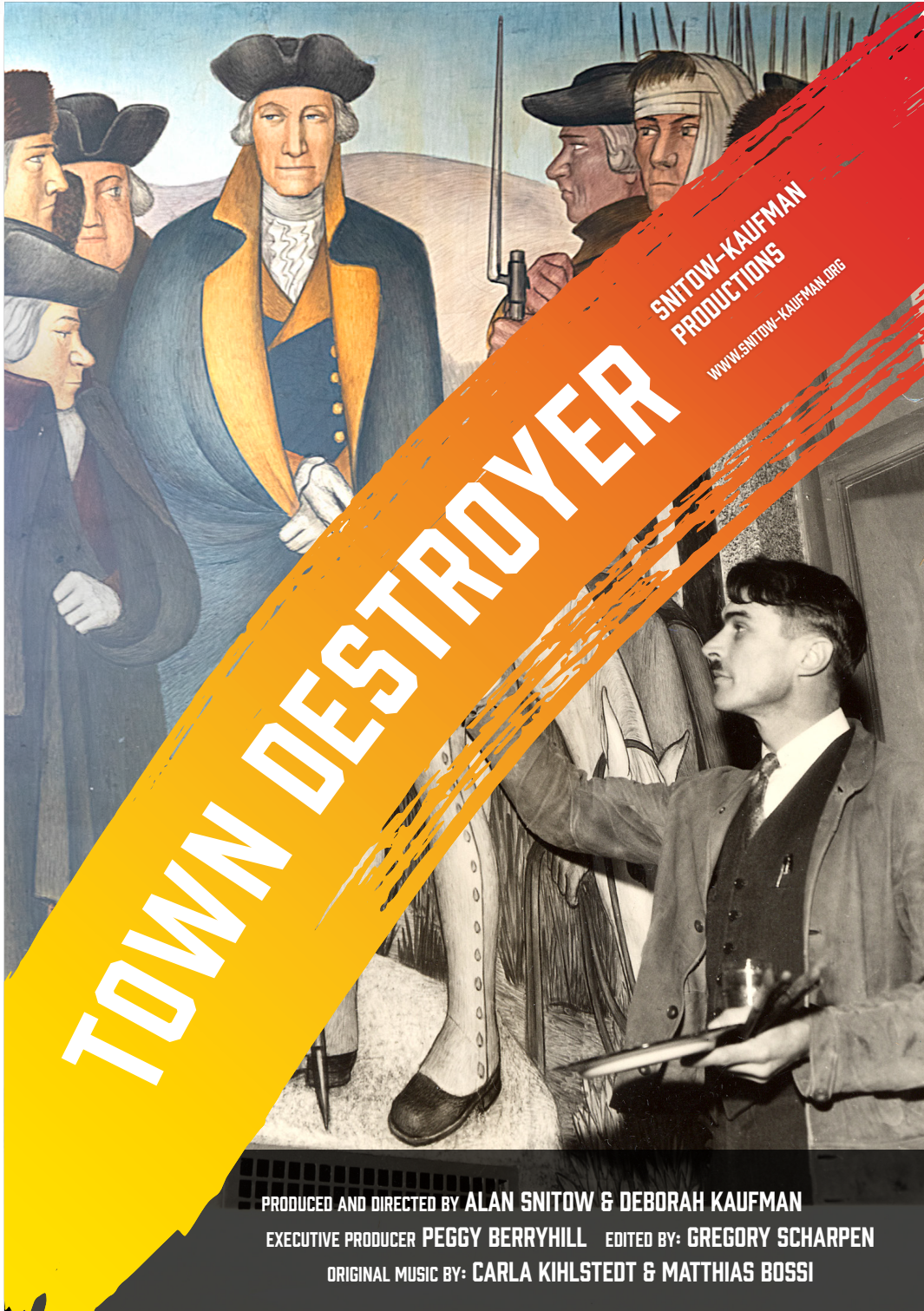


MVFF

EDUCATION GROW EXPLORE CONNECT DISCOVER

October 6-16



SNITOW-KAUFMAN
PRODUCTIONS
WWW.SNITOW-KAUFMAN.ORG

TOWN DESTROYER

PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY ALAN SNITOW & DEBORAH KAUFMAN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER PEGGY BERRYHILL EDITED BY: GREGORY SCHARPEN

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY: CARLA KIHLESTEDT & MATTHIAS BOSSI

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 *Town Destroyer*. 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 experience.

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. What is the significance of the film's title? Why do you think it was chosen? If you were to give this film another title, what would you title it?
8. Were there any voices or perspectives you thought you were missing from this film? If so, how might the inclusion of those perspectives have changed the film and its message?
9. How can we understand or treat the legacy of political leaders and pop culture icons who have contributed positively to history and culture, but have also been racist, owned slaves, or otherwise engaged in beliefs/actions we now recognize as wrong?
10. What might be the difference between Confederate and Pioneer monuments and murals like "The Life of Washington"? Does the intent of the artist make a difference?
11. How would you define trauma? Do controversial works of art need trigger warnings?

INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. Why did such a wide variety of people from different communities (including many not directly connected to the school) come to feel so personally invested in determining the fate of the Arnautoff mural?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

As the debate over Arnautoff's mural at Washington High School escalated, it received news coverage from media outlets around the world. The following articles provide additional perspective on the events explored in the film.

New York Times – Carol Pogash

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/11/arts/design/george-washington-murals-ugly-history-debated.html>

San Francisco Chronicle – Jill Tucker

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/School-board-faces-mural-dilemma-free-speech-or-14065213.php>

Boston Globe – Renee Loth

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2019/04/29/when-art-offends/xTBYeGIF1OPkSLa1WG-BQOO/story.html>

Harpers – Kenneth Baker

<https://harpers.org/archive/2019/11/whiteout/>

The Nation – Robin D. G. Kelley

<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/arnautoff-mural-life-washington/>

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  californiafilminstitute #MVFF45

ART QUOTATIONS

The following quotations are provided as a way to get students thinking about a central theme of the film: the purpose of art in society. There are many ways to incorporate these quotations, and these are just a few ideas:

- Pick one of the quotations you think most likely to spark debate with your students. Project it and have students discuss.
- Print out each quotation on a separate page and post them around your classroom. Have students participate in a "gallery walk" in which they circulate to each quotation and write response comments on each paper.
- Provide students with a copy of all the quotations and have them pick one quotation to respond to as a pre-viewing activity.

"Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it."
— Berthold Brecht

"The artist has one function: to affirm and glorify life."
— W. Edward Brown

"The purpose of art is to raise people to a higher level of awareness than they would otherwise attain on their own."
—Brassai

"The purpose of art is to lay bare the questions that have been concealed by the answers."
—James Baldwin

"What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist."
—Salman Rushdie

"The purpose of art is the fight for freedom."
—Ai Weiwei

"The final purpose of art is to intensify, even, if necessary, to exacerbate, the moral consciousness of people."
—Norman Mailer

"What I love in art is that it takes known combinations and reorders them in a way that sheds light on something that they have never seen before or allows to consider the world in a slightly different way."
—Kehinde Wiley

"This benefit of seeing...can come only if you pause a while, extricate yourself from the maddening mob of quick impressions ceaselessly battering our lives, and look thoughtfully at a quiet image... the viewer must be willing to pause, to look again, to meditate."
—Dorothea Lange

ART QUOTATIONS

“In the evolution of knowledge, mistaken and unnecessary beliefs are forced out and supplanted by truer and more necessary knowledge. So too in the evolution of feelings, which takes place by means of art. Lower feelings—less kind and less needed for the good of humanity—are forced out and replaced by kinder feelings which better serve us individually and collectively. This is the purpose of art.”

—Leo Tolstoy

“Art is the perpetual motion of illusion. The highest purpose of art is to inspire. What else can you do? What else can you do for any one but inspire them?”

—Bob Dylan

“The purpose of art actually is, in many cases, to make you feel quite uncomfortable. Or at least to go to that place that’s already of discomfort inside of you and tap into that.”

—Michael Moore

“The purpose of art is to represent the meaning of things. This represents the true reality, not external aspects.”

—Aristotle

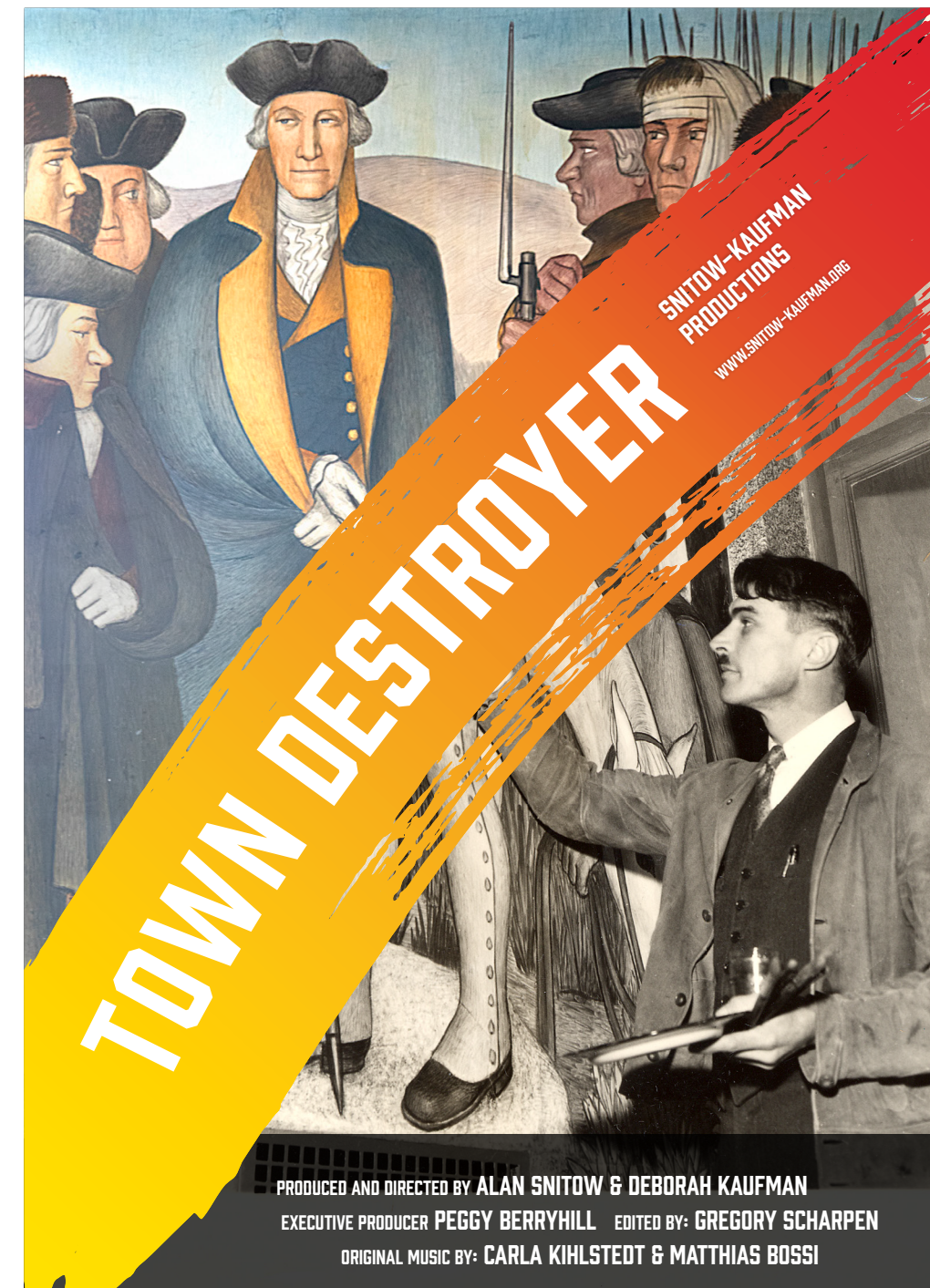
“Let children read whatever they want and then talk about it with them. If parents and kids can talk together, we won’t have as much censorship because we won’t have as much fear.”

—Judy Blume

“A maker’s role is to create some sense of instability so that you can ask the question why, who, what—you can’t do that making nice imagery.”

—Dewey Crumpler

Name: _____



ABOUT THE FILM

Town Destroyer explores the ways we look at art and history at a time of racial reckoning. The story focuses on a dispute over historic murals depicting the life of George Washington: slaveowner, general, land speculator, President, and a man Seneca leaders called “Town Destroyer” after he ordered their villages destroyed during the Revolutionary War. Heated debates spill into the community and make national headlines. The fight—taking place in the wake of battles over Confederate monuments across the U.S.—becomes a catalyst for a national discussion about censorship, reparations, generational trauma, the ways in which America’s history of genocide and slavery is taught and memorialized, and the differences between monuments built to further white supremacy and art that critiques racism.

ABOUT THE DIRECTORS

Deborah Kaufman & Alan Snitow

Deborah Kaufman and Alan Snitow's films include the award-winning *Company Town*, *Between Two Worlds*, *Thirst*, *Secrets of Silicon Valley*, and *Blacks and Jews*. Their films have been broadcast on PBS's POV, Independent Lens, and World. They have been used in classrooms, museums, and the U.S. Congress, and have been translated into 14 languages.



Prior to her work as a filmmaker, Kaufman founded, and for 13 years was Director of, the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, the first and largest independent Jewish film showcase in the world. Kaufman has been a Board member of the California Council for the Humanities and Amnesty International USA. She has been a consultant, programmer, lecturer, and activist with a variety of human rights and media arts organizations. Kaufman is a graduate of University of California College of the Law, San Francisco, a member of the California Bar, and a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Prior to his work as an independent filmmaker, Snitow was a producer at the top-rated KTVU-TV News, the Bay Area Fox affiliate, for 12 years. Before that, he was the News Director at Bay Area's Pacifica Radio station, KPFA-FM, winning the Corporation for Public Broadcasting Gold Award for Best Local Newscast. Snitow served on the boards of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters, Film Arts Foundation, California Media Collaborative, Food and Water Watch, and as Board President of the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival. He is a member of SAG-AFTRA and a graduate of Cornell University.

THE WORLD OF THE FILM

George Washington High School

The film takes place at George Washington High School, a public grade 9-12 high school in San Francisco, CA. The school was first established in 1936. It is located in the Richmond District of San Francisco, which is a primarily residential neighborhood in the northwestern part of the city. The city of San Francisco occupies the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary homeland of Ramaytush Ohlone peoples.

In the 2020-2021 school year, the school had a total enrollment of 2,069 students. The chart to the right shows the ethnic makeup of the school (as reported by families in the 2018-2019 school year). In the 2020-2021 year, 45% of Washington High's students were eligible to receive free or reduced lunch.

Enrollment by Ethnicity	2018-19
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.20%
Asian	56%
Black or African American	4.50%
Filipino	4.90%
Hispanic or Latino	17.80%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.40%
None Reported	4.50%
Two or More Races	2.30%
White	9.50%

Source: [http://www.ed-data.org/school/San-Francisco/San-Francisco-Unified/Washington-\(George\)-High](http://www.ed-data.org/school/San-Francisco/San-Francisco-Unified/Washington-(George)-High)

Questions to Consider:

1. What stands out as important or unusual in the filmmakers' backgrounds? How might their non-film experience influence the way they approach making a documentary film?
2. Analyze and consider the relative size of each ethnic group represented at Washington High. How do you think it might feel to be a student from each of these groups at this school?

BEFORE VIEWING:

JOURNAL ENTRY

Directions:

Respond to the following prompt in a short, personal journal reflection.

Art that deals with sex, religion and politics has been controversial for centuries. What are some controversial works from the past and what are other art controversies today? What have been responses to these works over the years?

Are there any art works that speak to you, but adults/other groups find controversial or offensive? How would you explain the differences in reactions?

DURING VIEWING: NOTEATCHER

Directions:

As you watch the film, pay attention to the various individuals and groups with a relationship to the Arnautoff mural. Fill out each box to keep track of the people and their opinions.

	What did you learn or notice about this person/group?	What are their beliefs and values (pertaining to the mural, art or society)?	What changes/solutions do they want to see in society or at the school?	How do they advocate for their position?
Viktor Arnautoff				
Dewey Crumpler				

DURING VIEWING: NOTEATCHER

	What did you learn or notice about this person/group?	What are their beliefs and values (pertaining to the mural, art or society)?	What changes/solutions do they want to see in society or at the school?	How do they advocate for their position?
Washington High Students				
Community Members who oppose the mural				
Community Members who support the mural				

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. What was Arnautoff's original intent when painting the mural? What changes in society led to the rejection of the mural by many groups?

2. Does the fact that this mural is in a public school (as opposed to another public space, like a park) change whether or not the mural should be preserved or covered? Why or why not?

3. After suffering trauma, both individuals and communities often require intentional action in order to heal. What actions might offer the community in this film healing and reconciliation?

4. If both sides in the mural debate have strong arguments, how would you resolve the conflict over the Arnautoff murals? Do you see a way to honor all sides and build consensus? Are there methods of conflict resolution that could be used in this situation?

5. If it were solely your decision, what would you do with the mural? Explain your reasoning.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: CONNECT WITH YOUR SCHOOL BOARD

Community members on both sides of the Arnautoff mural debate engaged in several direct actions that involved the school board. If you attend a public school, then the local school board likely makes many of the decisions that affect how your school is run. If your school is home to a controversial work of art, or if there are other issues of concern to you, then learning how to engage with your school board is one way for you and your peers to understand school governance and to voice your concerns to key decision-makers.

Here are two ways to engage directly with your school board at the grassroots level.

OPTION 1

Write a letter to your school board. School boards typically consist of multiple community members, and they don't necessarily get to spend lots of time interacting with students.

If you have a particular issue or need that you would like addressed—such as the representation, misrepresentation or lack of representation of groups in your school environment—writing a letter to the school board is a way to let decision makers know about the issues important to you, the students.

For example, you can discuss issues like school murals and art, or explain the need for a particular program or service that is not addressed at your school.

School board members' emails and other contact information should be available on your school district's website, or somebody in your school office can help you get that information.

OPTION 2

Attend a school board meeting. These are open to the public and you should be able to find information on where and when they are held at your school district's website or asking someone in your school office.

Usually, school board meetings follow specific codes of conduct and have agendas that include discussion of issues, hearing from the public, and voting on new policies

Write a short reflection on what was discussed and what you noticed about how decisions are made.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: A SCHOOL MURAL FOR TODAY

Though the fate of the Arnautoff mural at Washington High is still uncertain, one thing is clear: murals remain a potent way to provoke public discourse around important issues. Art is one way that you can have an impact on the opinions and perspective of other people in your community. In this activity, you will conceive of and create a prototype for a mural that you think would speak to an important issue relevant to audiences in your school or local community.

Directions:

1. Consider an issue of historical or contemporary significance that you think deserves to be memorialized through public art.
2. Pick a location at your school that has either a blank wall or a mural you consider in need of an update.
3. Brainstorm ideas for your mural: What imagery will you include? Will there be any quotations or other text in the mural?
4. Illustrate a mock-up of your mural on a piece of paper of similar dimensions (but a smaller size) than the wall you have picked out. Be creative and include as much detail as you would if it were full-sized.
5. Write a one-to-two paragraph Artist's Statement explaining the message and ideas behind the imagery.
6. Share your work! Even if you aren't able to actually create your mural at full size, you can still share your piece in the classroom or in youth art contests.



ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

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.

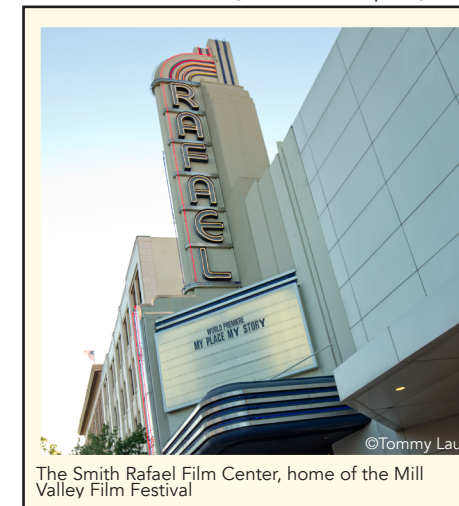
History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

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

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/>.