



# **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  
Cuyahoga Community College  
Kiwanis Foundation of Cleveland  
Louise H. and David S. Ingalls Foundation  
Martha Holden Jennings Foundation  
Ohio Arts Council  
Rakuten OverDrive  
Tom Piraino and Barbara McWilliams  
Third Federal Foundation

### **RUSSIAN SHORTS PROGRAM**

#### **52 TROLLEYBUS**

Austria, 2017, 29 minutes  
David Auerbach

#### **SPRING**

Russia, 2018, 23 minutes  
Nathalia Konchalovsky

#### **PHONE DUTY**

Russia, 2018, 8 minutes  
Lenar Kamalov

### **CURRICULUM LINKS**

Russian 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

---

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*, 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\***

**52 Trolleybus** (David Auerbach, 2017)

---

Research the recent history of Crimea, the region through which the trolleybus travels. Consider reading, for example, the *Washington Post* article, "[To Understand Crimea, Take a Look Back at Its Complicated History](#)," the *Atlantic* article, "[Putin's Playbook: The Strategy Behind Russia's Takeover of Crimea](#)," or the *Bloomberg* article, "[The High Price of Putin's Takeover of Crimea](#)." Then write a review of 52 TROLLEYBUS that considers how the film portrays the region and its people in relation to Crimea's recent history.

At the beginning of the film, an elderly woman describes the excitement of first seeing the trolleybus in the 1960s. What types of new technologies inspire similar excitement today?

Consider how the filmmaker uses the trolleybus as a device to share stories of the people who live along its route.

---

Discuss the Nikita Krushchev quote included in the film: “Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build bridges even when there are no rivers.” How does this quote relate to the trolleybus?

How does the filmmaker portray the various people who help operate and maintain the trolleybus? What types of jobs do they have? Describe the areas in which they work. What memories do they share?

Why is the trolleybus such a treasured form of transportation? What affect has it had on the Crimean people?

Discuss the filmmaker’s use of **close-up shots** of the film subjects looking directly into the camera. How do these shots reveal the filmmaker’s perspective on the subjects?

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?

### **Spring** (Nathalia Konchalovsky, 2018)

---

Think about your relationship with your parents or caregivers. How has the relationship changed as you’ve grown older? In what ways do you continue to rely on your elders? How do you express your appreciation for them? Write a journal entry reflecting on these questions.

Recall the scene in which Marion, played by Svetlana Pismichenko, first arrives at Olya’s apartment. How does Pismichenko’s performance (body language, gestures, etc.) and the **composition** of the frame convey Marion’s discomfort?

Describe Olya’s reaction to her mother’s arrival. Why does Olya treat her mother this way?

Why does Artyom leave the party with Marion?

When and how does Marion demonstrate that she is having a hard time dealing with Olya growing up?

How does singing karaoke affect Marion?

Why, after saying she doesn’t smoke, does Marion take Artyom’s cigarette?

How has Marion changed over the course of the film?

Discuss the significance of the film’s title.

What does the last scene imply about Marion and Olya’s relationship?

### **Phone Duty** (Lenar Kamalov, 2018)

---

Write an internal monologue from Cat’s perspective. What motivates his actions? How does he respond to the actions of the other characters? How has he changed, if at all, by the end of the film?

Why is Cat exhausted?

What is “phone duty”? Why does Cat dread being assigned to phone duty for the second time in one week?

Discuss the significance of Cat playing the word “entropy” in the soldiers’ Scrabble-like game.

Some viewers have criticized this film as pro-Russian propaganda, especially as it stars activist and novelist Zakhar Prilepin—whom [Russian scholar Julie Fedor describes](#) as “the popular face of the aggressive brand of militarism that has come to pervade the Russian media landscape.” Using specific examples from the film to support your points, discuss how this film promotes the agenda of the Russian military.

While Cat is on the phone with his own mother, the camera **tilts** and **pans** across numerous ringing phones. How do you interpret this final scene?

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

## **RUSSIAN LANGUAGE SHORT PROGRAM**

**78 minutes**

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

### **52-The Trolleybus**

David Auerbach  
AUSTRIA, 29 min.

A beloved former communist institution fights for survival amidst the ever shifting political and economic tides of the disputed Crimean peninsula. Told from the workers perspectives, this film from first-time filmmaker David Auerbach offers a look into the quotidian struggles of mechanics, machinists, drivers and administrators who keep a vital but outdated social service from fading into oblivion.

### **Spirit of the Mountains**

Nurmat Sakebaev  
KYRGYZSTAN, 18 min.

A story about a young man who risks his own life to save the snow leopard from a hunter.

### **Spring**

Nathalia Konchalovsky  
RUSSIA, 23 min.

Marina arrives to St-Petersburg for her daughter's birthday. At the party she meets a young man, Artyom, with whom she escapes from the celebration...

### **Phone Duty**

Lenar Kamalov  
RUSSIA, 8 min.

A Donbass rebel fighter, whose nom de guerre is Cat, receives orders to sit on phone duty, but it's not as easy as it may seem.