YOUTH WORKS

USING THIS GUIDE

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TEACHING THE FILMS:

The **Youth Works** program showcases the work of teen filmmakers in a program that highlights the diversity of emerging talent. Ranging from the personal to the political, the films speak to the technical prowess and storytelling skills of a new generation. Taught in conjunction with this guide, the **Youth Works** program will inspire young people to become creators and will equip them with the tools to engage in constructive critique.

A wide-ranging collection of work by young filmmakers ages 18 and under
76 minutes, English and Spanish with English subtitles, all ages

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

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USING THIS GUIDE

This study guide is intended to flexibly support educators in preparing for and following up on a class screening of the **Youth Works** program. Because the films are created by students' peers, the guide focuses on critique methodology and aims to direct students toward their own creative projects. Educators are encouraged to adapt and abridge the content as necessary to meet their unique learning objectives and circumstances.

GUIDELINES FOR CRITIQUE

adapted from Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process, via the Unlocking the Classroom Blogspot.

Educators may encourage students to discuss the **Youth Works** program as a way to critique films made by their peers. Students may select a film that they identified with and assume the role of the artist, posing questions to the class from the perspective of the filmmaker. These questions might examine the success of specific stylistic and technical decisions that the filmmaker made, or address the overall effectiveness of the film's storytelling style.

A classroom critique of the Youth Works films will encourage students to engage actively with the material and to imagine themselves in the role of the maker. Inform students that these practical discussion guidelines will be a useful tool in creative and collaborative working environments throughout their studies and careers.

In guiding a class critique, refer to the following prompts. These guidelines encourage constructive criticism in a safe and supportive creative space. They may be applied to each film, or to the films with which the students felt the strongest connection.

1 Statements of Meaning:
Students state what was meaningful, evocative, interesting, exciting or striking in the work they have just witnessed. Encourage students to focus on what "works" in the film, rather than what they "like," as the former is critically constructive and the latter is opinion-based.

2 Artist as Questioner:
The student playing the role of the artist asks questions about the film. Questions may be specific to a particular section of the film (i.e. How did you interpret the scene at the gas station?), or they may be general (i.e. Did the soundtrack effectively build tension throughout the film?). After each question, the rest of the students respond. They may express opinions if they are in direct response to the question asked and do not contain suggestions for changes. Students are discouraged from suggesting changes, because the creative problem solving process is best handled by the owner of the work.

3 Neutral Questions:
Students ask neutral questions about the film. The artist responds. Questions are neutral when they do not have an opinion couched in them. For example, if you are discussing the lighting of a scene, "Why was it so dark?" is not a neutral question. "What ideas guided your choices about lighting?" is.

4 Opinion Time:
Students state opinions, subject to permission from the artist. The usual form is "I have an opinion about _____, would you like to hear it?" The artist has the option to decline opinions for any reason.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SERIES DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Which film in this series was your favorite? Why?

2. Which film in this series was your least favorite? Why?

3. Which film in this series do you think was the most challenging to make? Why?

4. These films were shot on everything from professional digital cameras to consumer cell phones. What does this variety of formats say about modern technology?

5. These films are all made by young filmmakers, but they are each very different.
- Is the work of young filmmakers different than the work of older filmmakers? Why or why not?

- Do you think that young filmmakers are addressing certain themes that are more relevant to teens than to adults? If so, what are these themes?

- How is the filmmaking process different for a young filmmaker than for someone who has been making films for a long time?

- What additional challenges do young people face in gaining access to equipment and bringing their films into the world?

- What extra tools or skills might a young filmmaker have access to that more established filmmakers are not using?

- Did these films inspire you to make your own films? Why or why not?

IS THE WORK OF YOUNG FILMMAKERS DIFFERENT FROM THE WORK OF OLDER FILMMAKERS?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

1) Create Your Own Film:
Drawing inspiration from the Youth Works program, develop an idea for your own short film. It may be based on a moment in your life, a story you heard, or pure fantasy.
- Write a logline—a brief outline of the plot, meaning and message of your film (3 sentences)
- Decide on a genre for your film. You might choose to make a documentary, like **Bay Area Girls Rock Camp**; narrative fiction, like **Epitaph**; animation, like **Shadows of Senghenydd**; or an experimental format like **Point Reyes** or **10,000 Hours**. A story can be told in many ways, so think carefully about which format is right for your subject.
- Make a list of the characters who appear in your film. Include a brief description of each character.

- As a homework assignment, students might write scripts or create storyboards for their films. If time and interest allows, they may be encouraged to film a short clip from each story idea, using phone cameras or available resources.

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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.

{ CORE CONCEPTS OF MEDIA ANALYSIS }

MEDIUM — **All Media Is Constructed.**
How is the message delivered and in what format?
What technologies are used to present the message?
What visual and auditory elements are used?
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 — All **Media Is A Language.**
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?

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