



# CIFF

**FILMSLAM 2019**

**43<sup>RD</sup> CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL  
STUDY GUIDE**

FilmSlam

## **FILMSLAM IS PRESENTED BY**

Bruening Foundation  
The Char and Chuck Fowler Family Foundation  
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Tom Piraino and Barbara McWilliams  
Third Federal Foundation

## **ARABIC SHORTS PROGRAM**

### **BROTHERHOOD**

Canada, Tunisia, Qatar, Sweden, 2018, 25 minutes  
Meryam Joobeur

### **SALAM**

USA, 2018, 14 minutes  
Claire Fowler

### **1-0**

United Arab Emirates, 2017, 10 minutes  
Nada Elazhary

## **CURRICULUM LINKS**

Arabic Language, 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

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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**

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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*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2010); David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 9<sup>th</sup> 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\***

**Brotherhood** (Meryam Joobeur, 2018)

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Research the political relationship between Tunisia and Syria. (Consult [this guide published by NPR](#) or [this one](#) to double check that you are reading credible sources.) Then write a review of BROTHERHOOD that discusses how the film reflects and comments upon its political context.

Choose one of the characters in the film and write an internal monologue from his/her perspective. What motivates his/her actions? How does he/she respond to the actions of others? How has his/her perspective changed (if at all) by the end of the film?

The first line in the film, said by the father, Mohamed, is "Wolves show no mercy." Discuss the significance of this statement with respect to the rest of the film.

Why must Chaker, the second oldest brother in the film, slaughter the lamb? Discuss the symbolism of the lamb throughout the film.

Describe Mohamed's reaction to Malek's return. How do you think Malek felt in that situation?

Why does Mohamed dislike Reem?

What compelled Malek to fight in Syria? Why do you think Malek regrets going?

Do you think Reem should have removed her veil at Malek's plea? Does the act help alleviate the tension in the house? Why or why not?

Who does Mohamed call when he borrows the shop owner's phone?

How does **editing**, particularly cross cutting between the father running and the boys playing, create suspense at the end of the film?

When Mohamed arrives at the beach, the filmmaker frames the character's face in a **close-up shot** as Mohamed screams for Malek. How does this framing help to convey Mohamed's regret and despair?

### **Salam** (Claire Fowler, 2018)

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In the film, two very different people are brought together through a rideshare service, like Lyft or Uber. Considering how this scenario can inspire countless stories, write your own short story or screenplay about two people who meet in a rideshare. Think about the following questions while crafting your story: How do the two people interact with each other? Do they like or dislike one another? What obstacle(s) must they overcome together? How do they affect one another's lives? Will they ever see each other again?

What do we learn about Salam in the opening scene with her family?

What is the significance of the gift Salam gives to her nephew?

Why does Salam continue to work after she learns her husband, Musa, is in the hospital?

Why does Audrey become annoyed at Salam expressing concern? Why does Audrey retort, "Just because you're oppressed doesn't mean we all are"? How does Salam respond?

How does Salam and Audrey's relationship change over the course of the film?

Compare and contrast Salam and Audrey.

What do you think the future holds for these two women?

### **1-0** (Nada Elazhary, 2017)

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Think about a time when you sent a text or email to the wrong person. How did you feel after the mistake? Were you honest about the mistake, or did you try to cover it up? What were the consequences? What did you learn from the experience? Write a journal entry reflecting on these questions.

Outline Layla's various failed attempts to unlock her father's phone and delete the text she sent. What would you have done in a similar situation?

Compare and contrast Layla with her parents.

How does the film portray the use of technology?

Why does the father ultimately delete Layla's text?

Do you think Layla has learned anything from this experience?

How does the filmmaker use **sound design** and **editing** to convey the humorous tone of the film? Give specific examples to support your answer.

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

## ARABIC SHORTS PROGRAM

74 minutes

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

### Brotherhood

Directed by Meryam Joobeur

CANADA, TUNISIA, QATAR, SWEDEN, 25 minutes

Mohamed is deeply shaken and suspicious when his estranged eldest son returns home to rural Tunisia with a mysterious young wife in tow. *In Arabic with English subtitles.*

### Nefta Football Club

Directed by Yves Piat

FRANCE, 17 min.

Abdallah and Mohammed come across a donkey with headphones on his ears and bags full of a white powder on his back, they decide to bring those bags back to their village. *In Arabic with English subtitles.*

### Salam

Directed by Claire Fowler

USA, 14 min.

A female Lyft driver navigates the night shift in New York City while waiting to hear life-or-death news from her family in Syria. *In Arabic with English subtitles.*

### One and 0

Directed by Nada ElAzhary

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, 10 min.

When a flirty text to her crush accidentally gets sent to her dad's phone instead, a shy teenager must do whatever it takes to delete the message before her dad finishes watching the match and checks his phone. *In Arabic with English subtitles.*

### About Bintou

Directed By Dezhou Li

UNITED KINGDOM, 13 min.

About Bintou is a short documentary about an African female Muslim student's life in Guangzhou, China. Bintou will talk about the challenges of being an African student in China. She will also talk about the difficulties she's having now, of being an African and a Muslim woman. She would love people to understand her as an independent Muslim woman by sharing her ambitions and thoughts against the stereotype ideology towards Muslim women in society nowadays.

*In Arabic, Chinese, English, French with English subtitles.*