



What These Walls Won't Hold + How We Get Free + Sol in the Garden

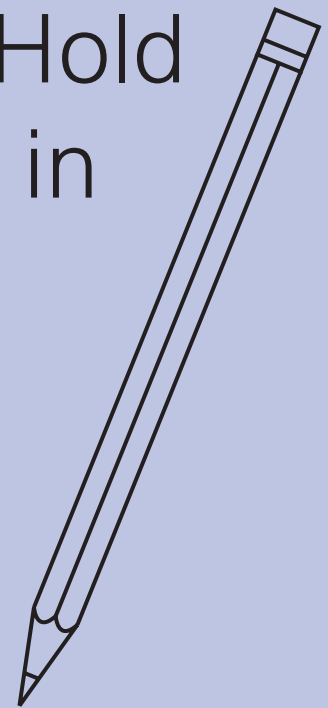
STUDY GUIDE

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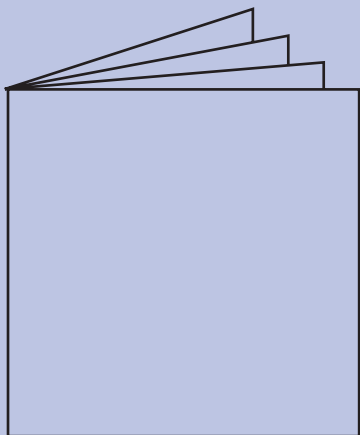






Index

02	About the Films
02	Pre-Viewing Topics
03	Presenter Bios
04	Discussion Questions
09	Activities
10	Beyond the Classroom
11	Documentary Guide
12	Media Literacy Resources
13	California Media Standards
14	Common Core Standards





About the Films



How We Get Free

Directed by **Geeta Gandbhir & Samantha Knowles** (USA, 31 min)

Over the course of two years, **How We Get Free** follows the intrepid **Elisabeth Epps** as she works to abolish cash bail in Colorado and put an end to the criminalization of poverty. Epps is the founder and leader of the Colorado Freedom Fund, one of the over 100 community bail funds around the country, which was started to help incarcerated individuals who can't afford their bail before trial. For Epps, this work is personal. She spent time in jail herself, bearing witness to the conditions she is so desperate to change. After years of grassroots activism, and on the heels of the 2020 racial reckoning, Epps is confronting a new challenge: calls from her community to run for State Representative.



Sol in the Garden

Directed by **Emily Cohen Ibañez & Débora Souza Silva** (USA, 21 min)

After 16 years of incarceration, Sol is released from prison, when she discovers that her freedom can be as challenging as living behind bars. Through a community gardening collective of formerly incarcerated horticulturalists in East Oakland, Sol strives to recover her humanity and sense of self.



About the Films



What These Walls Won't Hold

Directed by **Adamu Chan** (USA, 42 min)

Set against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic at San Quentin State Prison, **What These Walls Won't Hold**, chronicles the organizing and relationships of people who came together beyond the separations created by incarceration, to respond to this crisis. Filmmaker **Adamu Chan**, who was incarcerated at San Quentin during the height of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, documents his path through incarceration and beyond. The film is a meditation on how relationships—built on trust, shared liberatory struggle, and connections across broader abolitionist organizing work—can unfold into sites of resistance and radical change.

Recommended Grades: 6–12

Subject Areas

- Activism
- African American Studies
- Art/Media
- Asian American Studies
- Journalism
- Latin American Studies
- Mental Health
- Political Science



Teaching the Films

Through SFFILM come three unforgettable stories about transformation, mortality, and, ultimately, the criminalization of poverty. When we look around us, we see things telling us what to believe in and what not to believe in. In **How We Get Free**, a grassroots activist with a mission to fix the inequality of cash bail runs for state representative, while in **What These Walls Won't Hold**, an incarcerated individual starts a film production company right in the walls of prison, and in **Sol in the Garden**, a formerly incarcerated individual spends time in the garden striving to recover her humanity. Time and time again, these movies show that, in life, it's not so much about what you want, but, rather, who you want to be.

Everyone with a bond to get out of jail is legally innocent, and Elisabeth Ebbs, the grassroots activist in **How We Get Free**, realizes that only those in poverty are left sitting in jails because the wealthy can afford to pay the bail money for their freedom. She decides to launch an organization that addresses two tasks: to pay peoples' bail money, and to work to get rid of bail all together. A woman of character, spirit, and resilience, who shows true care and concern for each individual she works with, Elisabeth sets out to attempt one of the most difficult feats in life: to create opportunity where there is none.

Then, the screenings delve into an innovative film that proves the invaluable and long sought-after answers to systemic

crime prevention are right in front of us, from the voices we're often too fast to ignore: between the prison walls. This film is directed by **Adamu Chan**, a formerly incarcerated individual who utilizes creativity as a steadying force of purpose in the dangerous starkness of prison, a rare setting for a documentary to take place in. As incarcerated individuals are interviewed one by one, **What These Walls Won't Hold** reveals the profound root cause of all forms of crime: isolation.

Finally we meet Sol, a formerly-incarcerated woman of philosophical nature who spends her time exploring the concept of creation. Struggling with the title WA2-47 in prison, she finds family in her coworkers and realizes that her life is her decision and it is up to her what to do with it. **Sol In the Garden** is about the little girl who couldn't ask for help, and the woman who opens her heart to it.

These films are rich memoirs full of relatable and raw human emotions that address the overlooked value of community in America while exposing the habit of assumption-before-learning that obstructs and represses facets of society from progression. Note that this study guide is recommended to be completed in multiple class sessions to give enough time for proper student discussion and time to reflect due to the complex nature of the study guide's content.



Teaching the Films (Cont.)

“Because if I feel isolated, if I feel like I’m not part of the community, then I don’t respect or value communities’ rules of social norms. But when I feel like I’m part of the community, then I have a responsibility to my community. It’s central to our humanity. Because without feeling loved, it’s hard to love - and if you don’t feel loved and you don’t love, then you don’t care. You’re a dangerous person.”

- **Rahsaan Thomas (What These Walls Won’t Hold)**



Presenter Bios



Geeta Gandhir is an award winning director, producer and editor. As director, she won Best Documentary at the News and Doc Emmys for **I Am Evidence**, an HBO Documentary Film, and Best Government and Politics Documentary for **Armed with Faith**, a PBS Documentary film. As editor, she won a Primetime Emmy for Best Editing for **Spike Lee's** HBO documentary series **When The Levees Broke** and also for the HBO film **By The People, The Election of Barack Obama**. A documentary film she co-produced, **The Sentence**, for HBO, also won a Special Jury Primetime Emmy. In 2019 she directed the series **Why We Hate** with Amblin Entertainment and Jigsaw Productions for Discovery. Other award-winning feature docs she co-directed include **Prison Dogs** which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, and **A Journey of a Thousand Miles: Peacekeepers** which premiered at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival and aired on PBS. She created and is co-directing and co-producing a series on race with **The New York Times Op-Docs** titled **The Conversation** which won the AFI Documentary Film Festival and a MacArthur Grant. She also co-directed and edited the film, **Remembering the Artist: Robert Deniro Sr.** with **Perri Peltz** for HBO which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2014. She has been the recipient of a Ford Foundation grant, a MacArthur Grant, among others, and in 2017, she was the recipient of Chicken & Egg Pictures' Chicken & Egg Award



Samantha (Sam) Knowles is an award-winning Brooklyn-based filmmaker. Most recently she won the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Directing in a Documentary Series, and the Gracie Award for Best Director of a National TV Program for the HBO docuseries **Black and Missing**, which brings attention to black and missing persons cases that are routinely neglected by the police and the media. She was also nominated for a Black Reel Award for Outstanding Documentary for **Black and Missing**. The series also won the Independent Spirit Award for Best Documentary Series, a Television Academy Honors Award, and an AAFCA TV Award for Best Documentary. In 2021, she partnered with Hewlett-Packard to direct **Generation Impact: The Coder**, which was featured in the inaugural "Brand Storytelling" event at Sundance Film Festival. In 2018, she directed **The Blue Line** which examined the controversy that erupted when a small town painted a blue line on the street in support of police in the midst of the Black Lives Matter movement. It premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, was featured in NBC's Meet The Press Film Festival, and is now part of the prestigious **New York Times Op-Docs** series. Samantha also directed and produced the award-winning short documentary **Why Do You Have Black Dolls?** which is inspired by a question asked of an 8-year old girl and examines the history and significance of the



Presenter Bios



Adamu Chan is a filmmaker, writer, and community organizer from the Bay Area who was incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison during one of the largest COVID-19 outbreaks in the country. He produced numerous short films while incarcerated, using his vantage point and experience as an incarcerated person as a lens to focus the viewer's gaze on issues related to social justice. In 2021, he was a recipient of the "Docs in Action Film Fund" (through Working Films), and was tapped to produce and direct his film, **What These Walls Won't Hold**. Adamu is currently working on the doc-series **Bridge Builders**, partnering with ITVS. He is also a 2022 Stanford University Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity Mellon Arts Fellow. Adamu draws inspiration and energy from the voices of those directly impacted, and seeks to empower them to reshape the narratives that have been created about them through film.



Pre-Viewing Topics

Filmmaking Overview: Story development

There are 3 stages of film production:

- Pre-production (screenwriting, planning, shotlisting)
- Production (filming)
- Post Production (video editing, soundscape, poster design, festivals).

In a **narrative film**, screenplays are developed to tell a story, while in **documentaries**, the story is often revealed in the interview questions and found in the editing room - the video editor takes many hours of video footage and cuts them down to a film two hours or shorter, identifies a theme, identifies the main conflict, and reveals the main character's problem-solving decisions to reach their ultimate goal. In a **narrative screenplay**:

Act 1: The screenwriter identifies a main character (**protagonist**), defines what the character loves, writes an inciting incident exposing the antagonist, a person or thing that is the main source of **conflict** (something that puts the main character's favorite things at risk).

Act 2: Shows the protagonist's problem-solving decisions as each new problem arises, and then intensifies the conflict so much that it becomes the climax.

Act 3, the protagonist finds their end goal and it (hopefully) comes to a resolution. Protagonist transforms in some way.

All of this goes almost the same for the story structure of a documentary. The most interesting stories have either conflict or humor on every page. The best stories are always ones with unusual, strange, or surprising elements in them. There are so many unanswered questions in the world, and the best films address those.

In addition to the above filmmaking vocabulary, below are a couple additional vocabulary words. You can refer back to this area while reading the discussion questions that use these terms multiple times over the course of this guide.

Motifs - objects, situations, or story elements that serve as a metaphor for a deeper idea.

Camera movements - the way a camera moves to be expressive, including pan (pivoting the camera left and right) tilt (pivoting the tripod up and down) and track (moving the camera on a dolly track).

While viewing the films within this study guide, look for different shots you like, and don't like. Ask yourself, why are the filmmakers making the decisions we witness in the film? What would you have done differently?



Pre-Viewing Topics (Cont.)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The five levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs are:

1. **Physiological needs:** These are the most basic needs that humans have, such as food, water, shelter, warmth, and sleep. These needs must be met before any other needs can be addressed.
2. **Safety needs:** Once the physiological needs are met, people have a need for safety and security. This includes physical safety, financial security, and stability in their environment.
3. **Love and belonging needs:** Once safety needs are met, people have a need for social interaction and a sense of belonging. This includes relationships with family and friends, as well as a sense of community.
4. **Esteem needs:** Once the love and belonging needs are met, people have a need for self-esteem and respect from others. This includes recognition, achievement, and status.
5. **Self-actualization needs:** Once all of the previous needs are met, people have a need for self-actualization, which is the desire to reach their full potential and achieve personal growth.

According to Maslow, people must satisfy the needs at each level before they can move on to the next level. The theory suggests that people are motivated by their unmet needs, and that they will work to satisfy those needs before they can focus on higher-level needs.

Justice System - Rough US Price Guide for Litigant

1. Transcripts - \$4.50/page
2. Attorneys - \$400/hour
3. Bail money - can range between several hundred to millions of dollars depending on the severity of the charges.
4. Filing/docket fees - \$10-several hundred
5. Fines - range from a few hundred to tens of thousands of dollars

6. Expert witness fees - range from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands of dollars.
7. Investigative costs to gather evidence - range from a few hundred to tens of thousands of dollars.
8. Transportation costs - a few dollars to hundreds for long distance.
9. Counseling or treatment fees - can range from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands
10. Appeal fees - a few hundred to several thousand dollars
11. Photocopying and document production fees - a few cents to several dollars per page
12. Translation fees - a few hundred to several thousand dollars

Prison Facts

In most prisons, inmates follow a strict daily schedule that includes set times for meals, recreation, work, education, and other activities. Inmates are typically housed in small cells in dormitory-style rooms with little to no privacy. Inmates may struggle with feelings of isolation, boredom, and depression, and may face violence or other dangers while incarcerated.

According to sources like the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), and the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), some of the most common triggers of crime in the United States include poverty and economic inequality, discrimination, prejudice, and organized crime. According to a report published by the Pretrial Justice Institute in 2019, on any given day, approximately 60% of people in U.S. jails are legally innocent and awaiting trial. The report also states that many of these individuals remain incarcerated because they cannot afford to pay bail.



Pre-Screening Questions

1. Transformation can be either positive or negative. What are the qualities of positive transformation? What causes transformation?
2. When was a time you learned something really important about life? What caused you to learn it? What were the conditions?
3. When was a time that you learned something important from someone? What was the person saying? How were they saying it? Who was that person?
4. What was a moment where you felt inspired? Why?
5. What happens when a person has important things to say but are told by everyone in their community not to say it? What do you think happens?
6. What are the elements of a suppressive community? What happens when self expression is hindered?
7. What is freedom to you?
8. What is health? Where does health come from?
9. What does the phrase “look at the bigger picture” mean to you?
10. What creates community?
11. What is the value in community?



Discussion Questions



How We Get Free

1. What was the film's conflict? How was it resolved?
2. Elisabeth Ebbs describes prisoners as "people in cages". [5:20] How does that make you feel?
3. Elisabeth's goal is to "end the criminalization of poverty." What does the phrase "criminalization of poverty" mean?
4. Does the legal system criminalize poverty? If so, in what ways?
5. What kind of societal financial divisions have you seen in your life? Have they made sense? Why or why not? Who benefits from these divisions? Can people think they benefit from it but really don't? Explain.
6. Delving deeper behind the politics of money, why do you think it could be important for some to have designer labels as status? Where do these statuses come from? Who designates this as a status?
7. What is freedom?
8. What is health? Where does health come from?
9. Are people who are financially struggling, their world, and their lives, are they being represented in advertisements, Hollywood, and TV shows?
10. Do you think advertising integrates or divides various groups of people? Why or why not? Can advertising create beliefs? Why or why not? What kind of opinions does that create? What are some advertisements you didn't agree with? Which ones did you agree with? Where does the creation of a belief start?
11. Some people plead guilty just to get out of jail because they can't afford to pay cash bail. Do you think there is a problem with using cash / the ability to pay cash as a reward for getting freedom from prison as a bail? Who profits from this? Do you think this is equitable? Why or why not?
12. What have you observed is the relationship between the justice system and finances?
13. What is something that can be done that the government could hand out that would prevent people from having too little resources so everyone can have their basic needs met?
14. "We have to and we can invest in the things that help keep victims safe, and not just reduction work after the fact." What do you think Elisabeth means by that? What do you think are some things that could be established to help prevent crime?
15. Why don't some people raise awareness on certain causes, even if they wanted to? Do you think people don't raise awareness sometimes because they feel like a cause is hopeless? Why or why not? Have you ever felt like a cause was hopeless and you couldn't make a difference? Why or why not? When was a moment when you felt like you could make a difference? How can we make others understand that they can make a difference? How can we put hope back into a situation, even when it seems hopeless, or too big, etc.?
16. Elisabeth is knocking on doors fighting for what she believes in and using everything she's got. What are some good ways to find a true champion of a cause?



Discussion Questions



Sol in the Garden

1. In the film, there is a voiceover that says, "We often think of the mind as being in the brain. The mind is outside of us - in language, and the labels we give nature. In other words, nature animates the mind, and the mind, in turn, animates nature." What is the motif behind gardening in this film?
2. In one part of the movie, Sol says, "In prison, we're no longer people, we're a number". Everything goes down to a number. How we lose our identity, we lose everything about us. The first time that I kind of felt like I had some of my humanity back was when I was having my parole hearing, and the commissioner had asked me to state my first name and my last name." What was Sol expressing? How did Sol feel?
3. In the film, Sol explains that, "Coming out [to work], I feel like I finally know what a sense of community means." What is something people are told in childhood that can hinder their confidence? How does Sol's story relate to Maslow's hierarchy of needs?
4. Who are our role models growing up? Where do we get them from? What do they say and what do they tell us? Who are the role models we picked up a lot from?
5. Why do you think people do things that don't align with the law? Are their rights accessible and transparent? Why or why not?
6. What was an area of the film for you where the soundtrack and the camera framing/movement worked together harmoniously?
7. In one part of **What These Walls Won't Hold**, Adamu spoke about trusting the resiliency of the human spirit. In **Sol in the Garden**, Sol explains, "You're not that label... that's not really you...[Regarding] the societal labels after you come out of prison...you must take the weeds out of what others tell you you are, and plant the seeds of who you really are." Are incarcerated individuals and formerly-incarcerated individuals discussed in everyday conversation? Or is there a stigma against them? If it does exist, is this stigma helpful or unhelpful? Why? Do stigmas encourage growth and positive transformation? Why or why not?
8. What do you think was the deeper meaning behind the film **Sol in the Garden**?



Discussion Questions



What These Walls Won't Hold

"Relationships [in prison] are an act of resiliency, in a pushback to isolation...Isolation is actually a root cause of crime. Because if I feel isolated, if I feel like I'm not part of the community, then I don't respect or value communities' rules of social norms. But when I feel like I'm part of the community, then I have a responsibility to my community. It's central to our humanity. Without feeling loved it's hard to love. And if you don't feel loved and you don't love, then you don't care. You're a dangerous person. Relationships are one of the most powerful acts of resistance because it says to the system that we're not going to allow you to do that. We're not going to allow you to take this person's humanity. And we're going to help them maintain their value by showing them love and concern." - Rahsaan Thomas

1. What do you think about the above paragraph?
2. What is the relationship between prison conditions and Maslow's hierarchy of needs?
3. "...and I've been waiting forty years to play ball with the guys"- Rahsaan Thomas. Do you think punishment is ever the key to transformation?
4. What is the purpose of prison? Does it achieve that goal? Why or why not?

5. "Being held by chains and wild bars versus being held by love"- Adamu Chan. Is prison designed to create transformation or to create fear? Why or why not? Faith versus fear, belief versus dread, inspiration versus hopelessness - what does prison instill? What do you think?
6. Does the philosophy behind prison help families? Why or why not?
7. Does prison create safe enough conditions for the inmates to live in? Why or why not?
8. The incarcerated individuals in **What These Walls Won't Hold** created their own film production company. Why do you think that helped them?
9. How can the justice system be made more equitable? What are some alternatives you think there could be to the concept of traditional prison?
10. The film ended with the soundtrack with lyrics that included "Hurt people hurt people", included as a motif. What are other ways music and lyrics can be used as a motif in film?
11. Describe the film using the 3-act structure in the Pre-Viewing Topics section.
12. Did you learn anything about the concept of creativity from this film? If so, what did you learn?



Activities

These projects both reflect and bring further the themes and ideas explored within this study guide, including the topics of rights accessibility, belief system formation, positive transformation, crime prevention versus reduction, and the opportunity to do real activism work right within the classroom. These projects may each be cut up into parts or adjusted to be made shorter, or used as a whole for longer-term classroom projects.

1. Reimagining Social Media
2. Changemakers.

REIMAGINING SOCIAL MEDIA

You have a powerful tool right in your pocket. Your phone. And you have an app, likely several apps, where you can influence a group of people. Social media. Many of us have social media accounts. Unlike just a few years ago, just about all of us have our own fanbase, our own following, almost like we're mini celebrities. Many of us have hundreds or more people who see whatever we advertise to them - it's no longer limited to the 15-20 people you see weekly in real life. Most high schoolers' influence reaches internationally. In high school - what do you see posting for social platforms mostly used for?

Some popular Instagram posts among general users include pets, selfies, friends, and family. But what if social activism was added to the mix? What if every high schooler posted, not on their story but permanently posted, just once a month, something about a cause that was important specifically to them? What do you think can happen in this state? In this country? In this world?

What if social media were reimagined as SOCIAL CHANGE MEDIA?

Activity:

Step 1: Think about a cause that means a lot to you, personally. Write down exactly what you want to say about it, what you wish people knew about it, what you wish were different. Visualize how the world would be different if people knew these things, and write about it.

Step 2: Design a post on Canva as a prototype social media post raising awareness on that cause.

Step 3: Send it to someone you know, even if you don't feel like it's ready to post right away, DM it to someone and test it out. You don't have to share who you shared it with.

Step 4: Brainstorm your own hashtags and come up with a challenge that would have more people raise awareness on this cause - it could be a TikTok challenge, an Instagram filter paired with a sound, an activity challenge that would somehow relate to the cause, etc. (remember the ice bucket challenge?)

Step 5: The teacher randomly picks a student's cause out of a hat. The whole class will support the selected student to create a social media page from scratch. The selected student comes up with a username and creates a brand-new Instagram page, where every day, each classmate creates a post for the chosen student's Instagram, once a day, until all students in the class contributed one post. Use hashtags.



Activities (Cont.)

CHANGEMAKERS

Step 1. Rights Accessibility: Individually or in groups, invent a product, activity, poster etc. where a person can have access to knowing what their rights are in a way more digestible than a lawbook written in legalese. Research and choose 3-5 laws you think are important for people to know about, then translate them in layman's terms.

Step 2. Belief Systems: Who was the person growing up that you were influenced by the most, for better or for worse? Write a brief reflection on this. You don't have to show it to the teacher or the class, but you could if you want.

Step 3. Positive transformation: If you had to reinvent the prison system from the ground up, what are three things you would make sure that all prisoners had as part of prison life? Why? Write your answer and explain your reasoning.

Step 4. Prevention, not reduction. What is something everyone could be part of that would lower crime rates? What is something that can be done that the government could hand out that would prevent people from having too little resources so everyone can have their basic needs met? Write your ideas down.

Step 5. Art for Service. Whole class creates volunteer art for a local organization - greeting cards, letters, paintings or coloring pages for Alzheimer's patients, children in hospitals, etc. In partnership with any kind of cause. Concept based off of Brown University's organization Art 4 Service. Can even be developed into a school club.

Additional Ideas: Take a field trip to visit the offices of activist politicians, or have them come speak in the classroom.



Beyond the Classroom

Here are some useful resources you can share with your class, including free filmmaking resources, the movies' websites, and more ideas on the concept of positive transformation.

Five Free Filmmaking Resources:

1. StudioBinder for screenwriting <https://www.studiobinder.com/>
2. Smartphone for filming
3. Stop Motion Studio app for animation <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/stop-motion-studio/id441651297>
4. For industry-standard editing and special effects: Da Vinci Resolve 18 <https://www.blackmagicdesign.com/products/davinciresolve> or Avid Media Composer First <https://my.avid.com/get/media-composer-first>
5. Canva for creating movie posters. <https://www.canva.com/>

NASA Astronaut Orbital Perspective Concept:

<https://www.rongaran.com/planetary-stewardship/>

Orbital Perspective Film Planetary: <http://weareplanetary.com>

Filmmaking Free Resource Sheet: <https://bit.ly/filmmakingcheatsheet>

Bail Reform Facts from NYS Senate Majority Leader

Andrea Stewart-Cousins: <https://westchesterdems.org/2022/02/13/facts-about-bail-reform-from-nys-senate-majority-leader-andrea-stewart-cousins/>

Prison Arts Project: <https://williamjamesassociation.org/prison-arts-project/>

Youth Empowerment Solutions: This is a community-based program that engages young people in designing and implementing crime prevention strategies in their own neighborhoods. The program aims to empower young people to take ownership of their communities and work collaboratively to address the root causes of crime. <https://yes.sph.umich.edu/about-us/>

Shakespeare for Social Justice program, which uses theatre and performance as a tool for preventing youth violence and helping with the healing of prisoners, likely drawing from an earlier form of social justice theater Theatre of the Oppressed. <https://www.marinshakespeare.org/shakespeare-for-social-justice/>



What is a documentary?

A documentary is a film whose goal is to capture truth, fact or reality as seen through the lens of the camera. But there are many kinds of documentaries, and not everyone's idea of truth is the same. The Scottish filmmaker **John Grierson** coined the term "documentary" in 1926 to describe American filmmaker **Robert Flaherty's** romanticized culture studies, but nonfiction filmmaking dates back to the earliest motion picture reels.

The definition of documentary expanded as filmmakers experimented with technology and the goals of nonfiction. Avant-garde documentarians, like **Dziga Vertov** in the 1920s, believed that the mechanical eye of the camera gave a truer image of reality than the human eye and pointed his lens at newly industrialized cities. **Leni Reifenstahl's** propaganda films from Nazi Germany used the nonfiction form to convey a political message, a slanted truth

The international cinema vérité or observational movements of the 1960s attempted to remove authorship from the documentary. The observational filmmaker hovered like a "fly on the wall" watching the world without commentary. Modern documentaries often seek to raise awareness about a social, environmental or political issue, guiding their audiences toward civic participation and activism.

While watching a documentary, it is important to remember the core concepts of media analysis: who made the film, for what audience and why? The nonfiction format can be deceptively subjective, as all filmmaking involves an inherent selection process: in the images that are shot, the music and narration that accompanies them and, most significantly, the way in which they are all edited together. Media literacy means always analyzing a documentary for its message and authorial intent.

Even though they are nonfiction films, most modern documentaries structure their content around a traditional story arc: with a beginning, middle, and end, as well as characters, and a conclusion, theme or thesis to impart to the audience. Documentary filmmakers begin their projects with an idea or an issue that they wish to explore more deeply. Through research and planning, they develop a comprehensive plan before they begin shooting.

A BRIEF TIMELINE OF THE DOCUMENTARY

- 1895
The Lumiere brothers develop the first motion picture film reel, capturing brief unedited clips of life around them called 'actualities.'
- 1900-1920
Travelogue or 'scenic' films become popular showcasing exoticized images from around the globe.
- 1926
Dziga Vertov, with the Soviet Kino Pravda movement, released the experimental nonfiction film, **Man With A Movie Camera**.
- 1939
John Grierson collaborated with the Canadian government to form the National Film Board of Canada, with the initial goal of creating Allied propaganda in support of war.
- 1960s
The 'cinema vérité' movement began in Europe, followed by the 'direct cinema' in the US. Portable cameras and sync sound allowed filmmakers to capture intimate footage with minimal intervention.
- 1968
The Argentine film, **La Hora de los Hornos**, opened the door to activist cinema of the 1970s, using film as a tool to counter capitalist politics in Latin America.
- 1988
Independent Television Service (ITVS) was founded.
- 2000s
The widespread use of digital cameras and editing software made the documentary medium more affordable to independent filmmakers.
- Present Day
The term 'documentary' comes to encompass a wide range of nonfiction cinema. Contemporary filmmakers continue to push the boundaries of truth in film and to explore new avenues and applications for the medium.



Media Literacy Resources: Screening with Meaning

We live in a world where technology mediates a large portion of human interaction and the exchange of information. Every projected image, every word published on a page or a website, and every sound from a speaker reaches its audience through the language of the medium. The ability to parse the vast array of media messages is an essential skill for young people, particularly in a mainstream commercial culture that targets youth as a vulnerable, impressionable segment of the American marketplace. Many students already have a keen understanding of the languages different media use and the techniques they employ to inspire particular emotions or reactions, but they often lack the skill or awareness to fully deconstruct the messages they continuously receive. Analysis of a media message, or any piece of mass media content, can best be accomplished by first identifying its principal characteristics:

1. **Medium:** the physical means by which it is contained and/or delivered
2. **Author:** the person(s) responsible for its creation and dissemination
3. **Content:** the information, emotions, values or ideas it conveys
4. **Audience:** the target audience to whom it is delivered
5. **Purpose:** the objectives of its authors and the effects of its dissemination.

Students who can readily identify these five core characteristics will be equipped to understand the incentives at work behind media messages, as well as their potential consequences. Media literacy education empowers students to become responsible consumers, active citizens and critical thinkers.

MEDIA LITERACY STANDARDS

MEDIUM

All Media Is Constructed.

- What is the message, how is it delivered and in what format?
- What technologies are used to present the message?
- What visual and auditory elements comprise the media content?
- What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?

AUTHOR

All Media Is Constructed by Someone.

- Who is delivering the message?
- Who originally constructed the message?
- What expectations do you have of the content, given its author(s)?

CONTENT

Media Is A Language For Information.

- What is the subject of the media message?
- What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content?
- What tools does the author employ to engage the viewer and evoke a response?
- To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?

AUDIENCE

All Media Messages Reach an Audience.

- Who receives the message?
- For whom is the message intended?
- What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- How might others perceive this message differently? Why?

PURPOSE

All Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason.

- Why was the message constructed?
- Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How?
- To what extent does the message achieve its purpose?
- What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?



California Media Standards

Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications

Grades 9 & 10: Standard 1.14 Identify the aesthetic effects of a media presentation and evaluate the techniques used to create them (e.g., compare Shakespeare's *Henry V* with Kenneth Branagh's 1990 film version).

Grades 11 & 12: Standard 1.14 Analyze the techniques used in media messages for a particular audience and evaluate their effectiveness (e.g., Orson Welles' radio broadcast "War of the Worlds").

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

Grades 9 & 10: Standard 1.7 Use props, visual aids, graphs, and electronic media to enhance the appeal and accuracy of presentations.

Grades 11 & 12: Standard 1.10 Evaluate when to use different kinds of effects (e.g., visual, music, sound, graphics) to create effective productions.

Comprehension

Grades 9 & 10: Standard 1.2 Compare and contrast the ways in which media genres (e.g., televised news, news magazines, documentaries, online information) cover the same event.

Grades 11 & 12: Standard 1.1 Recognize **strategies** used by the media to inform, persuade, entertain, and transmit culture (e.g., advertisements; perpetuation of stereotypes; use of visual representations, special effects, language); Standard 1.2 Analyze the impact of the media on the democratic process (e.g., exerting influence on elections, creating images of leaders, shaping attitudes) at the local, state, and national levels; Standard 1.3 Interpret and evaluate the various ways in which events are presented and information is communicated by visual image makers (e.g., graphic artists, documentary filmmakers, illustrators, news photographers).



Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze 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.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.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7

Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.9

Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington's Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail"), including how they address related themes and concepts.

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.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.5 Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.