



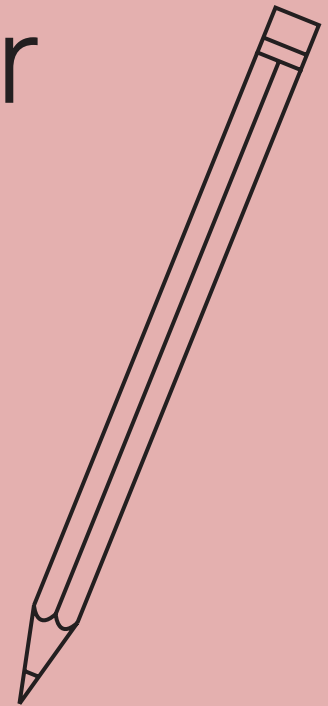
Judy Blume Forever

STUDY GUIDE

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All SFFILM Education materials are developed in alignment with California educational standards for media literacy. SFFILM Education welcomes feedback and questions on all printed study materials..



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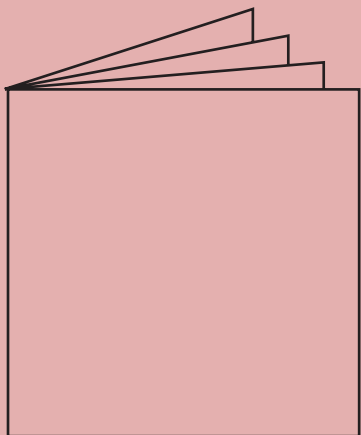






Index

02	About the Film
03	Pre-Viewing Topics
04	Presenter Bios
05	Discussion Questions
06	Activities
09	Beyond the Classroom
10	Documentary Guide
11	Media Literary Resources
12	Common Core Standards





About the Film

This documentary traces **Judy Blume**'s journey from childhood to storytelling pioneer who elevated the physical and emotional lives of kids and teens. Intimate conversations with the author take us on a journey to understand Blume's profound impact on readers young and old alike, and how the banned writer continues to fight back against censorship today. This funny, touching, and radically honest documentary tells the story of the woman whose revolutionary books changed the way millions of readers understand adolescence and puberty, their sexuality, and what it means to grow up.

Recommended Grades: 7–12

DIRECTOR
Davina Pardo & Leah Wolchok

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
Brian Grazer, Ron Howard, & Meredith Kaulfers

PRODUCERS
Davina Pardo, Leah Wolchok, Sara Bernstein, Justin Wilkes, & Marcella Steingart

(USA 2022) English, 97 min

Teaching the Film

Davina Pardo and **Leah Wolchok**'s documentary **Judy Blume Forever** is a radically honest and uplifting documentary about the world renowned writer **Judy Blume**. Through intimate conversations with the author and the people she has inspired, the film follows the journey of her life from childhood to present day and all her successes and mistakes along the way. The film touches upon the career building of a writer, her activism against book banning and censorship, and the unique challenges students face during adolescence. A screening of this film will complement a curriculum in English Language Arts and other subjects, diving deep into the Judy Blume universe.

Subject Areas

- **Career Path Training**
- **English Language Arts**
- **Health**
- **Mental Health**
- **Peer/Youth Issues**
- **Social Studies**
- **Women/Gender Studies**



Pre-Viewing Topics

To prepare for a class screening of **Judy Blume Forever**, ask your students to consider their prior knowledge of Judy Blume, authorship, and book banning. The following prompts are to gain a better understanding of your students' understanding of the subjects covered in the film.

1. Have you read a Judy Blume novel? How would you describe her novels to your friends that haven't read her books before?
2. What do you think is the most difficult and most fulfilling part of being a writer?
3. What makes a good young adult author?
4. Does anyone have an interest in a career as an author?
5. What is a creative practice you enjoy participating in?
6. What is censorship?
7. What are some examples of censorship that you have seen or experienced? Are there any positive examples of censorship?
8. Do you think art should be censored? Do you think writing should be censored?
9. Have you read a book you thought was controversial? What did you think of it?
10. Choose a book that has meant a lot to you. This can be a book you read recently or when you were younger. How would your life be different if you had never read this book because you weren't allowed to?



Presenter Bios



Davina Pardo

Davina Pardo is an award-winning documentary shorts filmmaker, her films including **116 Cameras**, **Minka**, and **Yesterday in Rwanda**, have screened at festivals worldwide, including Toronto International Film Festival, Tribeca, True/False, DOC NYC, Hot Docs, Full Frame, Sheffield Doc/Fest, Aspen Shortsfest, Palm Springs ShortFest, and AFIDOCs. **116 Cameras** was broadcast on PBS, featured as a New York Times Op-Doc, and shortlisted for the Academy Awards.

Pardo produced **Very Semi-Serious**, a feature-length HBO documentary about New Yorker cartoonists directed by Leah Wolchok, and **Queen Of Hearts: Audrey Flack**, directed by Academy Award-winning filmmaker **Deborah Shaffer**. Her work has been supported by the Sundance Documentary Fund, Tribeca Film Institute, IFP's Documentary Lab and Independent Film Week, Catapult Film Fund, and New York State Council on the Arts. Pardo previously worked as assistant to **David Cronenberg**, and associate produced the Academy Award-winning documentary **Freeheld**. Born and raised in Canada, she has an MA in Documentary Production from Stanford University and a BA from Amherst College.



Leah Wolchok

Leah Wolchok is a writer and director who won an Emmy for her first feature documentary, **Very Semi-Serious**, which was broadcast on HBO. The film was a NY Times Critics Pick, won the Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco Film Festival, and received the inaugural HBO/Tribeca Film Institute Documentary Fund grant. She co-produced the Independent Lens documentary **Ask Not** and directed four award-winning short films. Wolchok received a bachelor's degree in English from Yale and a master's in documentary production from Stanford, and her highest honor is being the mom of two awesome kids.



Discussion Questions

1. What are some topics that are important to today's youth that Judy's books did not cover? Has the rise of technology contributed to additional challenges that were not present while Judy was still writing?
2. When was the last time you wanted to try something new but didn't know how to start?
3. How are some ways you relate to Judy in terms of wanting to start something but not knowing how to?
4. The liminal moment between childhood and adolescence can be a period of awkwardness and insecurity, but it's also a magical time of infinite possibility. What are some of the challenges you face today as a young person and what are some possibilities you see available to you?
5. In the film, Judy revisits painful moments and past mistakes from her life. What are some ways we can use our mistakes to fuel our creative practices?
6. In the film, we see Judy reckoning with the Women's Movement in the 60's and 70's around issues like entering the workforce and reproductive health care. Today, reproductive healthcare has been challenged by the Supreme Court and several states. What are some other parallels between what is going on politically today, and some of the issues facing the country that we see in the documentary?
7. What are some of the ways in which writers are crucial to freedom of expression? Why is it important to have access to controversial texts? Do you think the government should be allowed to ban books? How are the foundations of democracy threatened if governments have the power to ban books?
8. Do you think books about certain topics are challenged more than others? Which marginalized communities are impacted more than others in terms of "challenging topics"?



Activities

1. Choose a character from one of **Judy Blume's** banned novels and write a persuasive essay from their perspective on why the book should or shouldn't be banned. Back up your claim with evidence and reasoning.
2. An important aspect of the documentary is seeing how Judy has helped so many students that have written deep and personal letters to her over the years. Pour your heart out in a letter to **Judy Blume** and send it to her:

Judy Blume
c/o Tashmoo Productions
1075 Duval Street
Suite C21 #236
Key West FL 33040

3. Read this [NYT article](#) about teenager's thoughts on book banning and discuss whether you agree or disagree with their different viewpoints.
4. Watch and Respond: The history of banning books on [PBS](#).
5. What do you think is more dangerous? Banned books or the act of banning them? Get into small groups and debate both sides.



Beyond the Classroom

Dive deeper into the topics covered in the documentary by using these resources to explore Book Censorship.

Your voice is a powerful tool to fight back against unfair censorship. As a student, you definitely have the power to make changes. Not sure where to start? Judy's got you covered. The link below will take you to a toolkit on her website aimed at fighting against book censorship. Choose one way to fight back, you can even get your parents and teachers involved.

[Toolkit for fighting against book censorship on Judy's website](#)

Fighting against censorship doesn't need to be boring. Put your knowledge to the test and solve the clues in the game to see if you can escape the dead end of censorship:

[Escape The Dead End Of Censorship! A Virtual Escape Room Adventure](#) developed by the ALA Intellectual Freedom Round Table



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?



Common Core Standards 7-12

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources (connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole, 11-12th)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text (and makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas, 11-12th).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1-8C Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

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.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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.7 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.