

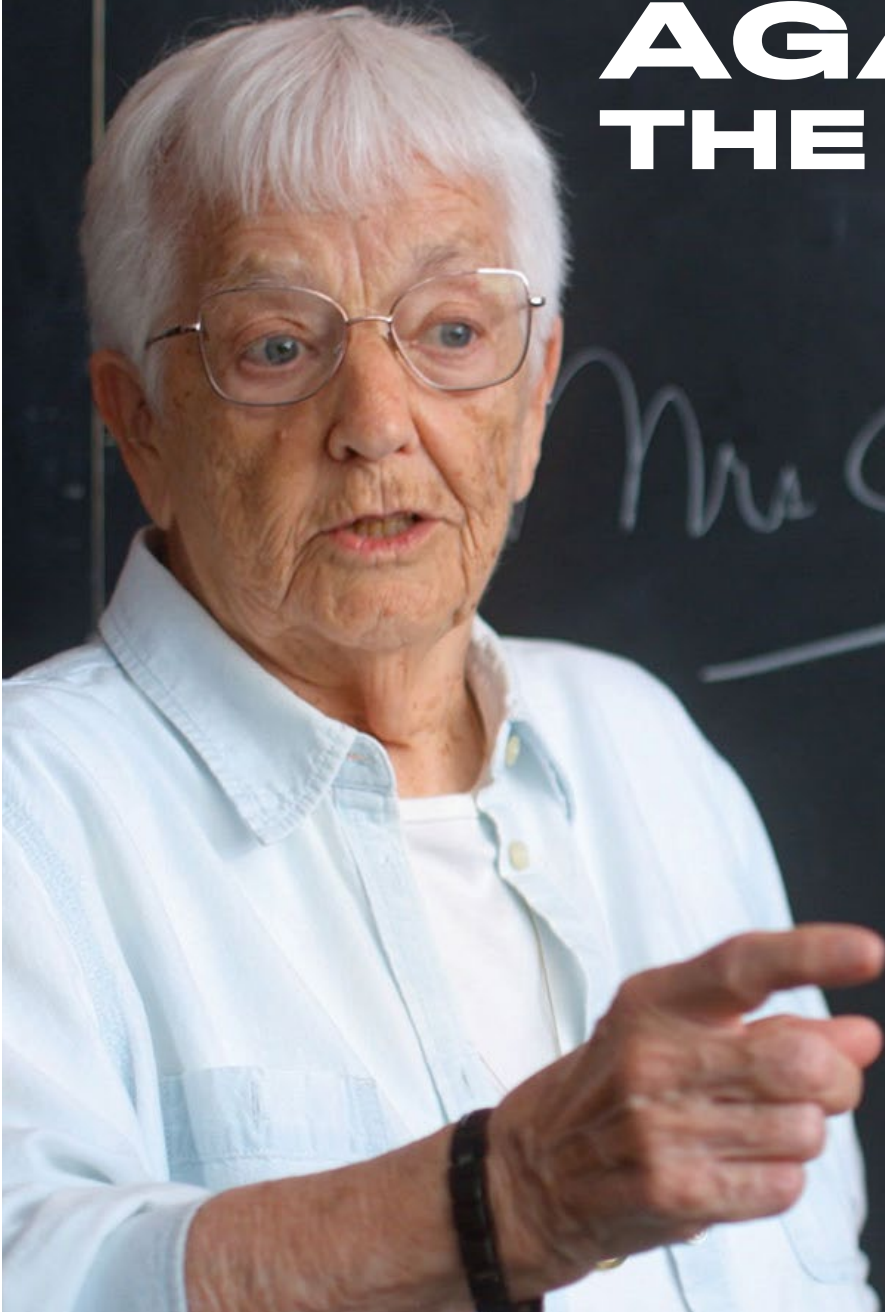


**DOCLANDS**

**EDUCATION**

**APRIL 30 - MAY 3**

# **JANE ELLIOTT AGAINST THE WORLD**



*Ms Elliott*

**CURRICULUM GUIDE**  
**GRADES: 9-12**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Instructor Resources

A Letter to Educators	ii
Additional Resources	iii
About CAFILM	iii
Standards	iv

## Student Handouts

About the Film	2
About the Filmmaker	2
Before Viewing Activities	4
During the Viewing Guide	6
Discussion Questions	8
Interpretive Essay Prompts	11
Extension Activities	13



Dear Educators,

Thank you for attending the 10th Annual DocLands Documentary Film Festival screening of the documentary feature film *Jane Elliott Against the World*. We are excited to return in our 2026 spring season with a combination of both in-theater 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 in 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

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### CAFILM Documentary Film Analysis Toolkit

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/192NExBcx7uXqQX1ilKvAVdxibQaRnZzE61Ow2KrdRIA/edit?tab=t.0>

### Jane Elliott “Blue Eyes-Brown Eyes” Experiment Anti-Racism | YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLAI78hluFc>

### A Collar in My Pocket | The Blue Eyes Brown Eyes Exercise | Jane Elliott

<https://janeelliott.com/video-store/a-collar-in-my-pocket>

### PBS | Frontline Article

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/introduction-2/>

### A Class Divided | Full Documentary | Frontline

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mcCLm\\_LwpE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mcCLm_LwpE)

### The Eye of the Storm

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0365177/>

### Inland Empire Family PAC | Taking Back the School Boards

<https://iefamilypac.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.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.9-10.3

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. 9-10.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

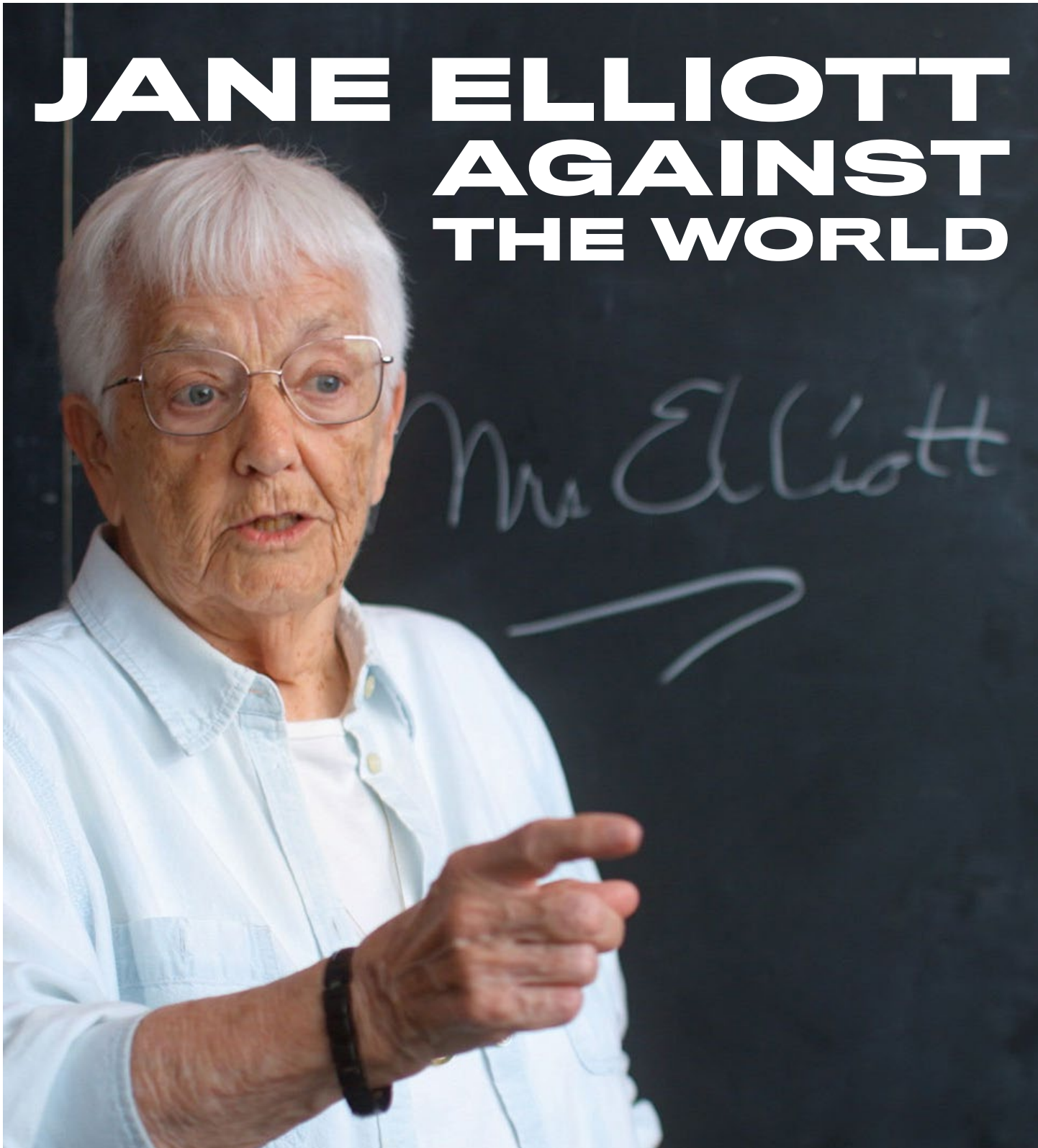
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.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: \_\_\_\_\_



## LOGLINE

A rural Iowa teacher who taught her all-white class a 1968 lesson in discrimination becomes a national voice against racism and, after decades of speaking out, remains an unfiltered force in the fight over history and power in America.

## ABOUT THE FILM

Jane Elliott became a national voice against racism after leading her contentious but now-famous “Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes” experiment with her all-white third grade class in the wake of Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1968 assassination. For more than 50 years, she has remained committed to confronting racism, even as media attention spread her work nationwide and backlash in her hometown of Riceville, Iowa, had a lasting impact on her family. Now nearly 90, Elliott continues to speak out unapologetically on issues of race, history, and power, using her platform and privilege to push for change. Not about to quiet down, Jane Elliott remains a fierce and unrelenting advocate, proving her message is as urgent today as ever and Jane Elliott Against the World is a film for this moment.

## EPIGRAPH

(QUOTE FROM FILM TO GUIDE VIEWING & DISCUSSIONS)

“Racial prejudice is an emotional commitment to ignorance.”

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKER JUDD EHRLICH

Judd Ehrlich is a Grand Clio, Cannes Lion, and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker. His intimate, cinematic storytelling, informed by his years as a caseworker, blends empathy with an unflinching lens to reveal stories of struggle and resilience. His films are part of the US Department of State’s American Film Showcase, fostering cross-cultural dialogue worldwide. His films include *We Could Be King* (2014), *Keepers of the Game* (2016), *The Price of Freedom* (2021), and *26th Street Garage: The FBI’s Untold Story of 9/11* (2021).



## FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

I first saw Jane Elliott as a teenager, watching The Oprah Winfrey Show from my childhood home in Lower Manhattan. I had never seen a white person speak so directly to other white people about racism. Later, in a college psychology class, I studied her Blue Eyes Brown Eyes exercise and began to understand its impact in a different way. When she went viral again in 2020, after the murder of George Floyd, something clicked. I reached out, not expecting a reply. She responded right away.

Over the past several years, I have sat across from Jane in her living room, traveled with her and witnessed her fire up close. She is exactly who she appears to be, sharp, uncompromising and completely uninterested in being liked. She is also funny, generous and deeply human. She trusted me with her story, her family and her personal archive. I have tried to honor that trust by making a film that does not look away.

As a Jewish filmmaker drawn to stories that confront injustice, I was struck by Jane's clarity. Born in 1933, the year Hitler came to power, she grew up hearing her father condemn the Nazis while holding racist beliefs at home. This contradiction stayed with her. She saw early on how easily people can be manipulated through fear and propaganda and how quickly a community can turn against "the other" based on something as arbitrary as eye color. She built her life's work on that realization.

This film is not just about where Jane has been. It is about where she still is. She is banned from schools across America, yet refuses to retreat. She stands on the front lines of school board fights, including in Temecula, California, where white Christian nationalists are erasing history in the very district where her grandchildren went to school and where her great-grandchild now sits in the classroom. For Jane, these battles are deeply personal. She challenges young activists, calls out liberal complacency and demands clarity in a moment shaped by backlash.

The film also captures a woman reckoning with time. Jane knows she will not be here forever. Confronted with her own mortality and the bonds of family, she continues to provoke, inspire and demand more from all of us. She remains a singular voice, blunt, polarizing and fearless.

Jane does not want to be celebrated. She wants people to act. This film calls for nothing less.



# BEFORE VIEWING ANTICIPATION GUIDE

**Directions:**

The film you are about to watch is about a controversial lesson in discrimination that was used to address the racism of the time. For each statement, decide whether you agree or disagree, then write a one or two sentence explanation for your opinion.

STATEMENT	AGREE/DISAGREE	EXPLANATION
Racism is mostly a thing of the past.		
Racism is a learned behavior that is explicitly taught or acquired through socialization, cultural observation, or the bystander effect.		
Education is not about learning facts but about leading people out of ignorance.		
Learning honest history is essential to not repeating past atrocities.		
People change when they are forced to experience discrimination.		
If someone is not racist, they are not part of the problem.		
Silence means agreement.		
Racial prejudice is an emotional commitment to ignorance.		

# BEFORE VIEWING

## QUICK WRITE | IDENTITY REFLECTION

**Directions:**

The act of writing helps us think about a topic. This documentary examines how overlapping social identities intersect with systemic structures of power to create unique, compounded experiences of discrimination or privilege. In anticipation of the topics explored in this film, respond to the following questions.

1. What are two or three identities that shape how others see you?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. When have you felt included or excluded because of identity?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. How do people learn who is "better" or "worse" in society?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# DURING VIEWING

## THEN & NOW TRACKER (Best For Online/In-Class Viewing)

### How to Use this Thinking Routine:

The “Blue Eyes - Brown Eyes” exercise featured in the film raised ethical concerns and was widely criticized. Despite the controversy, Jane Elliott has spent 50 years conducting the exercise for corporations, government agencies, and universities, maintaining that the discomfort of the exercise is necessary to wake people up to reality. “Then vs. Now” doesn’t always mean better or worse, but different in context, awareness, and responses. Use the notecatcher to compare characteristics of the exercise from the past with its characteristics and impacts in the present.

Category	Then   The Original Experiment	Now   Modern Audiences in Subsequent & Recent Years
<b>How Discrimination is Taught</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is discrimination actively created in the classroom?</li> <li>How do people learn about discrimination?</li> </ul>		
<b>How Discrimination Shows Up</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What behaviors are apparent?</li> <li>What attitudes are obvious?</li> <li>How is prejudice hidden?</li> </ul>		
<b>Student Reactions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do participants in the exercise feel?</li> <li>How do students respond to discussions or education about discrimination?</li> </ul>		
<b>Adult Reactions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do adults respond to the exercise depending on context?</li> <li>What do adults think about this lesson in discrimination?</li> </ul>		

# DURING VIEWING CONT.

## THEN & NOW TRACKER (Best For Online/In-Class Viewing)

<p><b>Power Dynamics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who has control of a classroom?</li> <li>• How does authority or influence affect the lesson's impact?</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Resistance &amp; Denial</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do people push back or resist education on discrimination?</li> <li>• How or why do people deny that bias exists?</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Language Used</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What words are used to make people feel a difference in status?</li> <li>• How do people talk about discrimination?</li> </ul>		

Then & Now   Reflect & Respond	
<p>What has changed about racism since the 1960s?</p>	
<p>What has not changed about racism since the 1960s?</p>	

# AFTER VIEWING

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS | LEVELING UP THE CONVERSATION

### How to Use this Thinking Routine:

Select an effective class discussion format to encourage active participation and deepen understanding of the film. Varying formats from small groups to structured whole-class approaches ensures all student voices are heard. Use the notecatcher below to record highlights.

### Level 1: Immediate Reaction - "Lobby Talk"

Objective: To process reactions and surface emotions or tensions.

- What moments in the film made you uncomfortable? Why?
- Can one teacher, in one day, change the lives of students forever?
- Is the Blue Eyes-Brown Eyes Experiment effective and necessary or harmful and exploitive?
- How do participants in Elliott's workshops respond differently, and what might explain those differences?
- Do you think participants actually change or just react in the moment?

### Level 2 Analytical Discussion: Digging a Little Deeper

Objective: To move from reaction to interpretation.

- How does Jane Elliott use power, authority, and control in her workshops?
- In what ways does the film suggest that bias is learned, performed, or internalized?
- Where do you see tension between intention and impact in Elliott's method?
- How does the documentary frame Elliott - as effective, problematic, necessary, extreme, or something else?
- Is the film intended to inspire action or conversation?

### Level 3: Argument Building - Insight & Analysis

Objective: To push toward arguable ideas.

- Is it ethical to use discomfort, shame, or confrontation as a teaching tool?
- Do the ends (awareness, empathy, or behavior change) ever justify the means (the methods used) in Jane Elliott's workshops?
- Can a simulated experiment ever accurately represent real oppression, or do they risk oversimplifying it?
- What responsibilities do educators have when teaching about discrimination, bias, inequality, or injustice?



# 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

# AFTER VIEWING

## IDENTITIES, ISSUES, & IMPACTS

### How to Use this Thinking Routine:

This post-viewing thinking routine is designed to help students move from observation to critical analysis. It invites students to examine how identity shapes perspective, to identify the central social issues presented, and to consider the broader impacts on individuals and communities.

### Directions:

Use the structured reflection guide to deepen your understanding of bias, power, and social responsibility.

### IDENTITIES

#### WHO WE ARE & HOW THAT SHAPES EXPERIENCE

- How do different identities affect how people respond to Elliott?
- Who is able to “opt out” of the lesson? Who is not?
- How does privilege show up in the film?
- Which identities carry power vs. those identities that are more vulnerable in the experiment?

### ISSUES

#### SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS EXPOSED

- What does the film suggest about how racism is learned?
- Is racism shown as individual, structural, or both?
- Why do some people reject Elliott’s message?

### IMPACTS

#### WHY THIS MATTERS

- What are the emotional and psychological impacts of discrimination shown?
- Does Elliott’s method create real change, or just temporary awareness?
- What responsibility does education have in confronting racism?
- Can experiences like this actually change society? Why or why not?

## AFTER VIEWING INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

### Directions:

These interpretive essay prompts offer an opportunity to write a personal, yet evidence-based argument about the film's deeper meaning and themes. Review the prompts and choose the one that offers the most compelling angle for your analysis.

### Individual Choices, Policy, and Environmental Impact

Who is responsible for climate action? How does Plan C for Civilization illustrate the relationship between individual behavior, government policy, and environmental outcomes? Write an essay in which you argue who bears the greatest responsibility for addressing the climate crisis and creating meaningful change. Use specific examples from the film to support your perspective, including what obligations humanity holds for future generations.

### Awareness and Action in Documentary Storytelling

Can film be a catalyst for change? In what ways does Plan C for Civilization seek to raise awareness and inspire action? Write an essay in which you evaluate whether the film is an effective tool for motivating viewers to respond to climate change. Use specific examples to analyze how the documentary uses its platform to influence audiences.



# EXIT TICKET

**Instructions:**

As a check for understanding and feedback on the film, respond to the following question and write your response in the space provided.

- When does a film stop being a documentary and become an intervention?

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE



# EXTENSION ACTIVITY

## RECREATE THE METHOD

### Note to Educators:

For optimal results, this extension activity is designed to span up to two class periods. Providing students with ample time for designing, executing, debriefing, and reflection will deepen engagement and support more thoughtful, meaningful outcomes. Adjust pacing as needed to fit your classroom context and instructional goals.

### Introduction:

In the documentary, Jane Elliott uses a controversial experiential exercise to expose how prejudice and discrimination operate.

### Student Task:

Instead of replicating Jane Elliott's exercise, which is controversial and can be harmful if done improperly, your task is to design a new, ethical, and safe learning experience meant to teach a social issue about bias, privilege, exclusion, stereotyping, or othering.

**Note:** You are not recreating Elliott's "Blue Eyes-Brown Eyes" exercise. Instead, you are creating a hypothetical classroom-appropriate experience that raises awareness without causing harm.

- This activity is about understanding systems, not simulating trauma.
- Students are acting as educators and designers, not participants in a reenactment.
- The goal is insight and responsibility, not shock value.

### Part 1: Define Your Concept - The "Why"

Choose a specific issue your activity will address.

#### You must clearly explain:

- What social issue are you addressing?
- Why does this issue matter today?
- What do you want participants to realize, feel, question, or challenge?

#### Examples of Potential Focus Areas:

- Language-based exclusion.
- Socioeconomic privilege in education.
- Gender expectations in classrooms.
- Implicit bias in hiring.



# EXTENSION ACTIVITY CONT.

## RECREATE THE METHOD

### Part 2: Design the Experience - The "How"

Create a step-by-step plan for your activity.

#### Setting & Structure

- Where does this experience take place? The classroom, workplace, online?
- How long does it last?
- What materials or setup are needed?

#### The Core Mechanism

- Describe the central idea that drives your activity.
- What is the "hook" or experience participants will go through?
- How does it simulate or reveal the issue?

#### Examples of Mechanisms:

- Unequal access to information,
- Rules that advantage some participants over others.
- Communication barriers.
- Assigned roles with different levels of power.

#### Step-by-Step Process

Outline exactly what happens.

- Introduction and instructions.
- Activity phase.
- Turning point or realization moment.
- Conclusion.

### Part 3: Ethical Safeguards - The "Should We?"

This is the most critical component. You must explain how your activity avoids harm.

#### Address all of the following:

- How will you ensure no one is humiliated, singled out, or emotionally harmed?
- How will participation be voluntary or low-risk?
- How will you avoid reinforcing stereotypes instead of challenging them?
- What will you do if someone feels uncomfortable?

# EXTENSION ACTIVITY CONT.

## RECREATE THE METHOD

### Part 4: Debrief Plan - The "Meaning'Making"

The learning doesn't come from the activity alone - it comes from reflection.

#### Design a Guided Debrief:

- What questions will you ask participants after the experience?
- How will you connect the experience to real-world systemic issues?
- How will you ensure misunderstandings are clarified?

#### Examples of Debrief Discussion Questions:

- What did you notice about how power operated?
- How did the structure influence behavior?
- Where do we see this dynamic in real life?

### Part 5: Reflection - The "So What?"

Write a short reflection about recreating the method.

#### Address the following questions:

- What makes experiential learning powerful, but risky?
- What are the limits of activities like this?
- When does awareness-building cross into harm?

#### Compare your design to Jane Elliott's Method:

- What did you keep?
- What did you change?
- What did you intentionally avoid?



# EXTENSION VIEWING

## START A MOVEMENT | INFLUENCERS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

### Introduction:

Jane Elliott's lesson on discrimination has grown into a movement that includes books, workshops, social media, and merchandise. Imagine you want to start a movement that tackles an important issue today. How would you share it, grow it, and make it meaningful without losing the core values behind it?

### Student Task:

Explore how ideas, social causes, or social justice principles spread in contemporary culture and reflect on the strategies and ethics of influencing others for positive change.

### Step 1: Choose a Cause

- Pick a social issue that matters to you.
- It could be related to race, gender, climate, immigration, mental health, etc.

### Step 2: Craft a Core Message

- What is the one idea or lesson your movement would teach in a way that's clear and memorable?
- What do you want your audience to take away from your lesson?

### Step 3: Design an Influencer Campaign

- What name or tagline will you use for the movement - like a hashtag?
- What social media platforms you would use and why.
- What symbols, visuals, or merchandise will help you convey the message?

### Step 4: Ethics Check

- Reflect on potential pitfalls.
- How do you stay authentic?
- How do you avoid misrepresenting your cause or trivializing serious issues?

### Step 5: Creative Output | Choose One

- A mock social media post - image + caption + tweet thread + instagram story + TikTok Script.
- A mini-poster and logo for the movement.
- Merchandise to market and spread the word.
- A short "call-to-action" speech you could post online.

### Step 6: Debrief & Discuss

- Compare classroom student movements with real-life influencers.
- Discuss the balance between spreading a message widely and going viral while keeping it meaningful, just as Elliott's work balances intensity with teaching.

### Step 7: Reflect

- Write a short reflective paragraph on how Jane Elliott's strategies influenced your thinking about social advocacy today.

# 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 throughout 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 DocLands Documentary Film Festival

Presented by the California Film Institute, DocLands is a vibrant celebration of nonfiction storytelling held annually in Marin County, California. Expanding upon the exchange of ideas and inspiration through captivating screenings, networking, and engaging conversations, DocLands strives to foster dialogue, inspire connections, and build an inclusive community around the art of documentary filmmaking. DocLands aims to illuminate filmmakers' diverse perspectives and ignite a passion

for exploring real-world issues by showcasing compelling stories and the thought-provoking insights behind them. Join us as we embark on a journey to discover, connect, and celebrate the power of documentary cinema.



The Smith Rafael Film Center, home of the Mill Valley Film Festival

## Questions to Consider:

What is the purpose of a film festival? What are the benefits for filmmakers? For the audience? For the community? How might the films at a festival differ from the films available to watch at your local movie theater? 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 have student film categories. If you are a filmmaker, explore FilmFreeway ([www.filmfreeway.com](http://www.filmfreeway.com)) for a database of worldwide film festivals where you can submit your film.