

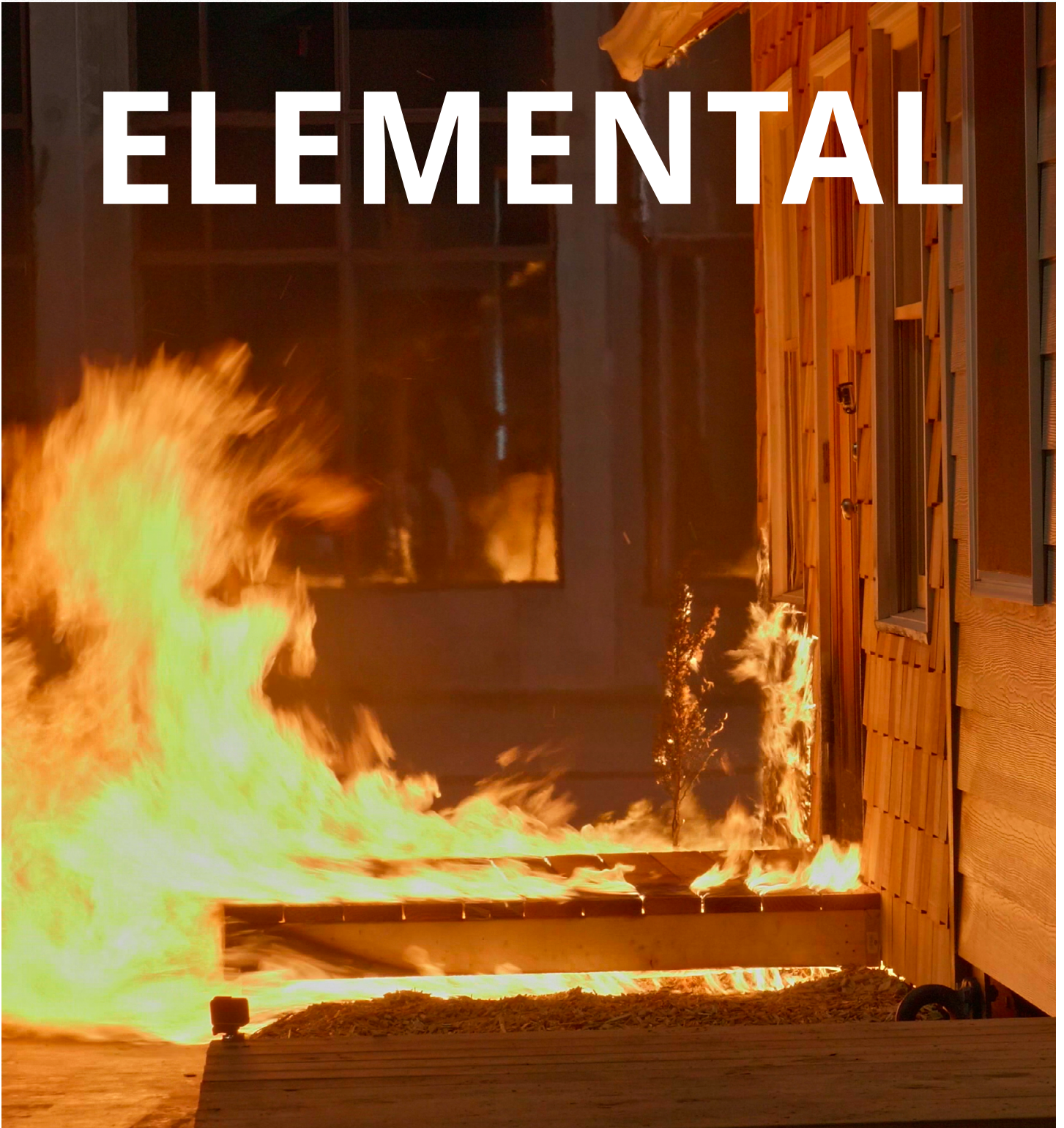
MVFF

EDUCATION

October
6-16

GROW EXPLORE CONNECT DISCOVER

ELEMENTAL



CURRICULUM GUIDE
GRADES: 6-12

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Dear educators,

Thank you for attending the 45th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of *ELEMENTAL*. We are excited to return in our 2022 fall season with a combination of both in-person screenings for local schools and online screenings for those of you joining us from afar.

This year, our film selections for school screenings continue to focus on increasingly relevant issues of global empathy and active citizenship, and we believe this film will be a powerful and engaging text to use in your classroom. These curricular materials are designed to get students to engage deeply with film by the common-core aligned skills of developing an evidence-based interpretation of a text.

The discussion questions on the following page offer a variety of options for fostering small-group or whole-class dialogue. If your students are already familiar with a process of writing evidence-based interpretive essays, consider using the suggested essay prompts for a short writing piece. Additionally, individual handouts for before, during, and after viewing are provided as stand-alone activities to be used individually or in sequence. We have also included a handout that provides some context for the film festival experience, which may help to introduce your screening.

Thank you so much for your tireless work!

Sincerely,

The CAFILM Education Team

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the main events that occur in this film? What has changed between the start and the end?
2. What are the primary emotions you felt during this film? What are some secondary emotions?
3. Consider the editing and the tempo of this film. Did things move quickly or slowly? How come?
4. What do you see in this film that reminds you of other stories from your life or other stories you know?
5. What are some background details you noticed in this film? How do these details provide information about the time or place in which this film was made?
6. Consider other films you've seen. What makes this film unique or important? What are some connections between this film and other films?
7. Were there any voices or perspectives you thought were missing from this film? If so, how might the inclusion of those perspectives have changed the film and its message?
8. How did early indigenous practices of fire management differ from some later Western practices?
9. What qualities of wildfires can make them difficult to study?
10. Besides destruction to property, what are some of the most devastating or impactful results of wildfires?

INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. What are the most critical changes that need to be made at the individual, community, national, and/or global level to improve wildfire management?
2. How is the scientific method's cycle of observation, hypothesis, experiment, and analysis used to advance technology and practices in wildfire management?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ready, Set, Go! Your Personal Wildfire Action Plan

https://www.fire.ca.gov/media/4996/readyssetgo_plan.pdf

A guide prepared by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection with information diagrams on defensible space, hardened homes, and action plans for wildfire response and evacuation.

Director Q&A: New documentary looks at alternative approaches to wildfires

<https://www.opb.org/article/2022/07/19/think-out-loud-new-documentary-looks-at-alternative-approaches-to-wildfires/>

A Q&A article with director Trip Jennings, conducted by Julie Sabatier for Oregon Public Broadcasting.

Review: “Elemental” Captures Nature’s Wrath and Resilience

<https://www.wweek.com/arts/movies/2022/07/12/your-weekly-roundup-of-movies-elemental-captures-natures-wrath-and-resilience/>

A review of the film from the Willamette Week.

STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.B

Apply grades 9-10 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning”).

ABOUT CAFILM

The nonprofit California Film Institute celebrates and promotes film as art and education through year-round programming at the independent Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, presentation of the acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival, as well as cultivation of the next generation of filmmakers and audiences through CAFILM Education programs.

The California Film Institute and Mill Valley Film Festival are located in Marin County, California, on the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary homelands of the Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples. This includes the Southern Pomo and Graton Rancheria Tribes. These tribes were removed or displaced from their lands. We recognize this history and the harm to present-day Coast Miwok, Pomo, and Wappo peoples and to their ancestors. The California Film Institute commits to moving forward from a place of authenticity and working with present-day tribes to elevate their stories, history, and present-day legacy through film.

Follow the Mill Valley Film Festival on social media

 @millvalleyfilmfest  @MillValleyFilmFestival
 @mvfilmfest  californiainstitute #MVFF45



ABOUT THE FILM

ELEMENTAL takes viewers on a journey with the top experts in the nation to better understand fire. We follow the harrowing escape from Paradise as the town ignited from wind-driven embers and burned within a few hours of the fire's start. We visit fire labs where researchers torch entire houses to learn why some homes burn and others survive. We learn from Native Americans as they employ fire to benefit nature and increase community safety as they have for thousands of years. We follow researchers who work to understand the effects of climate on forests and the crucial role that natural forests play in storing vast amounts of carbon. Along the way we listen to people who have survived the deadliest fires to underscore the importance of this quest.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR TRIP JENNINGS

Trip Jennings founded Balance Media and has worked with *National Geographic* for over a decade. He was named Adventurer of the Year by *National Geographic* after his first project with the organization: an expedition in Papua New Guinea. Since then, his films have won dozens of awards around the world and aired on major networks on every continent.

Jennings focuses on issues that are at a tipping point. He works to educate the public through film, including front-line communities and decision makers, so they can make informed decisions about issues that affect their lives.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I am deeply committed to changing the national conversation around wildfire.

My first exposure to wildland fire was when I was a sophomore in college working on a student film nearly 20 years ago. The Biscuit fire burned across half a million acres in Southern Oregon, and we covered the controversy, science and politics at play during and after the fire. The Bush administration proposed the largest timber sale in modern history, and a big fight ensued. A group of scientists led by Daniel Donato published a paper in *Science* magazine and they were attacked by other professors at their school. Our team grappled with the complex debate around fire and worked with scientists, advocates and local citizens to capture the story.

More than a decade later, the Eagle Creek fire ignited the Columbia River Gorge, a scenic area just a half hour from my home. As the fire burned, legislation was proposed that would allow clearcut logging in the forests after the fire. The community was shocked and angry. People were searching for answers, and I noticed that people were sharing my nearly two-decade-old student film - I was taken aback. Was it possible that little to nothing else was available to communicate this message?

As the rains came and put the fire out, I took to the air with an expert scientist to assess the burn. I created a short film about the fire that has been viewed by hundreds of thousands of people and has influenced the reporting and response.

For the last four years I have dedicated myself to visiting burned landscapes and communities destroyed by fire. I am deeply committed to changing the national conversation around wildfire. I have visited with scientists, investigators and firefighters and they have told me again and again that we can have healthy forests and safe communities, and that we can prepare for and adapt to fire.



Questions to Consider:

- What does it mean to “change the national conversation”?
- How can changing the conversation lead to other types of change?
- What does a film need to do in order to change the conversation?

BEFORE VIEWING: PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Directions:

The film you are about to watch explores the science of wildfires and fire management. Activate your prior knowledge on these topics by responding to the following prompts with a short paragraph.

1. What are some ways that wildfires have impacted you, your family, or your community? Or, if you don't feel you have been impacted by wildfires, when is the first time you became aware of wildfires affecting other people?



2. What methods and practices do you know of that are used to reduce the risk or manage the impacts of wildfires? Which ones do you think are most effective?





DURING VIEWING: NOTEATCHER

Directions:

As you watch the film, pay attention to the various individuals who have dedicated their lives to studying fire. Fill out each box to keep track of the people and the way they have explored and advanced our understanding of wildfires.

	What was their initial understanding, observation or hypothesis about wildfires?	How did they increase their understanding of fires or test a hypothesis about fire management?	What conclusion did they reach about wildfires and/or fire management?
<p>Rick O'Rourke Yurok Cultural Fire Management Council</p> 			
<p>Chris Dunn Fire Risk Scientist</p> 			

DURING VIEWING: NOTEATCHER

	What was their initial understanding, observation or hypothesis about wildfires?	How did they increase their understanding of fires or test a hypothesis about fire management?	What conclusion did they reach about wildfires and/or fire management?
<p>Dr. Beverly Law Professor Emeritus, Global Change Biology</p> 			
<p>Jack Cohen Retired USFS Fire Lab Research Scientist</p> 			

AFTER VIEWING: RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Directions:

Respond to each question, referring to specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your interpretation.

1. Describe two factors that can contribute to the rapid spread of wildfires.

2. What are some flawed practices that have been used in wildfire prevention in the past?

3. What responsibility do you think the government should have in mitigating wildfires? What do you think the government can or should do to hold corporations or individuals accountable for preventing wildfires?

4. What is one thing you can do in your home or community to prepare for or reduce the risk of wildfires?



AFTER VIEWING: FOUR C'S

Directions:

Respond to each prompt in complete sentences, citing specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your response.

CONNECTIONS

What connections do you draw between the film and your own life or other learnings?

CHALLENGE

What ideas, positions, or assumptions do you want to challenge or debate in the film?

CONCEPTS

What key concepts or ideas do you think are important and worth holding on to from the film?

CHANGES

What changes in attitudes, thinking, or action are suggested by the film, either for you or others?

Adapted from Harvard Project Zero's Think Routine Toolbox:

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/resources/the-4-cs>

ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

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What is a film festival?

A film festival is an event in which multiple movies are presented over the course of one or several days. Depending on the size of the festival, all of the screenings may take place in a single theater or may involve multiple venues throughout a city. Festivals also include special events like panel discussions with filmmakers and actors. Typically, filmmakers submit their works to a festival, where a team of curators selects the best entries for inclusion in the festival. For independent and international filmmakers, festivals are often an important way to raise awareness of a film, generate an audience, and/or attract a studio to purchase the rights to distribute a film in a wider release. Acceptance into a major festival can add significant prestige to a film, with some festival awards (such as the Cannes Film Festival's Palme d'Or) considered among the highest honors a film can receive.

There are many film festivals through-

out the world, with some focusing on particular themes, such as highlighting LGBTQ films/filmmakers, specific cultural groups, or particular genres. While some of the more famous festivals may be in distant locations, there are hundreds of small festivals spread through every corner of the world and, increasingly, festivals are using streaming access to make it easier for the public to view their curated programs.

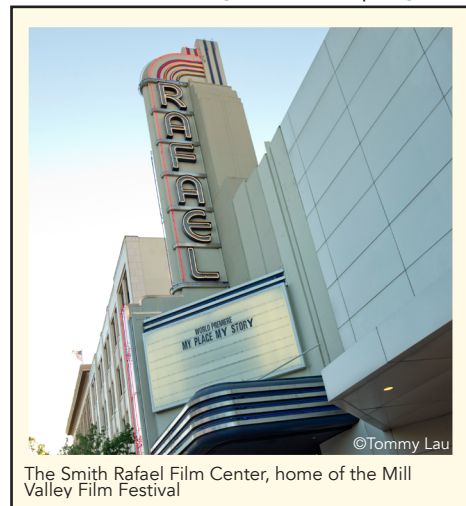
History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

Since founding the Mill Valley Film Festival in 1977, Executive Director Mark Fishkin has shepherded this once small, three-day showcase into an eleven-day, internationally acclaimed cinema event presenting a wide variety of new films from around the world in an engaged, community setting.

The festival has an impressive track record of launching new films and new filmmakers, and has earned a reputation as a filmmakers' festival

by celebrating the best in American independent and foreign films, alongside high-profile and prestigious award contenders. The relaxed and non-competitive atmosphere surrounding MVFF, gives filmmakers and audiences alike the opportunity to share their work and experiences in a collaborative and convivial setting.

Each year the festival welcomes more than 200 filmmakers, representing more than 50 countries. Screening sections include world cinema, US cinema, documentaries, family films, and shorts programs. Annual festival initiatives include Active Cinema, a forum for films that aim to engage audiences and transform ideas into action; Mind the Gap, a platform for inclusion and equity; and ¡Viva el Cine!, a showcase of Latin American and Spanish-language films. Festival guests also enjoy an exciting selection of Tributes, Spotlights and Galas throughout the program.



The Smith Rafael Film Center, home of the Mill Valley Film Festival

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Questions to Consider:

1. What is the purpose of a film festival? What are the benefits for filmmakers? For the audience? For the community?
2. How might the films at a festival differ from the films available to watch at your local movie theater?
3. What qualities do you think festival curators might look for in a film? If you are watching a festival film with a class/school group, what aspects of the film do you think made it appealing to the curators?

Get Involved!

Many film festivals, including the Mill Valley Film Festival, have student film categories. If you are a filmmaker, explore FilmFreeway (www.filmfreeway.com) for a database of worldwide film festivals where you can submit your film. The call for entries for MVFF opens in late February and closes in June. Youth filmmakers do not have to pay an entry fee. MVFF also offers many opportunities for volunteering. Find out more at <https://www.cafilm.org/volunteer/>.