



CIFF

FILMSLAM 2019

**43RD CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
STUDY GUIDE**

FilmSlam

FILMSLAM IS PRESENTED BY

Bruening Foundation
The Char and Chuck Fowler Family Foundation
Cuyahoga Community College
Kiwanis Foundation of Cleveland
Louise H. and David S. Ingalls Foundation
Martha Holden Jennings Foundation
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Tom Piraino and Barbara McWilliams
Third Federal Foundation

AFRICAN DIASPORA SHORTS PROGRAM

BULLES D'AIR

France, 2018, 30 minutes
Daouda Diakhate

I AM BLACK AND I AM BEAUTIFUL

Australia, 2017, 8 minutes
Hawanatu Bangura

LIVES

USA, 2018, 7 minutes
Monique Rosario

CURRICULUM LINKS

African Diaspora Studies, Social Studies, Global Studies, English Language Arts, Art, Media Studies

CURRICULUM GOALS

- Improve media literacy
- Develop critical thinking skills
- Engage in interdisciplinary learning
- Hone oral and written communication skills
- Foster global awareness and social justice

FILMSLAM VIEWING GUIDE

The Art of Filmmaking

Filmmakers of both narrative and documentary films (of either short or feature length) make numerous artistic decisions throughout the filmmaking process, beginning with the conception of the film, through filming, and finally during distribution and marketing. Understanding film terms and the production process helps viewers to identify and interpret these artistic choices.

Crew: The people who are involved with the production of a film and who do not appear in the film. The following are a few of the numerous people that make up a film crew:

- **Producer:** The person who oversees the entire filmmaking process. The producer finds the script, hires a director, finds financing to make and distribute the film, and markets the film.
- **Director:** The person who supervises the creative aspects of a film and instructs the actors and crew.
- **Screenwriter:** The person who creates the story, action, and dialogue.
- **Cinematographer:** The person who is responsible for the camerawork and lighting.
- **Editor:** The person who selects what he/she considers are the best shots and pieces them together to produce scenes, then larger sequences, and ultimately the film.

Development/Pre-Production: The process of preparing the film concept, assembling the crew, and determining a budget and shooting schedule. The following are terms often associated with this phase of the filmmaking process:

- **Synopsis:** A short description of the film.
- **Screenplay:** A detailed written account of the dialogue and action of a film, often including basic camera directions.
- **Literary Elements:** Films share numerous elements with literature, including plot, characters, setting, point of view, mood, and theme.
- **Genre:** A type or classification of films with identifiable similarities. Comedies, westerns, musicals, horror films, and science fiction films are popular genres.
- **Storyboard:** A series of drawings showing the scenes, shot by shot, and transitions for a film. The storyboard gives a director a clear idea of how the film will look.

Photography: The process of capturing visual images with a camera. The director and cinematographer make artistic choices about the following aspects:

- **Frame:** A single photograph of the larger film strip.
- **Shot:** A unit of film or series of frames over which the camera does not stop filming.
- **Take:** The length (in terms of time) of a single shot.
- **Focus:** The variable degree (from **hard** to **soft**) to which the image is clear and sharp.
- **Camera Angle:** The placement of the camera relative to the subject. When a camera is placed above (looking down upon) the subject, the camera is at a **high angle**. When the camera is placed below (looking upwards at) the subject, the camera is at a **low angle**.
- **Range:** The apparent distance between the camera and the subject, differentiated as **close-up shots** (framing the head from the neck up), **medium shots** (framing the body from the waist up), and **long shots** (framing the entire body).
- **Composition:** The organization of subjects or objects within the frame of the film.
- **Lighting:** The use of natural or artificial illumination and shadows for the purpose of visual clarity and/or mood.
- **Camera Movement:** There are number of common types of camera movements, including **panning** (in which the camera pivots from right to left, or vice versa), **tilting** (in which the

camera pivots upwards or downwards), and **tracking** (in which the entire camera moves forwards, backwards, or sideways).

Sound Design: The process, completed during or after filming, of capturing, creating, and interweaving dialogue, sound effects, and music. The following are terms associated with this process:

- **Soundtrack:** The recorded sound of a film, including dialogue, sound effects, and music.
- **Voiceover:** A voice of a narrator, generally not seen but heard on the soundtrack of a film.

Post-Production/Editing: The process, typically after filming has concluded, of combining shots, scenes, and sequences with the soundtrack. The following are terms associated with this phase:

- **Cut:** The distinct, abrupt transition from one frame to another.
- **Fade Out/Fade In:** A technique in which a shot gradually darkens until a new one emerges from the darkness.
- **Dissolve:** A technique in which one image gradually transitions into another image in such a way that the viewer can temporarily see both images at the same time.
- **Flashback:** A sequence of a film that shows events that happened prior to those already shown.
- **Title Sequence:** Written material at the beginning of a film, usually including the names of the people involved in the production of the film (the director, producer, screenwriter, cinematographer, featured actors, etc.) and sometimes called the opening credits or titles.
- **Intertitles:** Text displayed on the screen in between photographed shots or superimposed over a photographed image.

Distribution/Marketing: The process of selling and supplying films to exhibitors, including mainstream theaters, art house theaters, film festivals, television networks, and websites.

A Short History of Filmmaking: Short Films

The earliest films, usually consisting of a single shot, were undoubtedly short, rarely lasting more than a minute. While films gradually increased in length at the turn of the twentieth century, only “prestige” films—including biblical epics and films showcasing boxing matches—exceeded an hour. In the 1910s, the feature-length film grew in popularity, but short films of multiple genres (comedy, melodrama, educational, animation, etc.) remained part of mainstream exhibition programs for several decades. Screened before feature films, short films offered major Hollywood producers an arena to evaluate new talent, try out new technologies, and attract diverse audiences. During the 1950s, the screening of short films in mainstream theaters rapidly declined, but the concurrent rise of international film festivals and the popularization of television provided new exhibition venues. According to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences®—who annually recognize the Best Documentary Short, Best Live Action Short, and Best Animated Short—a short film does not exceed 40 minutes. Today, the Internet has facilitated the resurgence of short films, and young and established filmmakers continue to refine their craft through abbreviated fare.

Sources and Suggestions for Further Reading: Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010); David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 9th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010); Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: American Cinema’s Transition to Sound, 1926-1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Harper Cossar, “Bobby Jones, Warner Bros., and the Short Instructional Film,” in *Convergence Media History*, edited by Janet Staiger and Sabine Hake (New York: Routledge, 2009); Peter Lev, *The Fifties: Transforming the Screen, 1950-1959* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

PRE-SCREENING ACTIVITY

Assess the students' experiences viewing short films. Which short films, if any, have the students seen? Discuss, for example, SNL Digital Shorts, Comedy Central Short Form, or other shorts they may have watched on YouTube, Vimeo, or Facebook. Watch one short film as a class. Identify the various artistic choices the filmmaker made. Encourage students to consider how these choices affect their interpretation of the film and its message.

MAKING THE MOST OF POST-SCREENING Q&As

FilmSlam offers a unique opportunity for teachers and students to interact with filmmakers and/or local experts on the subject of the films screened. While teachers and students should feel comfortable asking any question inspired by their viewing of the films, the following questions (and many others) may help viewers understand the production process, how the subject of the film is important to their local community, and/or how they can get involved in local organizations.

What inspired the filmmaker to make a film on this subject?

What does the filmmaker hope audiences will take away from the film? (After the Q&A, consider if the filmmaker's answer aligns with or differs from your reaction to the film.)

How did the filmmaker get funding for the film?

How did the filmmaker assemble the production team? How big was the production team?

How long did the film take to produce?

Where else has or will this film be screened?

How or why is the subject of this film important to the students' local community?

How can students get involved?

POST-SCREENING ACTIVITIES/PROMPTS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION*

Bulles D'Air (Daouda Diakhate, 2018)

In the film, Omar struggles with mental health issues that make it difficult for him to reintegrate into life outside of the psychiatric hospital. Consider how his experience might have been different with more support adjusting. Research organizations that advocate for people affected by mental health issues in your community, and find out how you can get involved.

Why does Omar hesitate when asked if he wants to go to the birthday party of his friend's daughter?

Describe Omar's room in his father's apartment. What does the viewer learn about Omar from the objects in his room?

What do you think happened between Omar and Ania?

Describe Omar's relationship with his sister.

Discuss the significance of the song Omar sings when he is parked at night overlooking the city.

How does Omar's father think Omar should treat his issues? Why does this suggestion upset Omar?

How does the filmmaker foreshadow Omar's most extreme mental episode?

How does the ending mirror the opening sequence?

What does Omar's father give Omar? Why is this gift significant?

How does the filmmaker use **lighting, composition**, and color to convey when we're seeing the world through Omar's perspective?

I Am Black and I Am Beautiful (Hawanatu Bangura, 2017)

Write a poem in which you celebrate yourself.

How do the black women in the film describe their experiences growing up?

What affect did toys and the media have on their childhood perceptions of beauty? How do the women define beauty now?

In what ways do the women embrace their heritage? Why has doing so not always been easy?

Discuss the dance scenes interspersed throughout the testimonials. How do these scenes celebrate black beauty?

Watch [this making-of video](#) to learn more about the film's production. How does the production of the film support the film's message of inclusivity?

Lives (Monique Rosario, 2018)

Research the origination of and response to the Black Lives Matter movement in Cleveland. (Consult [this guide published by NPR](#) or [this one](#) to double check that you are reading credible sources.) Then write a 500-word film review of LIVES that summarizes your research and analyzes how the film provides a commentary on these recent events.

Discuss the significance of the film's title, paying attention to how the text appears onscreen.

How does the filmmaker use **cinematography** and **editing** to create a nightmarish setting?

Why do the cop and the young woman keep switching places?

Describe the **soundtrack** of the film. Whose voices and what sounds do you hear?

Discuss the question posed by the old man: "Do you know that you possess the power to change the ending?"

How do you interpret the ending?

*Definitions for terms in **bold** can be found in the FilmSlam Viewing Guide.

AFRICAN DIASPORA SHORT PROGRAM

67 minutes

Some films selected to screen in FilmSlam may contain strong language, unusual humor, and/or challenging topics and themes.

Van's Ice Cold Lemonade

Directed by Cornell Calhoun III

USA, 6 min.

A generation gap.

Funky Butt

Directed by Jonnie Stapleton

USA, 15 min.

A shy young girl spends time with her eccentric grandpa while her mother is away for work. Together, they embark on an adventure with a magical cornet that makes people dance.

Bulles d'air

Directed by Daouda Diakhate

FRANCE, 30 min.

Omar is thirty years old when he gets out from a long stay in psychiatric hospital. He goes back into the district where he lives with his father and his younger sister. The only thing which interests him is to hear from Ania, his ex-girlfriend.

I am Black and Beautiful

Directed by Hawanatu Bangura

AUSTRALIA, 9 min.

Seven Afro-Australian women explore the impact of western media on their identity and understanding of beauty.

Lives

Directed by Monique Rosario

USA, 7 min.

A black woman and white police officer trapped in a perpetual nightmare must fight to find a way out.