



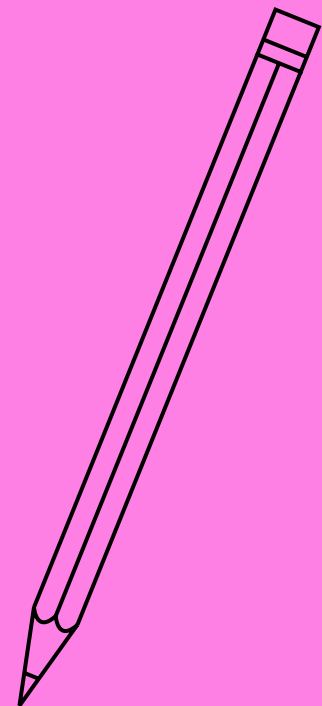
Growing Up

STUDY GUIDE

Content written by **Hillary Good**.

Designed by **Camille Gwise, Soph Schultz Rocha, and Keith Zwölfer**.

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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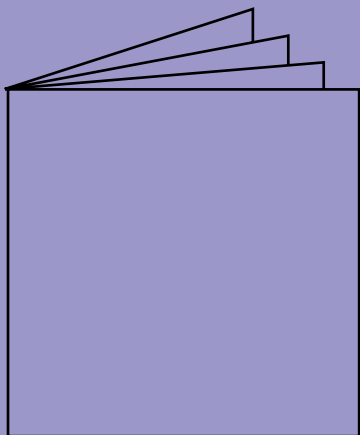


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Index

- 02 About the Films
- 03 Presenter Bios
- 04 Discussion Questions
- 05 Activities
- 06 Beyond the Classroom
- 07 Media Literary Resources
- 08 Common Core Standards
- 09 Documentary Guide





About the Films

Created by **Brie Larson** and Culture House, this innovative hybrid docuseries from Disney+ explores the challenges, triumphs, and complexities of adolescence through ten compelling coming of age stories. It uses narrative, experimental, and documentary filmmaking to follow one casted individual, ages 18–22, as they tell their story. They represent a wide range of lived experiences, giving audiences emotionally powerful narratives that offer an engaging look at teenagehood and the diverse social, familial, and internal obstacles young people face on their path to self-discovery and acceptance. We will be showcasing three of the episodes.

Episode 6: David

Rudy Valdez, USA 2022, 23 min

David is a young man from California who stepped out of his comfort zone by discovering poetry.

Episode 7: Sofia

Yara Shahidi, USA 2022, 23 min

Sofia's Story outlines her barrier breaking journey in STEM as a Black woman coder.

Episode 10: Gavin

Bernardo Ruiz, USA 2022, 23 min

Gavin overcomes the hardships of homelessness to earn a full scholarship to study nursing.

TEACHING THE FILMS

This series tells the stories of young people growing up in America today. Exploring the intersections of race, class, gender, and so much more, **Growing Up** uses the power of storytelling to demonstrate that young people have agency and power in determining their own lives. Taught in conjunction with this guide, this series will encourage students to use their creativity, agency, and political activism to make a change in their lives and the lives of others.

PRE-VIEWING TOPICS

Documenting the rich and unique lives of teens from around America, the **Growing Up** series can launch a wide array of discussion on its central themes. This series is unique in that it showcases how sharing one's own story can lead to connection with others, and can spark great conversation around personal expression, creativity, social justice and activism. This series demonstrates that growing up can be incredibly courageous, and takes a very optimistic look at how young people today are making their mark in the world.

To prepare students for a screening of the **Growing Up** series, ask students to reflect on their own experiences growing up in America. How does their race, class, gender identity, and more impact how their lives are shaped? In what ways does education play a role in determining how they see themselves in the world? What do they wish they could share with their friends and communities about what has been hard for them?

This series takes a look at how mental health can be impacted by the stories surrounding young people today. Also integral to this series is the role of perfectionism in shaping their budding identities in the world. Have students reflect on where the stories they tell themselves come from. Conversations around mental health and societal pressure are suitable entry points into learning more from this series.



Presenter Bios



Nicole Galovski is Co-Founder, Executive Producer, and Director at NYC production company Culture House. She is the showrunner of **Growing Up**, a hybrid docuseries for Disney+ with **Brie Larson**, producing a Netflix docuseries about race and gender in America, and is the producer of 2022 Tribeca premiere, **Of Medicine and Miracles**, about Dr. Carl June's groundbreaking cure for childhood leukemia. Feature film credits include NYTimes critic pick *All Creatures Here Below* (Samuel Goldwyn) and Tribeca premiere **Poor Boy** (Indican Pictures). Credits also include Showtime Documentary **Tough Guys**, and Jon Stewart's Emmy Nominated HBO special **Night of Too Many Stars**. She has produced award-winning brand work for Toyota, Microsoft, Apple, Orangetheory, Serena Williams, University of Utah, and Visit Philadelphia. Nicole's work has received support from the Rockefeller Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, UN Foundation, Impact Partners, Artemis Rising Foundation, and the Utah Film Center.



Rudy Valdez is an Emmy Award-winning Michigan-raised, New York City-based filmmaker committed to creating social, cultural, and political stories through a cinematic and meaningful lens. He got his start in film as a Camera Operator on the Peabody Award-winning, Sundance series, **Brick City**, and went onto direct a true passion project, **The Sentence** (HBO). Shot and directed by Valdez over the course of a decade, this feature documentary tells the very personal story of his sister's plight in the criminal justice system while tackling subjects like mandatory minimums and sentencing reform. For this work, the filmmaker won the 2019 Primetime Emmy Award for Exceptional Merit in Documentary Filmmaking, US Documentary Audience Award at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and was a 2018 Critics Choice Documentary Awards Best New Director nominee.



Presenter Bios



Yara Shahidi is an award-winning actress, producer, and the breakout star of ABC's Emmy and Golden Globe-nominated series **black-ish**. In 2019, alongside her business partner and mother, **Keri Shahidi**, she expanded her relationship with ABC by signing a multi-year producing deal under the moniker "7th Sun Productions."



Bernardo Ruiz is a two-time Emmy® nominated documentary director and producer. He was born in Guanajuato, Mexico and grew up in Brooklyn, NY. He has directed and produced four feature documentaries and has directed a host of nonfiction television programming for a variety of outlets including ESPN's 30 for 30 series, HBO, VICE, PBS and most recently Disney+ (an episode of the new **Growing Up** series). Ruiz's 2008 **Roberto Clemente** documentary was awarded the "Alma" Award for "Outstanding Made for Television Documentary" and Criterion Cast called his 2018 James-Beard nominated wine documentary *Harvest Season* "a film that's as beautiful as it is intimate and emotionally moving...told expertly and with some startlingly gorgeous photography."



Discussion Questions

Series

1. Why do you think this documentary series was made?
2. This series is about the “courage it takes to be yourself.” Why do you think it takes bravery to be who you really are? What gets in your way?
3. How did hearing the stories of each of these young people impact you?
4. Whose story did you like the most? Why did you like it?
5. What did you learn about growing up that was surprising?
6. How do each of these stories relate to each other? How do they differ?
7. What did you see in these stories that feels the same as your own life? What is different?
8. Why do you think the director chose to include so many different stories?
9. What is different about the teens you saw in this series versus teens depicted in popular culture?
10. This series has a strong visual style. What did you notice about the style of this series? Why do you think the director chose to use this style?
11. What would you have done differently in making this series? What would you have done the same?

Episode 6: David

1. David says, “growing up, being true to yourself when you’re being challenged is difficult.” Do you agree or disagree with this? How come?
2. “Growing up, I thought I was being who I was, but I was really being who I thought people saw me as.” Have you had this experience? What did it feel like?
3. David grew up idolizing the sports players he saw on TV. Why do you think people have such strong connections with the players they see?
4. Where did David learn to be himself growing up?
5. What are David’s “defense mechanisms” he learned from what he saw represented on-screen? How did this impact how people perceived David?
6. David felt the basketball court was the only place he could express himself fully. Why do you think that was?
7. David’s mental health began to suffer when he lost his identity as a basketball player. His friends supported him by reaching out to David’s parents to get him help. How would you approach a similar situation with a friend who was struggling?
8. Comparison can lead to negative self-worth. Explain how this is true for David. Have you experienced this?
9. What do you think about poetry and creative writing? Why do you think David first hid that he had started writing and reading poetry?
10. How do masculinity and stereotypes impact the ways men perceive themselves? Why is this harmful?
11. How does David’s spoken word poem reflect his own experience growing up?
12. What did you think of David’s spoken word poem? How did it make you feel? What did it make you think about?



Discussion Questions

Episode 7: Sofia

1. Sofia was told that she was an 'anomaly' for being a Black girl interested in math and science. What does she mean by this?
2. Why do you think Sofia let the boys around her do all the work for the math field day? How do you think she felt at the time?
3. What is perfectionism? How does the pressure of being perfect become harmful for Sofia?
4. Sofia explains that young girls have the tendency to discount themselves before they ask a question. Have you ever noticed this? Why is it more common among young girls to do this? How does it impact how a girl views herself?
5. Asking questions is an important way to learn. Have you ever felt embarrassed to ask a question? What did you do to overcome that?
6. How did participating in Kode with Klossy change Sofia's understanding of careers available to her as a young Black woman?
7. "A part of growing up is coming to terms with whose opinions matter to you." How did Sofia learn to ignore the hurtful opinions of others and listen to herself?
8. Why does representation in computer science matter?
9. How can inclusive stories depicting Black women in STEM help encourage more women to pursue these careers?
10. Sofia says that she is using her skillset in coding to 'dismantle somethings to make the tiniest impact on the world.' What skills do you have that could make a difference like Sofia?

Episode 10: Gavin

1. Gavin recalls that in the early part of his childhood, "in the blink of an eye...everything was falling apart." How do you think Gavin was feeling at the time?
2. After Gavin moved to Colorado with his father, his life had a "complete 180." What changes happened for Gavin at this time in his life?
3. Having a good listener was important for Gavin in his time of transition. Why is it important to find a trustworthy and steady listener in your own life?
4. Gavin grappled with coming out to his father. How do you think this impacted Gavin's self-perception?
5. After going to therapy, Gavin learned that much of his mental health struggles stemmed from his unstable childhood. This impacted how he related to others and himself. How might having a childhood like Gavin's lead to negative self-perception?
6. Running is a healthy coping strategy for Gavin to deal with stress and anxiety. What other healthy strategies do you use when you're feeling stressed?
7. Gavin shared that college was his "way out of poverty." What sacrifices did Gavin make to ensure that he received a good education and got into college?
8. Gavin's community of friends and teachers supported him after the passing of his father. How does this show that community and relations are important to everyone's health and well-being? What communities are you a part of?
9. In his graduation speech, Gavin says it "takes courage to keep going." Explain what he means by this. How have you shown courage in your own life?
10. As a nurse, Gavin believes that if you can change one person's life, you can change the world. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?



Activities

Creative Storytelling: Stories are an impactful way to process things going on in your own life. For this creative writing activity, it is equally important to write your own story as it is to share it. What do you want others to know about you? What do you think makes your story unique? Be courageous.

- Take some time to think about major milestones in your life. Write a brief journal entry, comic strip, or a simple timeline to help map out your story about growing up. Organize your thoughts on the page.
- Next, get creative: Take your draft about your own life story to the next level. Write a poem, like David, or a graduation speech, like Gavin. How do you want others to understand your story?
- In partners or small groups, share your story! Sharing and listening to other stories was an important component of the Growing Up series. It takes courage to be who you are, and let others see that too.

Activism Awareness Campaign: In Sofia's story, she shares that she had 'reached a breaking point' and decided to do something about it. Design an awareness campaign project like Sofia's app 'Dawn'. In a small group, combine your talents and interests to build an interesting campaign or project that supports an activism movement.

- Identify a social, political, or environmental topic that you think more people should be involved in or know about.
- Determine how your unique skills and interests could contribute to this cause. Are you a coder like Sofia? Are you a strong public speaker? Do you like to do research? Give each person in your group an opportunity to contribute with their talent.
- Design an awareness campaign or project idea around it. Mock up items that you will use in your project to get the word out. This could be the name of your app (like Sofia's), the focus of a rally or gathering, or any other creative ideas that help support your movement.
- Present and share your group project with the class.

Beyond the Classroom

There are several resources available to young people today to learn more about some of the topics addressed in the **Growing Up** series. Students can explore creativity, technology, activism, and much more through great organizations that offer services to young people.

Creative Writing and Storytelling:

The Moth: <https://themoth.org/>
StoryCorps: <https://storycorps.org/>
826 National: <https://826national.org/>
Girls Write Now: <https://girlswritenow.org/>
YouthSpeaks: <https://youthspeaks.org/>

Mental Health:

National Alliance for Mental Illness: <https://www.nami.org/Home>
Jed Foundation: <https://jedfoundation.org/>

Empowerment:

Youth Empowerment Project: <https://www.youthempowermentproject.org/>
The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
Girls Inc: <https://girlsinc.org/>
Black Youth Project: <http://blackyouthproject.com/>
United We Dream: <https://unitedwedream.org/>

Coding and Technology:

Girls Who Code: <https://girlswhocode.com/>
Black Girls Code: <https://www.instagram.com/blackgirlscode/>
Kode with Klossy: <https://www.kodewithklossy.com/>



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 medium, through the language of the device. 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. Most 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.

COMMON CORE 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

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).

Grades 9 – 12

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.9-10.6 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.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.11-12.3 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.11-12.5 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



Documentary Guide

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 the 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.