in a community.	
	Some people's voices are ignored because of who they are or where they come from.	
	Speaking up about injustice can actually lead to change.	
	The poor are often punished more harshly than the wealthy for the same mistakes.	
	Struggling to make ends meet makes it harder to participate fully in daily family and community life.	
	Immigrants should have the same rights and opportunities as anyone else living in the community.	
	Immigrant families face challenges that most citizens do not.	
	A person's accent, background, or status should not determine how seriously their voice is taken.	

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?	



DURING VIEWING

ELEMENTS OF A HYBRID DOCUMENTARY

Introduction:

A hybrid documentary, also known as docufiction, is a subgenre of documentary filmmaking that blends factual elements with fictional techniques to create a narrative. Unlike traditional documentaries, which aim for objectivity, hybrids explore reality by incorporating elements of narrative fiction, artistic expression, and creative storytelling. This approach allows for a deeper engagement with the nuances of human experience, emotion, and memory, often challenging genre boundaries and raising complex ethical questions about truth and representation.

Directions:

As you watch, track how these elements and techniques work together to create meaning and emotional impact. Use the notecatcher to note what you notice in each of the categories.

REENACTMENT | ACTORS & SCRIPTED SCENES

Notice & Note:

- What moments of the story are dramatized?
- How do these scenes shape your emotional connection or understanding?

Scene Example	What is dramatized?	Effect on Audience	Cinematic Techniques (acting, lighting, music, editing, etc.)

DURING VIEWING CONT.

ELEMENTS OF A HYBRID DOCUMENTARY

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS | NEWS CLIPS, FOOTAGE, PHOTOS, DOCUMENTS

Notice & Note:

- Which authentic sources are included?
- How do they add credibility, context, tension, or truth?

Clip Footage Example	What truth does it reveal?	Why include it?	Cinematic Techniques (sound, editing, pacing, visuals, etc.)

BLENDING THE TWO

Notice & Note:

- Where do reenactments and archival material intersect or overlap?
- How does this combination affect your sense of truth?

Moment of blending	What is combined?	Impact on Story or Truth	Cinematic Techniques (cross-cutting, sound bridges, transitions, etc.)

AFTER VIEWING

TRUTH & RELEVANCE

- What message or truth about the real world does this film leave you with?
- How is this hybrid approach (acting + archives) more powerful than one method alone?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

REFLECTION

- What cinematic choices stood out most to you?
- What techniques were most effective in blending truth and storytelling?
- How might this film change or reinforce the way people think about history, justice, or society?

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

AFTER VIEWING

STEP IN | STEP OUT | STEP BACK

Introduction:

This routine nurtures a disposition to take social and cultural perspectives responsibly, recognizing that understanding others is an ongoing process that reveals as much about ourselves as it does about the people we seek to understand.

How to use this Thinking Routine:

Dig a little deeper into Valentina's perspective by responding to the following questions.

Step In: What does Valentina feel, believe, know, or experience?		
Step Out: What would you like or need to learn to understand Valentina's perspective better?		
Step Back: What do you notice about your own perspective and what it takes to take Valentina's?		

AFTER VIEWING

BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS

1. What central theme or issue does this film explore and how effectively does it do it?

2. What scene, image, or moment best captures the film's overall message? Explain.

3. How does this film expand your understanding of history, culture, or society?

4. What choices did the filmmaker make (style, structure, visuals, sound, editing) that shaped your response to the story?

5. What questions, critiques, or debates does this film leave you thinking about?

AFTER VIEWING

EXIT TICKET | ART & ACTIVISM

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.

- After watching the film, how do you see the relationship between art and activism? Can film function as both?

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

VOICES FOR CHANGE | A SPEECH TO CITY COUNCIL

Instructions:

Your voice matters. In this activity, you'll take on the role of a community member preparing to speak before your city council. You will choose an issue that affects your school, neighborhood, or community, research it, and write a short persuasive speech proposing change or action. Then, you'll deliver your speech as if you were standing at the council podium. By the end, you will have written and delivered a three-minute civic-minded speech

Directions:

1. Choose an Issue
 - What's a real challenge, concern, or opportunity in your community?
 - Examples: safety, transportation, public spaces, education, environment, youth programs, etc.
2. Do Some Research
 - Gather facts, stories, or examples that explain why the issue matters.
 - Think about what changes or solutions you want to see in the community and what you would suggest to make that change.
3. Write Your Speech (2-3 minutes)
 - Hook: Grab attention with a story, fact, or powerful statement.
 - Explain the Issue: Describe the problem and why it matters.
 - Propose a Solution: Suggest what the city council, or leaders, could do.
 - Call to Action: End with a clear, memorable proposal or request.
4. Practice Your Delivery
 - Read through your speech several times.
 - Speak with confidence and passion, using a strong voice and making eye contact.
5. Deliver Your Speech to the Class
 - Imagine you're addressing actual city leaders who can make a difference.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

FILM REVIEW

Directions:

After watching the hybrid documentary/docudrama feature *Valentina*, 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

[illegible]

ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

What is a film festival?

A film festival is an event in which multiple movies are presented over the course of one or several days. Depending on the size of the festival, all of the screenings may take place in a single theater or may involve multiple venues throughout a city. Festivals also include special events like panel discussions with filmmakers and actors. Typically, filmmakers submit their works to a festival, where a team of curators selects the best entries for inclusion in the festival. For independent and international filmmakers, festivals are often an important way to raise awareness of a film, generate an audience, and/or attract a studio to purchase the rights to distribute a film in a wider release. Acceptance into a major festival can add significant prestige to a film, with some festival awards (such as the Cannes Film Festival's Palme d'Or) considered among the highest honors a film can receive.

There are many film festivals 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/>.