

Young Audiences of Massachusetts Educational Materials

Please forward to teachers

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Ensemble

Grade levels:

5th – 12th

LEARNING GOALS:

1. To be equipped with basic filmmaking skills as a means of self-expression.
2. To learn the different approaches to fairly documenting true stories with film and video.
3. To appreciate the importance of factual stories happening locally and personally.

PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: Viewing local documentary.

View a short-subject documentary directed by the artist (“The Bonsai Effect,” 2016) and discuss its impact. What makes the story interesting? What makes the story worth telling? The film takes place entirely in a small New England town – what might be happening in the students’ own towns, communities, or schools that would make for a compelling film?

POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: Selecting the story.

Each person is surrounded by a community full of potential stories. Which of these stories would make for a good film subject? What do the students want to make a documentary film about? Which documentary approach, from the choices discussed in the presentation, will they take?

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Cinematic Arts, Journalism, Personal Storytelling, Language Arts, Social Studies

LEARNING GOAL: To understand the value of factual events and how they are worthy of being told in story form.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION: A copy of “The Bonsai Effect”

TIME: 45 minutes

STEP 1: Watch “The Bonsai Effect”

STEP 2: Discuss the film. What makes it interesting? Which of the characters stand out? Why?

STEP 3: Explain the film’s setting – a small town in Massachusetts. What other stories might be hiding in small towns / communities that deserve to be told?

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) Discuss the goings-on in the school and surrounding community – what would be good material for a documentary?
- 2) Discuss the possibility of telling a personal story from a student's point of view.

LEARNING GOALS:

To cite specific examples of interesting non-fiction material. To select a topic / story to explore in the form of a short documentary film.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

List of documentary film genres (from presentation).

TIME: 45 minutes.

STEP 1: Discuss what makes a topic interesting / appropriate for a documentary film.

STEP 2: Choose potential stories from students' lives, school and surrounding community. What stories are unfolding? What stories would people like to see made into a movie?

STEP 3: Select (democratically) which of these stories to be the subject of the class's documentary film.

STEP 4: Determine which documentary approach (from list) is best suited for the selected subject/story.

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) Each person has a story to tell – challenge each student to find at least one story from his/her own life that others would like to see or hear.

RESOURCES:

“The Bonsai Effect,” dir. Christopher Alan Maloney

“Hoop Dreams,” (clip)* dir. Steve James

“Bowling for Columbine,” (clip) dir. Michael Moore

“Jackie Robinson,” (clip) dir. Ken Burns

“Planet Earth,” (clip) BBC Natural History Unit

*all clips provided by performer

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS:

Christopher Alan Maloney is an independent filmmaker whose work has been featured on PBS and the Discovery Channel.