



Shorts 6: Youth Works

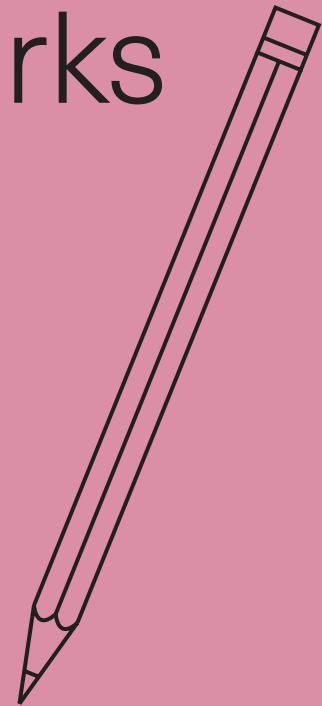
STUDY GUIDE

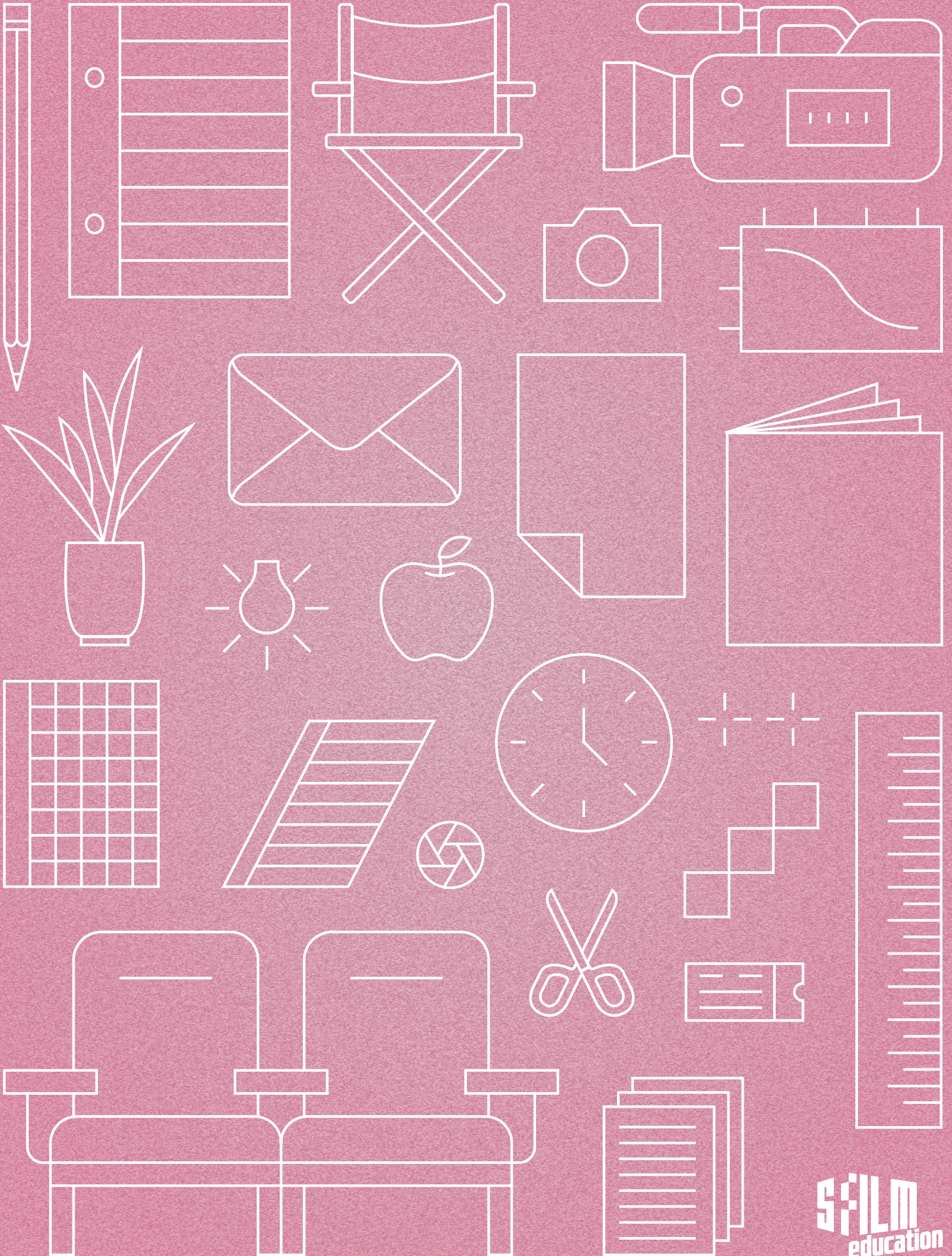
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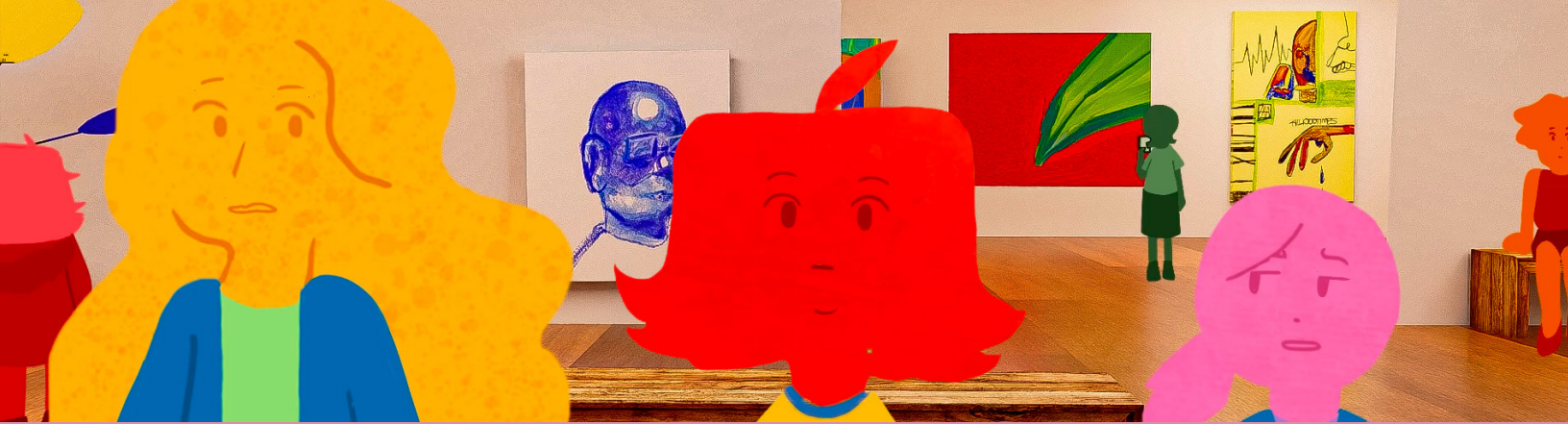
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All SFFILM Education materials are developed in alignment with California educational standards for media literacy. SFFILM Education welcomes feedback and questions on all printed study materials.

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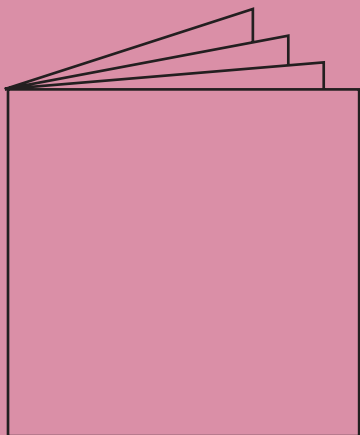






Index

02	About the Film
03	Pre-Viewing Topics
04	Discussion Questions
19	Activities
20	Beyond the Classroom
22	Media Literacy Resources
23	Common Core Standards



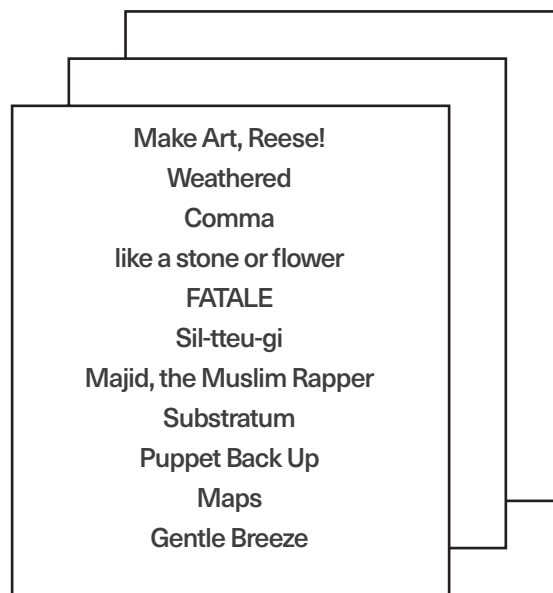


About the Films

Shorts 6: Youth Works

Youth Works celebrates and spotlights young filmmakers from within the Bay Area and as far across the globe as Ukraine and rural China. With works encompassing out-of-this-world visual effects, innovative hand-drawn animation, and intimate interviews, these young filmmakers do not shy away from pushing boundaries and displaying their talent. Through their unique viewpoints, we peek into their communities, adolescence, and the growth and transformation that happens in early adulthood. From tales of fantastic journeys, radical self-acceptance, and feminine power, to understanding one's culture and identity, these films introduce us to an up-and-coming group of cinematic voices carrying us one short at a time into the next generation of filmmaking.

Recommended Grades: 7–12



Teaching the Film

These movies are full of non-superficiality and are works from the heart. They will inspire you to make new art and explore deep within yourself what it means to express yourself. These filmmakers display mastery, as their films contain the introduction of new ideas rather than recycling the already explained.

This incredible array of youth works stretches far beyond your imagination as you take flight into uncharted territory to reveal unexpected truths about the world around you. These films are proof that it is not about the formula, but rather, the vision that makes a film, **a film**.

Subject Areas

- **Activism**
- **Art/Media**
- **Asian American Studies**
- **Career Path Training**
- **English Language Arts**
- **Mental Health**
- **Muslim Studies**
- **Peer/Youth Issues**
- **Women and Gender Studies**



Pre-Viewing Topics

Learning Metaphor

What is a language stronger than words alone? Metaphor. With metaphor, you can speak with all the objects in the world, use a couch to describe a thought, or the shape of a chocolate bar to describe a feeling. Every single object or thing in the world is fair game to become an entire description, idea, or even paragraph, in just a tiny, single object.

Metaphor drives emotion, and emotion in film is fascinating. Sometimes to achieve emotion, filmmakers cross genres, creating new feelings that don't yet have a name. Sometimes, filmmakers go back to the heart of the very things people treasure and value the most, such as the concept of family and home at the end of the film *The Wizard of Oz*.

In cinema, every visual and auditory tool is just another opportunity for metaphor. One filmmaker who does a great job of taking advantage of every frame and moment is Wes Anderson. When you put as much of your heart into your movie as possible, people will be able to sense it was made with care.

Metaphor allows you to do storytelling in so many more ways than just the dialogue in your script. If you took advantage of every tool out there, just think of the possibility and think of the denseness and richness in your film.

With **music**, you can use violins as a metaphor for crying, or with **cinematography**, you can use a dolly zoom as a metaphor for the feeling of suddenly entering into reality. With **lighting**, you can light a subject from the back of them to create a silhouette effect as a metaphor for feeling like a ghost. With **color scheme**, you can have characters only wear red clothes to foretell all the pain and strife that will be happening in the film later on. With **choreography**, you might choose a modern dance for the characters that represent a trapped bug running for its life, because a character might feel that way. With **sound effects**, you might want to make the volume of the footsteps louder than the rest of the sound effects if the person is walking to a place that is very important to them. With **location**, you can place your character in a dark, cavernous space that represents how they feel on the inside. And the list goes on and on.

These are creative choices, and one of the best parts of filmmaking. Suddenly, everything becomes your palette.

Everything is a metaphor. Manipulate each of these, and you become an auteur of the silver screen. Think back to your own life. When was a time that an object represented an emotion to you? What are your decisions behind your current fashion sense? Do you think that you choose your clothes based on metaphor? Metaphor is about taking something that can appear mundane and breathing life into it to take on a whole other deeper meaning. Have you read any books that relied heavily on metaphor?



Pre-Viewing Topics (Cont.)

Some famous quotes on film and metaphor:

- How can so many people have different interpretations of the same film? How do films achieve this?
- What is one movie that you saw in the past that used metaphor to connect you to something real?
- Have you ever felt a difference in emotional impact between realistic and nonrealistic acting in a film? How?
- What makes something meaningful to you in a movie?

Metaphor is a delicate thing. It needs to be made to achieve the experience where it means something slightly different to everyone that experiences it, which is achieved by leaving some of it to mystery and not explaining everything but, rather, **leaving some blanks for the audience to fill in**. For example, if you wanted to use rain as a metaphor for washing away old worries for the main character, you might simply show them smiling and walking in the rain, then pausing looking up, and letting the rain fall on their face, instead of additionally inserting dialogue explaining the feeling and saying, “boy oh boy, this rain makes me realize that my unemployment doesn’t matter so much after all and I have a great big future ahead of me”.

There is an old cinematic adage that says, “Show, don’t tell.” Meaning, that whatever parts of the story you can tell through devices other than dialogue will often create a much more enriching experience for the viewer that they will be likely to remember for years to come due to the immersive quality of it. In order to do this, one must develop trust in their audience.

*“What I don’t want is to make something that an audience, someone who sees it, would say, “Oh yeah, I get it”. If they could answer the question in their head with one sort of thought, one little packet, then I’ve sort of failed. It should have that same quality as a stone or a flower. Like, you look, you look, you look, and you still can’t figure out what it is. It still **lingers** in you, like the phenomenon of it should be so strong that...you can’t figure it out and be satisfied with a logical conclusion. I think it’s something like, it bumps into you, or it hits you on the head, and then it creates a kind of swelling in the head, and then the swelling goes down, but now you’ve got this space in your head for this new idea to take inside your head. But it’s not a pre-planned kind of space into which you put this new sort of thought.” -Agelio Batle, **like a stone or flower***



Pre-Viewing Topics (Cont.)

A metaphor to spark change: what communication techniques can we combine the use of metaphor with to tell effective stories that spark positive change?

Metaphor unto itself is a communication device, where you use the world as your language to express thoughts deeper than what conversation has to offer.

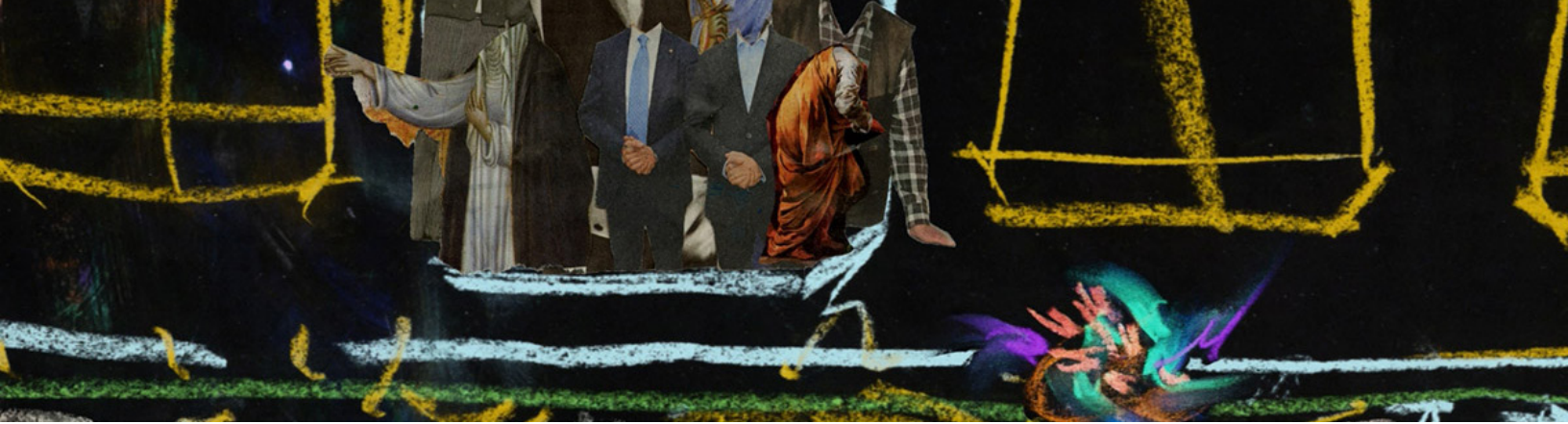
One frequently utilized technique is, before teaching audiences a new idea (solution) through metaphor, creators often prepare their audiences for the information they are about to receive by first **defining an experiential aspect of a problem so specifically**, it feels like the work is talking to that specific person. You will see this repeatedly take place in the following films in this program. This is a large element in storytelling that is often prevalent. The films in this program closely observe a variety of problems in life and offer solutions while they're at it.

If art-making was likened to cooking a recipe, it's akin to taking from everything you know like you're one big recipe yourself until you create something you like, and living life just becomes like gathering ingredients.

Have you ever seen something happen where there was the systemization of a natural and organic process? If so, what was a situation like that that you have seen? What was the result of that? Do you think art-making is like finding something within yourself and the things you value? Do you think it's somewhat about finding yourself? Do you think sometimes it might take a little time to find the things that give you joy?

Do you think sometimes a path or a process needs to happen in the mind to lead a person to the destination of finding what they need/want to do in terms of art absorption and creation? Does it have anything to do with giving that spark a chance to develop? How does one find the things that one values? Do you think art is personal? Do you think art is a way to explore life? Does art have to make sense?

In the following pages are discussion questions, categorized by the applicable short film and one of the primary cinematic techniques used in that film to convey metaphor.



Discussion Questions

*"I think art seems to satisfy those other yearnings: how we envision the world, how we express our deepest feelings, **it's a vehicle for all of those things outside of the grid logic structure.** It's like trying to look at your eyes - you know the eye's there, but you can't look at it, because you need your eyes to look at your eyes, like [you can't touch your finger with the finger itself, as close as it is]. So I think art is kind of like that. I'm basically trying to describe the thing that is outside of words, so how can I do that?" -Agelio Batle, **like a stone or flower***

Comma

Directed by Sonia Leliukh, Ukraine/Germany, 4 min

Character Design

1. What were some visual representations of emotions in this film?
2. Why do you think the animator chose to use that style of linework?
3. How was the human form represented?
4. What do you think the music was saying?
5. What do you think the train was a metaphor for?
6. How did this film define the emotion of grief?
7. Do you think this film goes past appearances to get to its core meaning? Why or why not?
8. What do you think the intention was of the filmmaker in making this film? What kind of change did the filmmaker want to see take effect?
9. Were there any moments you were able to relate to in this film?
10. How was this film different from other films you have seen before?
11. What did you feel as you were watching it?
12. There was no dialogue in this film. How did the filmmaker do that?
13. In what ways did this film transcend the human form?
14. Take a look at the font used in the credits, did the filmmaker use the font as yet another metaphor?



Discussion Questions

Gentle Breeze

Directed by Wenwei Hu, China, 4 min

Cinematography & Pacing

1. Do you think emotion and cinematography are tied together in this film? If so, how?
2. Whose perspective do you think the cinematography was done from? What kind of person's perspective was it trying to emphasize?
3. How were lighting and reflection incorporated into the film?
4. What was the pacing like in this film? Did the pacing create a sense of realism in the story? Why or why not?
5. How could the lack of dialogue in the film enhance the feelings in the story?
6. Do you think there were any other sounds used in place of the dialogue?
7. What did you think about the acting? Did you feel it was realistic? Why or why not?
8. The film culminates with the bike flying over all of the town. What did you feel when that happened?
9. When the bike flew overhead, everyone became quiet and stopped what they were doing. What do you think that could represent? What did that represent to you?
10. Describe the final shot.

FATALE

Directed by Kayen Manovil, USA, 4 min

Genre

1. "Isn't love a union between two people or does Earth fall in love with herself?" "Yes. I fall in love with myself, and I want someone to share it with me." -Eartha Kitt. What emotion was this film trying to express?
2. How was voiceover used as a metaphor in this film?
3. The film opened with a very creative production company logo animation. What are some ideas you might have for a production company animation?
4. In what ways did this film blend genres?



Discussion Questions

*"I think art seems to satisfy those other yearnings: how we envision the world, how we express our deepest feelings, **it's a vehicle for all of those things outside of the grid logic structure.** It's like trying to look at your eyes - you know the eye's there, but you can't look at it, because you need your eyes to look at your eyes, like [you can't touch your finger with the finger itself, as close as it is]. So I think art is kind of like that. I'm basically trying to describe the thing that is outside of words, so how can I do that?" -Agelio Batle, **like a stone or flower***

like a stone or flower

Directed by Kaiya Jordan, USA, 10 min

Interview

1. This film takes an honest look at the age-old question: Why do we make art?
2. The film used split screen, black and white, a gold-colored filter on one of the shots, a combination of image and video, varying aspect ratios, and even showing three frames at once. How did this make you feel?
3. In the film, Tamara talks about the process of seeing things and capturing them before they disappear as they are fleeting, and that to see the beautiful things in life, one must take the time for them. Have you ever seen anything like this in your own life?
4. What do you think an artistic process is? How can it be defined?
5. Do artists look at life as a kind of experiment? In what way?
6. How do you think art puts a finger on life and defines why we make the decisions that we make?
7. *"It was like these places that I couldn't visit...For a short window of time, I was privy to the existence of this place, this window that has opened, and you get to enter this magical land where things that shouldn't be able to happen are happening, or you're seeing things that normally aren't there...and then that window closes and...that dream is kind of over."* What does this line have to do with metaphor?



Discussion Questions

8. Did you ever have an experience similar to the one the artist experienced when his sculpture accidentally cracked and yet it felt like it was telling him something?
9. Describe the ending montage and why you think the filmmaker chose to create this montage, especially at the end of the film.
10. Does this documentary hold honesty and truth for you? Why or why not?
11. In the film, Mika explains that, "...[artists are] almost like superheroes, because they can create really good pieces of art, and make things from real life or draw things that don't make any sense, but somehow, represent a certain emotion. Other people can see it, and even if they have no idea what it is, they can feel the same way the artist felt when they were making it, so it's kind of a way that people can connect, even though they don't know what they're connecting about. It's kind of like this unseen emotion." Do you think it is possible to create new emotions through art?

"I mean, humans are really smart. And we've made a lot of inventions. It's just really cool that we can create these pieces of art by ourselves with the resources we have." -Mika Jordan, **like a stone or flower**

Majid, the Muslim Rapper

Directed by Kea Morshed, USA, 10 min

Relationships

1. How do Majid's encounters with the children on the street affect him?
2. Why is Majid feeling conflicted about his rapping career?
3. What do you think the topic of rapping was a motif for?
4. What has been a situation in your life where you felt compelled to do one thing but received external pressure to do another?



Discussion Questions

Make Art, Reese!

Directed by Mika Lim, USA, 8 min

Set Decoration

1. What visual communication techniques did this film use?
2. The animation style was collage-type, matching 3D imagery with real photographs, paper cutouts, geometrical shapes, and illustrations. What else did you notice? How did this combination make you feel?
3. What was the color scheme in this film? Did you notice mostly warm or cool colors?
4. How did you feel about the set decoration?
5. Do you think it is important to let fun lead your art? Why or why not?
6. Earlier in the film, Reese tells Luna, "The idea is to have no idea." and Luna replies, "That's still zero ideas." How did you feel when you heard this in this scene? Have you ever had anyone tell you to apply a formula to your own personal art?
7. In one of the scenes, Luna mentions that Reese needs to base his art on something already seen in galleries which must make the art special to them to get their attention. Have you ever felt like you had to make art like that already in galleries to get it to be popular without putting in your personal preference? If you ever did this, how did it feel?
8. When you start working on art without an external roadmap, what starts to happen? Where does the art come from?
9. When was a time in your life when not having an idea was one of the best ideas?
10. In the film, Venus says that the essence of art is "putting into words that which evades meaning." What do you think she meant by that?

*"Humanity's quest: processing the world on our own terms...Maybe it will help to define your experiences. Zero in on when you feel that unexplainable way and how it feels...I planned how I'd express my ideas, the significance of my techniques...When I look at works, there's just this infinite mystery to explore. I'm wondering about why an artist made these choices. What they wanted to express. The intention behind each technique. The way a work of art starts before a paintbrush hits an easel." -Venus, **Make Art, Reese!***



Discussion Questions

Maps

Directed by Esmé Nix, USA, 8 min

Dialogue

1. What is being a sea explorer being used as a metaphor for in this film?
2. If you were to make a movie, what kind of music would you be interested in making for it?
3. How did you feel watching this film?

Puppet Back Up

Directed by Maxwell Downer, UK, 9 min

Props

1. What do you think play can do for social justice movements that serious explanations cannot?
2. Have you ever seen any situations in your life where the concept play was able to create a bigger change than a serious explanation? Explain. Why do you think that was?

Stil-tteu-gi

Directed by Yezy Suh, USA, 5 min

Animation

1. How was the metaphor of memory handled in this film?
2. Why do you think the filmmaker used animation in this film?
3. What are some other creative ways memory was handled in other movies you have seen?
4. How did you feel when you experienced the narrator's memories in the film?



Discussion Questions

Substratum

Directed by Harvey Abrahams, Australia, 7 min

Props

1. This film was crafted using a digital production workflow, meaning environments were created on a computer and achieved in part with a green screen. The filmmaker directed, filmed, did special effects, and composed the music. To do this, he took the time to teach himself a variety of techniques in completely different fields of work. Does this give the director freedom? How so?
2. What was the relationship between the teddy bear-giving grandmother and dictator-obsessed grandson a metaphor for? What was the journey of their relationship?
3. What role did symmetry play in the cinematography of this film?
4. How would the film feel if dialogue was added to it?

Weathered

Directed by Patrick Jang, USA, 9 min

Relationships

1. In documentaries, interviews are shortened from much longer videos during the editing process to emphasize a part of the story. Which parts of the interviews created a strong portrayal of the interview subjects' resilience? How did the filmmaker illustrate this visually?
2. Which part of the film was inspiring to you? Why?
3. What did the use of black and white video do for this film as opposed to the traditional use of color?

Overall

4. How do these films forget about the superficialities of formula and just go for the artistic vision to achieve emotion, no matter how abstract that route to expressing it may be?
5. Do you think a person needs fancy, expensive equipment to make professional content? Why or why not?

"I thought maps were for finding lands to conquer, but maybe they're for finding the undiscovered places, the undiscovered peoples, and creating lands of our own." -Willa, **Maps**



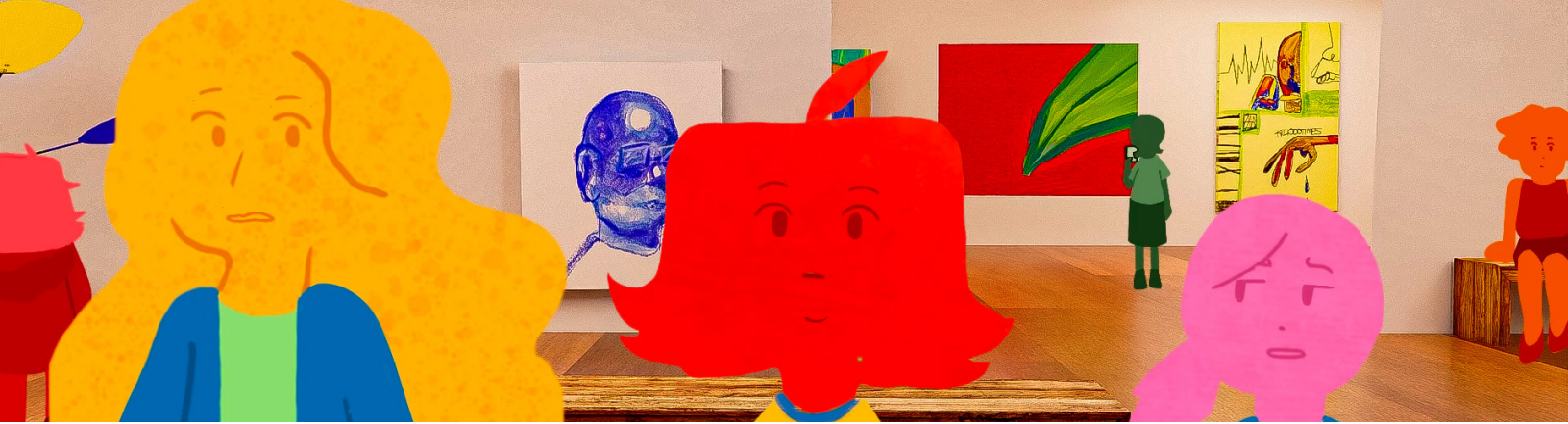
Activities

*"It is easier to talk about art that I'm drawn to rather than talk about what art is generally...It does feel like expressions of people's inner worlds or like **an offering of what the world can be...**[There is] so much disagreement about what art is...I think everyone is kind of **drawn to different kinds of visions of the world.**"*
- Tamara Chu, **like a stone or flower**

Activity 1: Completed short film experiment. Choose a metaphor and create a short film from beginning to end.

1. In class, put together a mood board of things you like and things that give you joy by printing out images and gluing them onto a piece of paper, no matter how random and nonsensical they may be.
2. Next, in class, each individual on a computer or tablet creates an account on [Writer's Duet](#), a screenwriting software, and writes a one-page screenplay that combines these elements around one single chosen metaphor.
3. Then, students work on text-to-video software utilization using [Runway](#) (free limited accounts)
4. After this, students download clips and put them together in [Adobe Express](#)
5. Music feature - Students create music on [BandLab](#) using the AI music feature, and then download their new songs and put them into the same Adobe Express project.
6. Students add credits to the movie in Adobe Express and download their final film.
7. Poster creation - Students create a poster for their movie using [Canva](#) and [Craiyon](#) image generators.
8. Screen all student films in a mini student film festival - hand out popcorn and the following certificates of achievement which can be filled out and customized prior on [Canva](#).

Activity 2: Journaling. Ask your students to choose 10 of their favorite questions in the study guide and answer them in a 3-page hand-written personal journal insert to share with you and the class. Be sure to suggest the entry's inclusion of a central argument, introduction, and conclusion.



Beyond the Classroom

*“There’s just certain art that I like because it makes me feel a certain way or it’s pointing to a certain thing that **I want to see more of**, and often I can’t really describe what that is. But I think that’s what we’re all sort of trying to do...Where my art comes from is there’s a world and I would love other people to see it, and I feel like we all kind of have that desire. So we just make things and be like, “Here’s that world”. And, **we’re often dissatisfied because it never really quite shows the totality of that world.**” - Tamara Chu, **like a stone or flower***

Free digital film production software:

1. [Blender](#), used with [Mixamo](#) (pre-recorded character movement), and [Luma genie](#) for text-to-3D objects and set decoration for your scene (drag and drop into it after downloading the object). You can use this combination of shortcut tools to quickly create any 3D movie you can think of without the hassle of design or frame-by-frame animation.
2. [BandLab](#) - A quick way to get started with music production
3. [Luma Genie text-to-3D software](#)
4. [DaVinci Resolve 18](#) - Free industry-standard video editing software now with a host of powerful AI video editing features.
5. Free Commercially-Usable Images: [Adobe Stock](#)
6. Product design - <https://www.designify.com/>
7. Podcast creation - [Adobe Podcast](#)
8. [Miro Board](#) - Free virtual whiteboard to get big ideas formed fast.
9. [Writer’s Duet](#) - Free intuitive screenwriting software that allows you to format as you go, a far more efficient method than Google Docs. The max is 3 active screenplays, so when you finish with one screenplay, download it as a PDF and Text file and save it to a secure place, then clear delete it on the platform so you can start all over again!
10. [Craiyon](#) - Free text-to-image generator
11. [LogiOptions+](#) - Free software that automatically performs tasks on your computer with the click of a button (i.e., open up a set of tabs using a hotkey) by using a feature called Smart Actions.
12. [The Film Business Handbook](#)



Beyond the Classroom (Cont.)

Metaphor in art:

1. [Essays on the history of art](#)
2. [Metropolitan Museum of Art curriculum resources](#)
3. [Metropolitan Museum of Art lesson plans](#)
4. [Adobe Max](#) - amazing workshops all about artistic processes, the perfect place to get inspired. Take a look at recordings from the past convention, or attend the upcoming free online event that takes place every October.



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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

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.11-12.3

Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequences of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

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.9-10.2

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.RH.9-10.3

Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.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.WHST.6-8.7

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.