



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
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Ohio Arts Council
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Tom Piraino and Barbara McWilliams
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INTERNATIONAL SHORTS PROGRAM

FAST HORSE

Canada, 2018, 13 minutes
Alexandra Lazarowich

STAY CLOSE.

USA, China, 2018, 19 minutes
Luther Clement, Shuhan Fan

BROTHERHOOD

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

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*

Fast Horse (Alexandra Lazarowich, 2018)

Research a Native American sport/game of your choosing. Then write a 500-word newspaper article highlighting a pivotal event and also detailing the sport's/game's history and impact on contemporary culture.

What drives Cody Big Tobacco, the Old Sun jockey, to participate in the relay?

How does Cody prepare for his first relay as a jockey?

Allison Redcrow, the Old Sun team leader, says that horses make them "warriors" today. How does the film support Allison's statement?

How does Cody feel after the race? Why?

How does this film compare to other sports documentaries or television shows you've seen? Consider how the film is structured around the Calgary Stampede in your discussion.

Discuss the black-and-white scenes. How do the **photography**, **editing**, and **sound design** in these scenes convey the extreme nature of the sport?

Documentarians have a number of tools for presenting information: interviews or “talking heads” (testimonials of witnesses or experts); observational footage (images of events as they happen); reenactments or staged events; archival footage (images initially created by someone else); **intertitles**; **voiceovers**; and graphics (maps, charts, or diagrams). Which of these tools does the filmmaker employ? Which do you think are most effective at conveying the film’s message?

Stay Close. (Luther Clement, Shuhan Fan, 2018)

Think about an extracurricular activity that has been meaningful to you. How did you become involved in the activity? What have you learned from the activity? How do your family and friends support you? What are your goals for this activity? Write a journal entry reflecting on these questions.

What inspires Keeth’s parents to sign up Keeth and his sister, Erinn, to a fencing club?

What obstacles, both athletic and personal, has Keeth had to overcome? How has he worked to overcome these obstacles?

What has Keeth learned from his parents?

Discuss the significance of the film’s title.

How do you interpret the final two scenes featuring Keeth’s daughter?

Consider why the aspect ratio (the ratio of the width to the height of the screen) changes throughout the film.

How do the animated scenes function in the film?

Which tools of the documentarian (described above) do the filmmakers employ? Which do you think are most effective at conveying the film’s message?

Brotherhood (Meryam Joobeur, 2018)

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?

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



INTERNATIONAL SHORTS PROGRAM

74 minutes

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

Life in Miniature

Directed by Ellen Evans

UNITED KINGDOM

5 minutes

A short film about small things - and the woman who creates them.

Fast Horse

Directed by Alexandra Lazarowich

CANADA

13 minutes

FAST HORSE is a rare look at the world of bareback horse racing through the experience of one Siksika horseman, Alison RedCrow, as he strives to build a team and take on the best riders in the Blackfoot Confederacy. This old tradition is alive and well.

Stay Close

Directed by Luther Clement, Shuhan Fan

USA, CHINA

19 minutes

The underdog story of a fencer from Brooklyn who overcomes a gauntlet of hardships on the road to the Olympics.

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.*

Fire in Cardboard City

Directed by Phil Brough

NEW ZEALAND

9 minutes

When a city made entirely of cardboard catches fire, it's up to the local fire chief and his brave deputies to save Cardboard City and its citizens from impending doom.

The Bicycle Thief

Directed by Kerry Skinner, Stewart Alexander

UNITED KINGDOM

8 minutes

You don't want to come between this girl and her bike.