



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
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Ohio Arts Council
Rakuten OverDrive
Tom Piraino and Barbara McWilliams
Third Federal Foundation

SHORTS PROGRAM FOR THOSE WITH HEARING LOSS

DEAF

Germany, 2017, 4 minutes
Lina Jakobi

SEVEN

United Kingdom, 2017, 11 minutes
James Morgan

BEFORE DARK

USA, 2018, 12 minutes
Aaron Smithson

CURRICULUM LINKS

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*

Deaf (Lina Jakobi, 2017)

While neither Emma nor Nick speak or sign more than a few words, their actions communicate a lot. Choose one of the two main 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 the other character? How has he/she changed by the end of the film?

Why does Emma hesitate to communicate with Nick? How can you tell she is repeatedly disappointed in herself?

Does Nick give Emma any signals of encouragement?

What do you think Emma writes to Nick? How does he respond?

What do you think will happen next?

Seven (James Morgan, 2017)

Imagine what happened to the geologist prior to being captured by the villagers. Write a short story that considers the moral dilemma he faced when deciding to kill Yohana's father. Is the geologist as innocent as he seems? Does he deserve to be saved?

Explain the comparison between the remote community and a wolf pack.

Yohana recalls her father saying that in the far north "it's easy to get lost, to think you're right when you're wrong." Discuss the poignancy of this advice in relation to the rest of the film.

Why does Yohana go through with the trial, despite her doubts? Why does she ultimately decide to save the geologist?

The film opens with a **title** card that reads: "The Arctic is changing. Conflicts between oil companies and remote communities are on the rise." By the end of the film, what message do you think the filmmaker is conveying about the changing Arctic and these conflicts?

Describe how the filmmaker's use of **long shots** and **deep focus** portray the characters in relation to their environment.

Before Dark (Aaron Smithson, 2018)

Reflect on a challenging experience that you've faced. How has that experience come to define how you think of yourself? What did you learn from this experience? If given the opportunity, would you do anything differently or opt to avoid the experience altogether? Write a journal entry addressing these questions.

How does the filmmaker communicate that the woman is pregnant?

What is the couple fighting about?

Why is the woman upset by her partner using the word "disabled"? How does she define her experience instead?

What does the man miss about being able to hear? How has the woman's life been different?

Explain what the woman means by "the gift of no sound."

Consider how the ridge is an apt setting for the couple's discussion.

Discuss how the film highlights the diverse experiences of people who have the "gift of no sound."

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

SHORTS "LIGHT" FOR STUDENTS WITH HEARING LOSS

74 minutes

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

Deaf

Directed by Lina Jakobi

GERMANY, 4 min.

Deaf is about one hearing person and one deaf person who are interested in each other but do not dare to say until the end.

In Sign Language with English subtitles.

Lost and Found

Directed by Andrew Goldsmith, Bradley Slabe

AUSTRALIA, 8 min.

A bumbling knitted dinosaur must completely unravel itself to save the love of its life.

Game Changer

Directed by Aviv Mano

USA, 3 min.

A macho toy arcade prize is quick to judge a young girl who wants to win him, and goes on a life changing journey in attempt to stop her from winning enough tickets and taking him home.

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.*

Stardust

Directed by Aldo Sotelo Laro

MEXICO , 14 min.

Adan lives day-to-day helping his father, Hilario, to collect garbage. An unexpected visit to the school will reconfigure Adan's whole universe. *In Spanish with English subtitles.*

Day in the Park

Directed by Diego Porral Soldevilla,

SPAIN, 2 min.

The monologue of a grandfather.

In Spanish with English subtitles.

Oblivion

Directed by Xenia Grey, Cristina Vaello

SPAIN, 5 min.

Fishermen return to the port, barely any fish caught. Hunger is devastating the country. An unknown man gifts sardines to some boys that are playing around, and they trust him when he says a big catch of fish is about to arrive at Alicante's market.

In Spanish with English subtitles.

Seven

Directed by James Morgan

UNITED KINGDOM, 11 min.

In just seven seconds, Yohana, a teenage girl from a remote community in the Norwegian Arctic must choose the fate of an oil rig worker who has killed her father - a decision that will not only mark her forever, but also determine the very future of her people. *In Norwegian with English subtitles.*

Parting Shot

Directed by Özgür Cem Aksoy

TURKEY, 11 min.

There is an incident at an otherwise very ordinary Turkish funeral. A man drops his phone inside the grave while throwing soil during the burial. He promptly interrupts the service to take his phone back. However someone in community denies this request because of religious beliefs. The Hodja who is leading the funeral, gets involved and an extraordinary discussion unfolds. *In Turkish with English subtitles.*

Before Dark

Directed by Aaron Smithson

USA, 12 min.

While hiking the Appalachian Trail, a deaf couple argue over the moral implications of giving their child a cochlear implant. *In American Sign with English subtitles.*