



Story & Pictures By

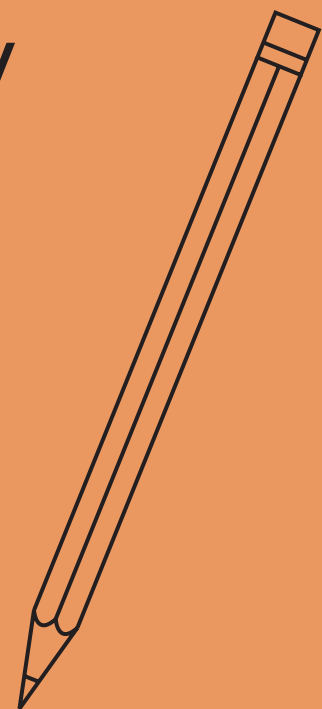
STUDY GUIDE

Content written by **Patricia Juri**.

Designed by **Camille Gwise, Jay Tiong, Soph Schultz
Rocha, 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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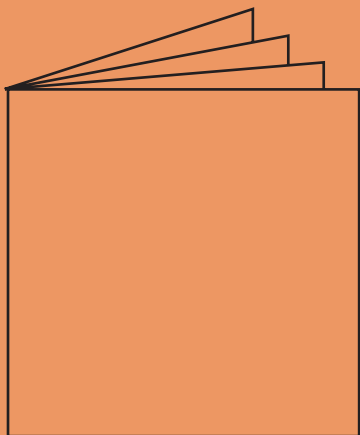
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About the Film

Children's picture books have brought creativity, joy, and a deeper understanding of the world equipped for all ages. **Story & Pictures By** presents the history of children's literature and how it has been a tool to both present a mirror of society and a dream of a limitless future. We follow three authors—**Christian Robinson, Yuyi Morales, and Mac Barnett**—who are pushing boundaries while also being at the forefront of a current "golden age" where stories and protagonists have greater diversity and broader representation. These authors reveal the magic and complexity of life by exploring topics of immigration, LGBTQ rights, race, incarceration, and class. Using charming animation and rare archival interviews of beloved authors, viewers will be delighted to rediscover timeless classics such as **Where the Wild Things Are** and **Goodnight Moon** in a new and dynamic light.

Recommended Grades: 3–8

DIRECTOR
Joanna Rudnick

PRODUCER
**Joanna Rudnick, Tim
Horsburgh, Korelan
Matteson**

(USA 2023) English,
82 mins

Teaching the Film

This heartwarming and informative film speaks to students of all ages through the telling of the story development process of past and present authors/illustrators of children's books. Through present day interview vignettes and historical footage and references, we learn about the inspiration behind the scenes of current bestselling and historically significant storybooks. The storybooks provide new context and experiences, and also expand children's vocabulary and enhance their communication skills. These stories can create emotional support during problematic situations in life, and help people make connections to similar or new situations. Storytelling provides many psychological and educational benefits, and feeds the imagination to help visualize spoken words. They introduce new vocabulary, expand communication skills, and create compassion and celebration in collective learning.

We learn about the impact of the creation of stories, which deliberately sparked a new genre of books created for young developing minds and had previously been ignored. Many stories were deliberately created to encourage families and schools addressing social issues. Historical reflection and current day video share the tales of the creators and the readers of these memory making childhood treasures, and inspire the next generation to continue to create and share their talent for seeing the world through the lens of the extraordinary.

A screening of this film includes Language Arts and Historical insights, expanding on the impact of children's books into American History, Government, and childhood wonder. Central themes include social-emotional learning, writing, creative process and storytelling.

Subject Areas

- **Activism**
- **Art/Media**
- **English Language Arts**
- **History**
- **Latin American Studies**
- **LGBTQ+ Studies**
- **Social Studies**
- **Women and Gender Studies**



Pre-Viewing Topics

Story & Pictures By tells the stories and backgrounds of many authors and illustrators of timeless classic books that many children continue to read today. Several new groundbreaking authors also explain how their new stories are planned and created, and use many of the teaching techniques that educators use with students in their writing today. Through interviews, we are able to observe storyboarding ideas, planning and writing development, and ultimately sharing/publication to bring these ideas to others. This film examines the creative process and demonstrates the art of revision and persistence in the creation of wondrous and exciting ideas. The authors explain how their life experiences influence their creations, and they share their personal lives and influences in their writing.

They address some difficult social issues through insightful telling, and allow critical examination of past and current social injustices and political book banning. The film creates an opportunity for students to become active in expressing their views around censorship, and encourages them to be upstanders for the future.

*Consider how this screening could be different for students who have varied experiences with adult participation in reading in their childhoods, and also encourage students to relay family fables, tales, and stories around family and cultural backgrounds to make connections where story books may not have been available. Conversations with your students will help them find similarities and differences in their childhood story experiences, and will encourage them to continue to celebrate their stories and connections.



Presenter Bio



Joanna Rudnick (she/her) is an Emmy-nominated director with over two decades of experience directing and producing documentaries. All of Joanna's films engage with ideas of family, the importance of the arts in society, human health and wellness, social justice, and youth issues. Joanna's first feature documentary **In the Family** (POV|PBS) took a personal look at the effect that testing positive for the breast and ovarian cancer mutation had on her and several others as well as the bioethical implications of the new medical technology. The film was broadcast in over a dozen countries, shown on Capitol Hill and used in a Supreme Court case brought by the ACLU on gene patents. Joanna directed the animated short **Brother** (Independent Lens|PBS); the Chicago Film Festival Audience Award winning short **On Beauty** (Shorts TV) and an episode of duPont award-winning **Hard Earned** (Al Jazeera America). Her producing credits include the Emmy-award winning **Robert Capa in Love and War** (PBS|BBC); **Crossfire Hurricane** (HBO); **Bill T. Jones: A Good Man** (American Masters|PBS); and **Prisoner of Her Past** (PBS). Joanna has a masters degree in Science, Health, and Environmental Journalism.



Discussion Questions

1. What is a book that brings you childhood memories when you think about it? What was it about the book that you liked? Was it an early reader so you could practice reading, the illustrations, the storyline, or something else?
2. What story have you read that helped you feel a connection to the characters?
3. How can childhood be challenging? What things are hard in Elementary School? Middle School?
4. What things are wonderful in childhood? What did you look forward to?
5. Why do kids like picture books? Why do pictures make them more exciting?
6. Do you think picture books are magic? How?
7. How does representation matter in picture books? What happens when kids don't see people who look like them in stories? Has this impacted you, and if so, how?
8. How can books with stereotypical or problematic representation also cause harm? What should we do with those books?
9. Would you like to be an author or an illustrator? What are some challenges that authors face while writing stories? What are some challenges illustrators face while drawing pictures to represent the stories?
10. If you were to illustrate a book that YOU like that has no pictures, which book would you choose and why? What kind of art would you use for creating the pictures (drawing, water colors, acrylic, claymation, felt, graphic design, collage art, photographs, etc)? Why?
11. Did anything surprise you from the artists?
12. Do you like to read online? Do you think that reading picture books online is the same as reading paper copies? Why or why not?
13. How were children's books different from adult books?
14. When children's books started, they were primarily books to teach children behaviors that adults wanted them to have. How did this change?
15. Is every author an illustrator, and is every illustrator an author? Why or why not?
16. If you could create a children's story, who would the characters be? Name them and tell what struggles they would have in the story.
17. How was Ezra Jack Keats a groundbreaking author/illustrator? What did he do that called attention to his work? How was that important during the times?
18. What is realism? How does it apply to children's books?
19. Yuyi Morales shares her story about her life evolving and her struggles so that she could share her story and help others not feel alone. How do books make you feel found when life makes you feel lost? What books have saved you?



Activities

- What books do you remember from your childhood? What parts of the story were your favorite? Draw your favorite scene you remember in a cartoon cell.

Print out: [Blank Comic Book Cells](#)

- Words and pictures tell stories together, stories that make a mark in your mind forever. Draw a silhouette picture of your head and fill it with pictures of characters from books you have enjoyed reading.

Print out: [Printable Head Silhouette Frames](#)

- Who was your favorite author or illustrator? Do a biography project about them and find out more about them. Use the web link below to learn how to create a biography project and print out a template to use!

Print out: [Webpage with Research Project and Printable Template for Biography page](#)

- If you could choose to interview one of the artists in the film, who would you choose? What are 5 questions you would ask? Use this guide after to add more questions, but start with YOURS!

Look at: [Suggested Author Interview Questions](#)

- If you could write a children's book to teach about a societal problem, what would it be about? Create a storyboard sketch about the story on the comic strips like authors and illustrators do to plan the progression of their stories. A storyboard is basically a visual representation of the children's story that you're writing. It helps you as the writer determine how many illustrations you need.

Watch: [How to Compose a Storyboard for a Children's Book](#)

- Research one of the authors who helped tell stories that created a multicultural genre in children's books. Some examples mentioned in the film are John Steptoe, Carol Byers, Pat Cummings, Jerry Pinkney. Choose one or someone else you research who celebrated the Black experience and the importance to society and culture and write an author bio.

Look at and print: [How to Write an Author Bio](#)

- Research a book about different types of families from this list. <https://theeverymom.com/22-childrens-books-that-show-all-families-are-different/>. How does the book help children connect with their own experiences or those of others they know?

1. Write a summary of the book and what you researched. Include references to banned book laws that are being challenged in current times.
2. Write a monologue as your chosen character and perform (in costume) describing who they are and why they shouldn't be banned.

- Contact your local library asking for books that are in danger of being banned and find out who you can contact to write a letter telling them to end censorship! You can contact your local legislators to say you've seen what's been happening in communities like yours, and you stand against censorship and book bans in your libraries and schools.

Look at: [Unite Against Book Bans Website](#).



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

Standards Grades 3–8

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.2

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2.A

Introduce a topic and group related information together; include illustrations when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2.B

Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.3.B

Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

CACCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CACCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CACCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1.c

Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence.

CACCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.8

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

CACCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CACCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CACCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CACCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7

Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

CACCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6

Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2.B

Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2.C

Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.