

MVFF49

MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL | 1-11 OCTOBER



YOUTH SHORTS PROGRAM: ALL THE YOUNG PUNKS



CURRICULUM GUIDE
GRADES: 1-5

Name: _____



YOUTH SHORTS PROGRAM: ALL THE YOUNG PUNKS



LETTER TO EDUCATORS

Dear educators,

Thank you for attending the 49th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of the Youth Works Program *All the Young Punks*. We are excited to welcome you to our 2026 fall season with a combination of both in-person screenings for local schools and online screenings for those of you joining us from afar.

We believe film is the literature of the 21st century: a universal language that helps students make sense of the world, and a powerful entry point into questions of ethics, identity, and active citizenship. This year's school screenings continue that focus and we think the Youth Works Program *All the Young Punks* will be a rich, engaging film program for your classroom.

This guide gives you everything you need to bring the film into your curriculum, including:

- Discussion prompts for small-group or whole-class dialogue on the film industry and the films themselves.
- Common Core-aligned writing options for evidence-based essay prompts or a film review format, depending on your students' experience level.
- Thinking routines for before, during, and after viewing with a focus on social-emotional learning.
- Extension activities exploring the film as both art and cultural or political statement.
- A festival-context handout to help frame the screening experience for your class.

Thank you for the work you do. Enjoy the film!

Sincerely,
The CAFILM Education Team

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1. Before you attend or screen the film: Hand out the Festival Context sheet so students know what a film festival is and why this screening matters.
2. Pick your discussion mode: Choose whole-class or small group prompts based on your time and class dynamic. Both formats work with the film industry angle, the specific film, or both and can be paired with the discussion notecatcher.
3. Choose a writing path: If students already write evidence-based essays, use the essay prompts. If not, try the film review format as a lower-lift alternative.
4. Layer in thinking routines: Assign the before, during, and after routines to deepen engagement. These double as social-emotional learning check-ins.
5. Extend if you have time: Use the extension activities for students who want to dig a little deeper into the film program's social, cultural, or political dimensions further.

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

"All the Young Punks, Laugh your life 'Cause there ain't much to cry for." Disappear into corner stores, and shark-filled waters, or love at first sight to find something new. Learn the language of the birds as you meet your match and find your people, or just your insides outside of you. These dynamic youth-produced shorts explore grief, community, and coming-of-age to tell stories both personal and universal.

FILMS FEATURED IN THIS PROGRAM



Cicada

Ukraine | 2 mins

Director: Matthew Glazunov Oleksandrovich

For 17 years, Cicada has worked faithfully and flawlessly in a gray office, yet remains ignored and bullied, his entire life bound to a strict schedule.

Chasing Dragonflies

United States | 10 mins

Director: Jaba Keh

After 40 years running his grocery store, 72-year-old Chuck reflects on his South Korean childhood and his lifelong devotion to Philadelphia's Caribbean community.



Chirp Talker

Taiwan | 4 mins

Director: Audrey He-Qing Cheng

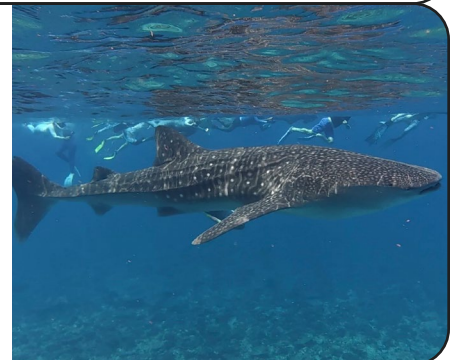
Delighted by the birds chattering on her balcony, Audrey invents a bird-language translator to unlock their secret, playful conversations.

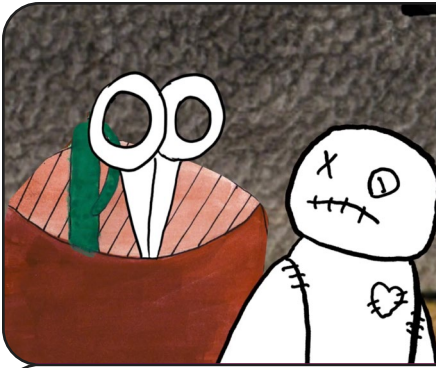
Constellations of the Sea

United States | 13 mins

Director: Addie Knoll

A 17-year-old filmmaker joins a Maldives research team documenting the fight to protect endangered whale sharks amid a global tourism industry.





The Doll

Germany | 3 mins
Director: Inside the Croco

Neglected by the boy who made her, a stitched doll injures herself again and again for his attention until the thread runs out and she's discarded.

Grow Up

Australia | 8 mins
Director: Dari Justin

When 12-year-old Kai realizes his older brother has outgrown their childhood games, he decides it's time to grow up too, though he's unsure if he's ready.



Happy Birthday

United States | 1 min
Director: Logan Bermudez

On her 18th birthday, a girl sits before her cake surrounded by celebration while something beneath the surface isn't right.

I Love My Guts

United States | 5 mins
Director: Jahan Zubair

After being dumped, a teenage girl literally spills her guts, dragging her entrails through school and family dinners in search of someone who cares.

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It's My Fault

Germany | 2 mins
Director: Inside the Croco

A 14-year-old-boy collects stones on an ordinary day, one from his drunken mother and another from a street fight he was too scared to stop.

Making Space

Romania | 1 min

Director: The Animation Incubator

Azorel, a dog-like urban dweller, navigates a fantastical reimagined city that explores how we reshape spaces to reflect our communities.



My Mother Told Me Not to Talk to Strangers

United States | 3 mins

Director: Joshua Najera

A young girl's ordinary afternoon at the park leads to an unexpected connection with a stranger that gradually reveals an unsettling undercurrent between trust and danger.

Oppression

Romania | 1 min

Director: The Animation Incubator

Inspired by Lanstong Hughes' poem, this film uses a bird as metaphor to confront the devastating reality in Palestine, refusing to let viewers look away.

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Purge

South Korean | 19 mins

Director: Jiahn Son

A week after her mother's death, Jiho forgets it entirely as her inner self, "Thought," demands she purge every trace while Jiho clings to denial.

Windward

United States | 5 mins

Directors: Alex Powell, Flynn Rossington, luna Barreiro, & Renn Smith

Blind sailor Walt Raineri thought he'd prepared for his loss of sight but learns anew through sailing, navigating by listening, feeling, and trusting the wind, water, and his community.



BEFORE VIEWING

SPOT IT, SENSE IT, SUSPECT IT

Introduction:

This program is built entirely from shorts made by young filmmakers - they are your peers, not distant auteurs. The gap between someone who makes films and someone who watches them is not as wide as it may seem. This is the real argument the program is making.

How to use this Pre-Viewing Activity:

Each of the following statements is related to one of the program's themes. Read each statement carefully. Mark whether you agree or disagree. Then, write a short explanation that defends your position. If there is time after watching the film, revisit these ideas to see how your perspectives may have changed.

Agree	Statement	Disagree
	Short films are limited by their runtime - they can't do what longer films do.	
	Film is a universal language - you don't need to speak someone's language to understand their film.	
	The form a filmmaker chooses - documentary, animation, or live action - changes the meaning, not just the look.	
	A young filmmaker's perspective carries a different kind of authority than an adult's on the same subject.	
	Having a platform to show your work is as important as having something to say.	
	Style can be substance - how a story is told is part of what it means.	
	Youth voices shape culture now, not just someday.	
	Some ideas can only be expressed through a camera - not through speech or writing.	

DURING VIEWING

SIGNPOST NOTES & TAGLINE CHALLENGE

Introduction:

A tagline is not a summary. It's a compressed promise - one that captures whose story this is, what's at risk, and how it feels, without giving away the ending. Every short film featured in this program has one hiding inside it. Your job, while viewing, is learning how to find it.

How to Use this Viewing Activity:

Fill in one row per film, right after it ends. Write fast, write specific. Note story, subject, substance, style, structure, and what's at stake.

The Formula: Keep this in mind while you watch. Every draft tagline gets checked against it.

Subject + Stakes + Tone/Twist = Tagline

Whose story is it? What's on the line? How does it feel? Under 12 words.

Quick Reference | What Goes in Each Column

Central Question	Key Image or Moment	Tone	Signature Style	What's at Stake
What is the subject or protagonist grappling with, searching for, or trying to resolve?	The one frame or beat you'd still picture a week from now.	Three specific words - not value judgments, but precise adjectives that capture the feeling of the film.	Note whether the film is narrative, documentary, or animated. Highlight use of structure, sound, or silence.	Why do these few minutes of footage matter? What is the bigger story?

Film	Central Question	Key Image or Moment	Tone	Signature Style	What's at Stake?
Cicada					
Chasing Dragonflies					
Chirp Talker					
Constellations of the Sea					

DURING VIEWING CONT.

SIGNPOST NOTES & TAGLINE CHALLENGE

The Doll					
Grow Up					
Happy Birthday					
I Love My Guts					
It's My Fault					
Making Space					
My Mother Told Me Not to Talk to Strangers					
Oppression					
Purge					
Windward					

AFTER VIEWING

ROLL CREDITS | EXIT TICKET

How to Use this Post-Viewing Activity:

Before any discussion begins, give students a quiet minute. Ask students to write silently without sharing out yet. Let this sit before moving into analysis. In the exit ticket, write:

- One word for how you feel right now.
- One image from one of the films you can't shake.
- One line - from one of the films - that resonated with you and you want to remember.

ADMIT ONE

ADMIT ONE



AFTER VIEWING TAGLINE CHALLENGE

How to Use this Post-Viewing Activity:

There are two ways to run this activity - the sprint version or the capstone version.

The Sprint Version:

Right after each film, take 60-90 seconds and draft one tagline using only that film's row.

The Capstone Version:

At the end of the full program, flip back through your notecatcher, pick your favorites, and draft with more care.

Draft, Then Test

- Write a first-draft tagline for each film you choose using the Subject + Stakes + Tone Formula.
- Swap with a partner. Give them only the tagline - not the title. Can they guess which film it's for?
- If they can't guess, it's too generic. Go back to your notecatcher and find a sharper, more specific detail to swap in.
- Revise. A good tagline should only fit one film in this program.

Film	My Tagline for the Film
Cicada	
Chasing Dragonflies	
Chirp Talker	
Constellations of the Sea	
The Doll	
Grow Up	
Happy Birthday	
I Love My Guts	
It's My Fault	
Making Space	
My Mother Told Me Not to Talk to Strangers	
Oppression	
Purge	
Windward	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HEADINGS & HIGHLIGHTS

Medium & Message

- Pick one film from the program and discuss its form. Why do you think the filmmaker chose documentary, narrative or animation for their particular story? Could the same story have worked as well in a different form?
- With the short film, every choice matters. Pick one film featured in the program and describe how a specific formal choice (editing rhythm, camera style, sound design) actively shaped its meaning and not just decorated it.

The Power of the Platform

- What does it mean for a teenager to have a platform to tell their story on their own terms, especially on a topic adults might choose to tell differently?
- Whose voices or stories do you think don't get this kind of platform often enough? What would change if they did?

Youth Voice & the Sphere of Influence

- Whose "sphere of influence" does a short film like this actually reach - friends, a school, a whole community? Does the length of the film or the power of the platform change that reach?
- Did any of the films featured in this program change how you think about an issue in your own life or community? What specifically shifted?
- If you had the platform to make a short film about your own life or community right now, what would it be about, and who would you most want to see it?

Film is a Universal Language

- Even though these films range from documentary, to narrative, to animation, what feelings or ideas seemed to come through no matter what the format? What does that tell you about what film can communicate that words alone can't?
- Did any film speak to you even though its story or setting was outside your own experience? What made that connection possible?
- All the Young Punks brings a selection of different films together under one title. What do you think ties them together as a shared "language?"



DISCUSSION NOTECATCHER

How to use this Thinking Routine:

Discuss the questions in small groups and record the ideas that come up in conversation. Be prepared to share what you take away with the whole class.

IDEAS I HEARD DURING DISCUSSION

MIND-POP IDEAS

Ideas that came to my mind during discussion.

ONE IMPORTANT THING I LEARNED DURING DISCUSSION

ESSAY OPTIONS

STANDARDS-ALIGNED WRITING PROMPTS

Write a thesis-driven essay that argues a claim about the program. Choose from one of the angles and clearly address the prompt.

- Use a formal, academic voice.
- Use textual evidence from at least two films to support your argument.
- Connect the program's message to bigger ideas we discussed in class, or to real-world issues.
- Show that you've thought about the films by explaining why the topic is important or how different people might see it in different ways.

Medium & Message

- Choose two films featured in the program that use different forms (documentary, animation, live action). Argue that the filmmaker's choice of form was purposeful - and that the film's meaning depends on how it was made. What would be lost if the story were told in another one of the forms?

The Power of the Platform

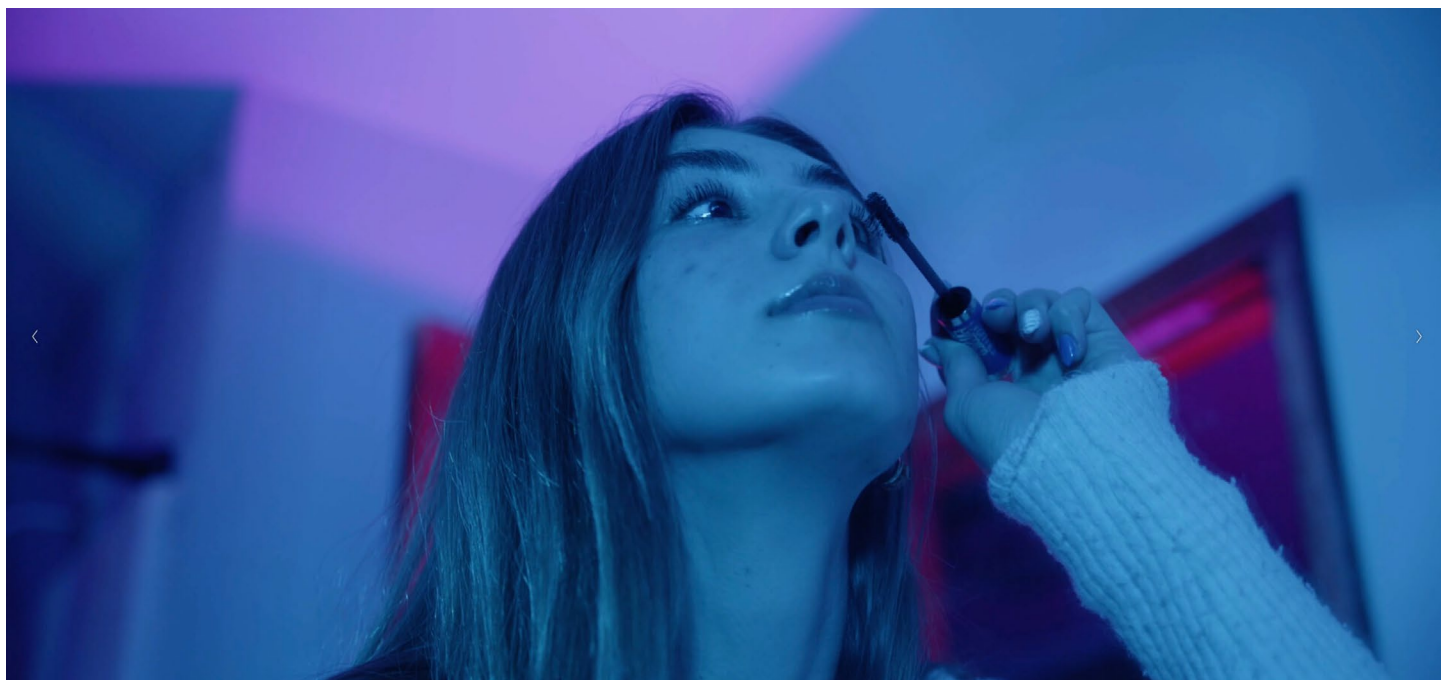
- Each of the films featured in this program were made by young people and are now being screened for an audience in a festival-style curated experience. What does this viewing style do for a short film that uploading it online does not?

Youth Voice & the Sphere of Influence

- These films were made by young filmmakers. Argue for what a youth-produced film can access, risk, or say that an adult-made film on the same subject cannot - or push back on the idea that age changes authority at all.

Film is a Universal Language

- Using at least two films from All the Young Punks, argue for or against this claim. Point to specific moments - story, substance, style - that either crossed a cultural or language gap for you, or didn't.



PROGRAM REVIEW

WRITING ALTERNATIVE TO STANDARDS-ALIGNED ESSAY

Evaluate the Program as a Whole

A Film Program Review asks students to write as a festival critic would when covering a curated group of short films screened together - rather than analyzing a single feature film in isolation. It is an alternative writing option built out for how a shorts program is experienced, discussed, and remembered as a whole.

The Prompt:

Write a Program Review about watching the films as a curated experience under the title "All the Young Punks."

Suggested Structure

- 1. Opening | Framing** (1-2 sentences)
Hook the reader and state your curatorial thesis. What holds this program together?
- 2. Program Throughline** (3-5 sentences)
Develop the connective idea across the films before diving into individual titles.
- 3. Film Discussion** (2-3 short paragraphs)
Discuss specific films as evidence for your claim. Organize films into clusters and discuss representative examples.
- 4. Craft Analysis** (1-2 short paragraphs)
Zoom in and analyze at least two specific craft choices and explain their effect on storytelling.
- 5. Closing Evaluation** (2-3 sentences)
Take a clear critical stance. Which films in the program are most successful, and why? How does the program work as a whole?



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

MOVIE POSTER & TAGLINE CAPSTONE

Introduction:

A film tagline is a short, memorable phrase used in marketing and on movie posters to capture a film's core tone, genre, and emotional hook. Taglines matter because they spark curiosity and create cultural impact. The best taglines become permanent parts of the cultural conversation because they stick with audiences long after they leave the theater. Students have already tracked the details of subject, stakes, tone, and twists while viewing the youth-produced shorts featured in this program. This extension activity adds one more step - to design a digital poster that puts that tagline to the test. The poster isn't decoration - it's the evidence that the tagline actually works, built by image, color, and type choices that support what the tagline promises.

Directions:

Create a digital poster for one film that proves the tagline you created for it. A viewer should be able to look at the image and guess the film's genre, tone, and intended audience. The tagline should confirm, not contradict, what the image already promises potential viewers.

1. Pick a Short - Market It

Look back at your viewing notes and post-viewing taglines. Pick one film to market by creating imagery to match the tagline you created for the film.

2. Craft - Central Image

Sketch one central image or composition idea that captures the film's genre, tone, and intended audience before any text goes on - this is the poster's real argument.

3. Create - Digital Poster

Build the poster digitally using Canva, Google Slides, or any tool you are already familiar and experienced with. Your poster should feature a central image, the title of the film, your tagline, and a small credits line. Choose colors and font types that match the tone your tagline promises.

4. Share - Put it to the Test

Cover the tagline and show a partner the image alone. If they can guess the genre, tone, and intended audience, the poster is doing its job. Reveal the tagline and see if it sharpens what they already felt about what the film promises.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

THE POWER OF THE PLATFORM & THE SHORT FILM CHALLENGE

Introduction:

All the Young Punks celebrates a punk-adjacent idea - you don't need permission to make something. This showcase of youth-produced films exists because a young person picked up a camera because they have something to say and they will find a way to say it. This extension activity offers students the opportunity to do the same - by embracing the power of the platform - or the youth-produced short film.

Concept Starting Points:

What does it mean to make your own platform instead of waiting for one?

- A story about your community that a larger platform would never think or be able to tell.
- A moment from your own life where you take back control of the narrative, instead of letting someone else tell it.
- A piece that turns limited equipment or resources into a visible, intentional style - where the medium is part of the message.
- A response to feeling unseen or overlooked - if you don't make this film and tell this story, who will?

Directions:

Rather than requiring every student to produce a full finished short film (which not every class has the time or equipment for), this activity is layered across the real three-stage production cycle: Pre-Production, Production, and Post-Production. Students (or the whole class) can choose how far into the production cycle to go.

Stage One - Pre-Production: The Development Phase

- Logline (1-2 sentences)
- Treatment (a short paragraph describing the piece, its point of view, and why it needs to be self-made).
- Shot list or Storyboard (at least 8-10 shots).
- Mood board (visual references of concept).
- Platform statement: reflection on production stage and process (outlined below).



EXTENSION ACTIVITY CONT.

THE POWER OF THE PLATFORM & THE SHORT FILM CHALLENGE

Stage Two - Production: The Principal Photography Phase

- Include everything in Stage One.
- Capture 60-90 seconds of actual video and audio footage, shot on any available device.
- A production log: what you shot, what went wrong, what you'd do differently with another opportunity to continue production.
- Platform statement: reflection on production stage and process (outlined below).

Stage Three - Post-Production: The Finishing Phase

- Include everything in Stage One and Two.
- Edit raw footage, mix sound, compose musical score, add visual effects, and color grading.
- Develop a fully edited cut or trailer (2-5 minutes) with sound design, music, and credits.
- Platform statement: reflection on production stage and process (outlined below).

The Platform Statement - The Reflective Core of Each Production Stage & The Creative Process
Required at every stage of the three-stage production cycle (150-250 words). This is where students name what this project means to them, why it matters now, and why it needs to be self-made. This statement should address and answer the following:

- Why does this story need my platform, specifically?
- Why now? How does my story speak to the moment?
- Who is this for - who's the audience you're making this for?
- What would be lost if this story weren't self-made?



STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.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.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or 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 produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

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.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.



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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ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS

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 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 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.