

KARINA FILMS PRESENTS

FINDING THE GOLD WITHIN

Curriculum and Learning Guide



What does it mean to be
young, black, male and dare
to step out of invisibility?

CURRICULAR ALIGNMENT

Arts
Civil Rights
Humanities
Social Studies

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FINDING THE GOLD WITHIN VIEWING GUIDE PRODUCED BY:
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Teaching the Film

Finding the Gold Within is a documentary that follows six African American young men who discover selfhood and share powerful personal narratives in their journey from adolescence to adulthood. At a moment when the long simmering problems of racial injustice are in the forefront of our national consciousness, *Finding the Gold Within* will challenge students to critically examine stereotypes of young men of color and the legacy of American inequality as lived by our youth. Taught in conjunction with this guide, the film provides an entry point to discuss contemporary racism, emotional maturity, and the support systems we rely on to build self esteem.

Keywords

Race
Stereotypes
Storytelling
Myth
Maturity
Support
Family
Young Adult
Success
Selfhood
Social Justice

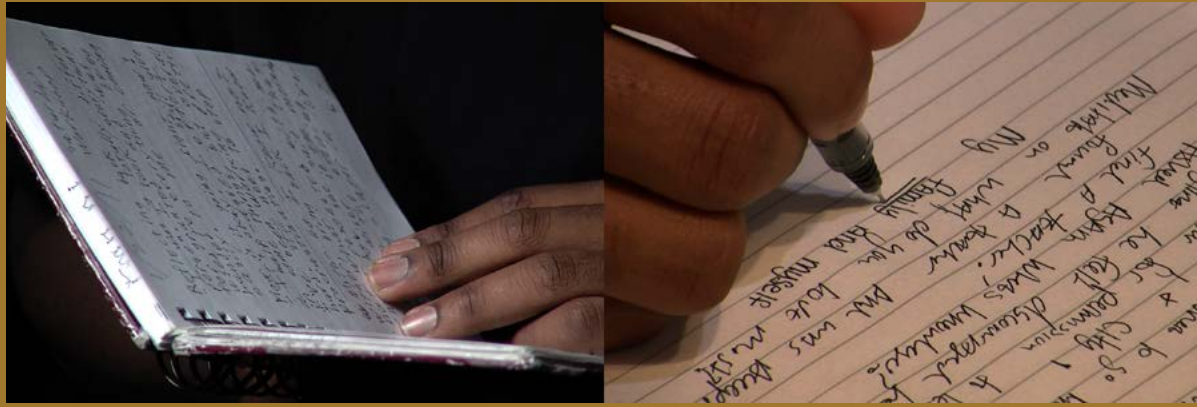
Karina Epperlein

92 minutes

In English, USA, 2014

About This Guide

This study guide is intended to flexibly support educators in preparing for and following up on a class screening of *Finding the Gold Within*. Support materials about the film are intended to facilitate group discussion, individual and collaborative creative exercise, subject-based learning and access to resources for further investigation of material. Educators are encouraged to adapt and abridge the content as necessary to meet their unique learning objectives and circumstances.



About the Film

Finding the Gold Within probes what it means to be young, black, male and “other.” This feature-length documentary follows six African American young men from Akron, Ohio for more than three years as they defy all stereotypes, thanks in part to the multi-year mentoring they receive from a local organization called Alchemy, Inc. Recipient of the 2012 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, Alchemy has been working in the Cleveland/Akron area since 2003, mentoring young black urban youth from middle through high school.

Exploring ancient stories from diverse cultures, as well as drumming and writing, this innovative program gives youth a chance to grow into self-knowledge, discipline, and confidence. They are taught to “follow the sage within their hearts.” In the intimate circle of Alchemy—which has been their “family” since sixth grade—they speak of their disappointments, despairs, trials, and triumphs with a disarming honesty. Through four to seven years of mentoring, they become equipped with self-confidence and critical thinking skills, ready to become the heroes within their own stories. Through the course of the film, the protagonists grow before our eyes, each of them hell-bent on disproving society’s stereotypes and low expectations. What will their paths and trials look like? How will they follow their dreams?

Preparation for Viewing

Finding the Gold Within is a film about the contemporary and ongoing struggle for racial equality in America, which can serve as a valuable complement to traditional Civil Rights Movement curricula. In preparation for a classroom screening, ask students to consider the goals of the Civil Rights Movement as presented in their history classes.

- Do you think the movement’s goals have been achieved?
- What is your assessment of race, equality and opportunity in modern America?
- What struggles and challenges does your generation face in working toward a more fair and equal America?

Have the goals of the Civil Rights Movement been achieved?

You may want to use these questions as a guideline for a free writing exercise and revisit them in discussion after viewing the film.



Post-Viewing Discussion

Characters and Story

1) Describe the young men that you met in this film.

- Who are they?
- What are their hopes and dreams?
- What challenges do they face in reaching their goals?
- Do you identify with any of these young men?
- If so, which one in what way do you relate to him?
- Do any of these young men remind you of people that you know in your school, at home and in your community? If so, please elaborate on this.

2) What challenges did each of them face as they moved from high school to college?

- Which challenges were universal and which were specific to being young men of color?
- How did these young men react when they faced adversity?
- What lessons did they learn about themselves?
- What role did mentorship and the Alchemy program play in guiding them through adversity?

3) Describe the Alchemy program.

- Who are the leaders and what are the goals of the organization?
- What kinds of support does it offer to the young

men in the group?

- Describe the use of myth and storytelling in the Alchemy program.
- What role do the myths play in the lives of these young men?
- How do storytelling, creative expression, and emotional openness become tools for achieving academic and personal success?
- Could you see yourself benefitting from a similar program? How?

How did these young men react when they faced adversity?

4) What new perspectives did you learn from **Finding the Gold Within**?

- Did the stories and viewpoints in the film reinforce experiences or knowledge that you already had?
- What did you learn from listening to these young men?

- Are there any anecdotes or moments in the film that particularly resonated with you?
- Do you have some good sense of the “gold” within you? Yourself as a hero?
- How do you deal with the external pressures (even if not racially related) that you experience, such as put downs or bullying from others?

Context

- 1) Compare **Finding the Gold Within** with other films about young black men.
- How were these characters like or unlike other young black men that you see in film or on TV?



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- In the film, the Alchemy group discusses the stereotype of the “typical black urban man.” What is that stereotype?
- How does that stereotype affect these young men’s sense of themselves?
- How does the existence of that stereotype affect the way that society treats these young men?
- How did the Alchemy program help them to reject and defy society’s categorizations?
- How do you think American culture can rid itself of harmful stereotypes?

2) What instances of racism did the young men in the film encounter?

- When did they experience overt racism and when did they experience microaggressions, or unintended acts of discrimination that fall within normal social behaviors? Can you list examples? Why is it important to recognize and call out microaggressions?
- Were there instances when the stakes were higher or the risks were greater for them because of their backgrounds and the color of their skin?
- How did they react to the racism they encountered?
- How did the training and support they received from Alchemy prepare them for these specific challenges?
- In the Alchemy reunion meeting, the group leaders expressed surprise at the persistence of racism among today’s youth. Were you surprised by the racism that you saw in this film?

3) How do the issues and themes addressed in **Finding the Gold Within** connect with contemporary protests and with the Black Lives Matter movement?

- Why is it important at this moment in our country’s history to say “Black Lives Matter”?
- Based on what you learned from **Finding the Gold Within**, what changes would you like to see implemented in this country to create true equality among all citizens?

- What action can you take to create meaningful change?
- As young people of all colors, what can you do to combat racism? How should you react when you encounter racism in the world?

4) In explaining his philosophy, Dr. Kwame Scruggs, the founder of Alchemy, says “Wounded people will continue to wound others until they are healed.” Explain this statement as it applies to the young men in the Alchemy program.

- Describe the healing process in the Alchemy program. In this

context, what does it mean to be wounded? What does it mean to heal?

- What is the connection between art and healing in this film? How does taking creative risks help these young men to discover themselves?
- What wounds can be cured by knowing who you are? In what ways is this healing process

What action can you take to create meaningful change?



specific to young black men, and in what ways is it universal to everyone growing up in modern America?

- Do you think that the statement about healing might apply in a broader way to American society? In what ways might our culture as a whole be wounded? How can we heal?

5) The young men featured in **Finding the Gold Within** defy many of the stereotypes of African American men, but they also defy stereotypes of men in general.

- What stereotypes exist that pressure men to act and interact with the world in a certain way?
- How are these stereotypes harmful to young men as they transition to adulthood?
- How can stereotypes of masculinity inhibit creativity and personal growth?
- What can we do as a culture to free men from stereotypes about how they should act and interact?
- As young men and women, how can you support your peers and your selves to break free from gender stereotypes?

Style and Message/ Reading for Media Literacy

- 1) What is the importance of storytelling in the Alchemy program? How does the retelling of a myth help the young men see through the challenges in their lives?
- What role do the mythological stories play in helping viewers to understand the personal stories of the

young men in the film?

- Do you see their stories through the context of the myths, as stories of struggle and discovery?
- Why does Alchemy choose to use myth, storytelling and drumming as a way to connect with these young men?
- Why do you think the Alchemy strategy has such a strong impact on these young men? Is it the stories? The circle? The safe space? The percussion? How do these elements combine to create the positive results that the program has achieved?

In what ways might our culture as a whole be wounded? How can we heal?

- How do you think this film would be different if it just included the young men's stories, without the drumming and the storytelling in Alchemy?

2) What strategies does the filmmaker use to help her audience identify with the young men in the film?

- How do the young men interact with the camera? How does the camera showcase their perspectives?
- Do you think you would be able to open up to the camera the way they have in this film?
- What kind of trust do the young men extend to the filmmaker?
- How do you think she gained their trust? What is her responsibility as a filmmaker now that she has gained their trust?

I, too, **sing** America

I am the darker **brother**

- Langston Hughes

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3) What is the core message of **Finding the Gold Within?**

- What themes emerge as you watch the film?
- How do the personal stories of the film's characters connect with current events and public policy?
- Why do you think the director chose to follow the Alchemy program and this particular group of young men? What message(s) is she trying to convey?
- Is the director successful with this film? Do you think that she successfully conveyed her message?
- What questions, thoughts, or ideas did this film raise for you? Were there moments that you found inspiring? Were there elements that you related to personally?

What themes emerge as you watch the film?





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Post-Viewing Exercises

Take Action for #BlackLivesMatter

Engage with the national movement to spread the word and bring change to your own community.

- Using materials in the Supplemental Resources section of this guide, write a short report on the Black Lives Matter movement and the work that young activists are doing to continue the civil rights struggle today. What is social justice? What are activists doing to define and promote social justice?
- Make a poster, a pamphlet or a web page to help educate young people in your community about Black Lives Matter and the ongoing struggle for equal rights.
- Join an action near you. Write about the experience or create a short video to share with your class.

Research Civil Rights in the 21st Century

Write a short essay analyzing the progress made by the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, and the challenges that remain in contemporary America. Use materials in the Supplemental Resources section of this guide to help your project.

- How do the goals of the Black Lives Matter movement compare with the goals of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement?
- What has changed and what remains the same?

Make Your Own Film

Create your own version of **Finding the Gold Within**. Working with peers and elders, create a short documentary that explores the challenges and achievements of young men and women in your own community.

- Identify the people whom you want to feature in your film, ask their permission, write interview questions and schedule your shoot.
- Film interviews and B-roll footage that paints a picture of your community.
- Edit your film and share it with your peers.

Analyze a Myth

Using the resources in your school library or on the Internet, locate a myth that you find meaningful. Write a short essay about what that myth means and how it can help you to understand and move through a challenge that you face in your own life.

Write a Poem

The characters in the film used poetry and music to release frustration and to move through the struggles in their lives. Drawing on their creative process for inspiration, tap into your own reserves of creative expression. Write a poem or a song about something that's happening in your life or an issue that is troubling your mind.

Engage with the national movement to spread the word and bring change to your community



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Supplemental Resources

Alchemy, Inc.

<http://alchemyinc.net/>

Finding the Gold Within, official website

<http://goldthefilm.com/>

Discussing Race in the Classroom:

Resources for teachers

KQED Blogs “How Can Teachers Address Race Issues In Class? Ask Students”

<http://blogs.kqed.org/mindshift/2014/04/how-can-teachers-address-race-issues-in-class-ask-students/>

University of Maryland: Tips for Teachers, Race in the Classroom

<http://www.odec.umd.edu/CD/FACILITI/RACETIPS.PDF>

NEA: “Talk About It” A guide to culturally responsive teaching, especially for white teachers with students of color.

<http://www.nea.org/home/14439.htm>

Framingham High School: “A Guide for Teachers Who Want to Discuss Issues of Race, But Don’t Know Where to Start”

<http://www.framingham.k12.ma.us/equity/Guideforteachers.pdf>

Resources to share with students:

Black Girl Dangerous: “Why We Need Mandatory Anti-Racist Education”

<http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/2014/10/need-mandatory-anti-racist-education/>

Franchesca Ramsey: “Five Tips for Being an Ally”

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/05/franchesca-ramsey-video-ally_n_6275680.html

Peggy McIntosh: “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack”

<https://www.isr.umich.edu/home/diversity/resources/white-privilege.pdf>

Black Lives Matter:

Ferguson Action Network

<http://fergusonaction.com/>

#Black Lives Matter

<http://blacklivesmatter.com/>



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Supplemental Resources cont.

Million Hoodies Movement for Justice

<http://www.mhoodies.org/>

Book: The New Jim Crow, by Michelle Alexander

<http://newjimcrow.com/>

On Masculinity and Stereotype: The Representation Project: The Mask You Live In

<http://therepresentationproject.org/films/the-mask-you-live-in/>

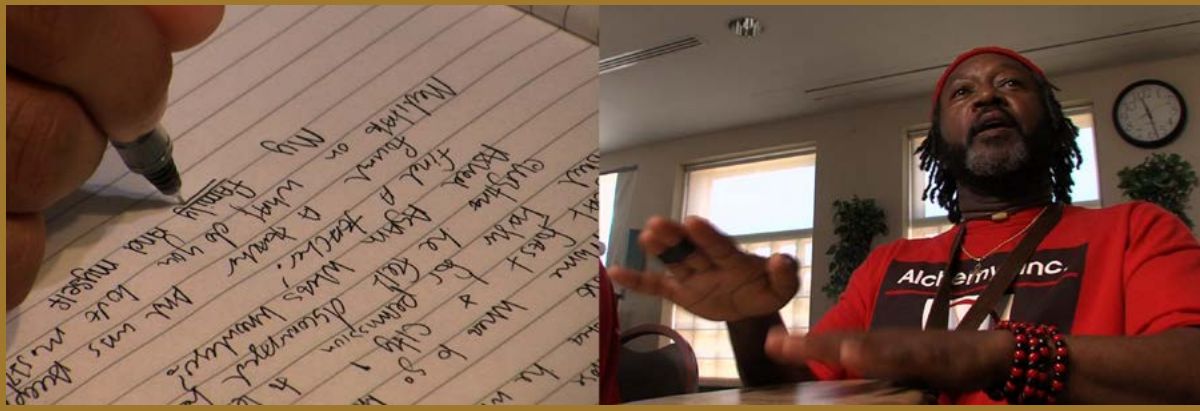
“Lost Voices”, a poem by Darius Simpson and Scout Bostley

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/22/when-a-black-man-and-a-white-woman-speak-for-each-other_n_7638530.html?utm_hp_ref=tw

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2zuNvcSAMc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpPASWInZIA>





Standards

California Media Literacy Standards Addressed In This Lesson:

Grade 8: Standard 1.9 Interpret and evaluate the various ways in which visual image makers (e.g., graphic artists, illustrators, news photographers) communicate information and affect impressions and opinions.

Grades 9 & 10: Standard 1.14 Identify the aesthetic effects of a media presentation and evaluate the techniques used to create them (e.g., compare Shakespeare's *Henry V* with Kenneth Branagh's 1990 film version).

Grades 9 & 10: Standard 1.2 Compare and contrast the ways in which media genres (e.g., televised news, news magazines, documentaries, online information) cover the same event.

Grades 11 & 12: Standard 1.1 Recognize strategies used by the media to inform, persuade, entertain, and transmit culture (e.g., advertisements; perpetuation of stereotypes; use of visual representations, special effects, language); Standard 1.3 Interpret and evaluate the various ways in which events are presented and information is communicated by visual image makers (e.g., graphic artists, documentary filmmakers, illustrators, news photographers).

For more information about media literacy standards in your state, visit:

MediaLiteracy.com: resources for advancing media education, United States Standards for media literacy education. <http://www.medialiteracy.com/standards.htm>

Frank W Baker's guide to State Standards Which Include Elements of Media Literacy. http://frankwbaker.com/state_lit.htm

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

SL, 9-10, 11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on [grade-appropriate] topics, text and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

W. 9-10, 11-12.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization and analysis of content.

W. 9-10, 11-12.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

W. 9-10, 11-12.5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

WHST. 9-10, 11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.



Media Literacy Resources

SCREENING WITH MEANING

Media literacy education empowers students to become responsible consumers, active citizens, and critical thinkers. In a world where technology mediates a large portion of human interaction and the exchange of information, the ability to parse the vast array of media messages is an essential skill for young people, particularly in a mainstream commercial culture that targets youth as a vulnerable, impressionable segment of the American marketplace. Most students already have some understanding of the languages different media use and the techniques they employ to inspire particular emotions or reactions, but they often lack the skill or awareness to fully deconstruct the messages they continuously receive. As not only consumers but also everyday creators of media, youth need to hone this skill now more than ever. Analysis of a media message—or any piece of mass media content—can best be accomplished by first identifying its principal characteristics:

- (1) Medium: the physical means by which it is contained and/or delivered
- (2) Author: the person(s) responsible for its creation and dissemination
- (3) Content: the information, emotions, values or ideas it conveys
- (4) Audience: the target audience to whom it is delivered
- (5) Purpose: the objectives of its authors and the effects of its dissemination

Students who can readily identify these five core characteristics will be equipped to understand the incentives at work behind media messages, as well as their potential consequences.

CORE CONCEPTS OF MEDIA ANALYSIS

MEDIUM	<p>All Media Is Constructed.</p> <p>How is the message delivered and in what format? What technologies are used to present the message? What visual and auditory elements are used? What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?</p>
AUTHOR	<p>All Media Is Constructed by Someone.</p> <p>Who is delivering the message? Who originally constructed the message? What expectations do you have of the content, given its author(s)?</p>
CONTENT	<p>All Media Is A Language.</p> <p>What is the subject of the media message? What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content? What tools does the author employ to engage the viewer and evoke a response? To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?</p>
AUDIENCE	<p>All Media Messages Reach an Audience.</p> <p>Who receives the message? For whom is the message intended? What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message? What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message? How might others perceive this message differently? Why?</p>
PURPOSE	<p>All Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason.</p> <p>Why was the message constructed? Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How? To what extent does the message achieve its purpose? What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?</p>



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The Nonfiction Film

WHAT IS A DOCUMENTARY?

A documentary is a film whose goal is to capture truth, fact, or reality as seen through the lens of the camera. But there are many kinds of documentaries, and not everyone's idea of truth is the same. The Scottish filmmaker John Grierson coined the term "documentary" in 1926 to describe American filmmaker Robert Flaherty's romanticized culture studies, but nonfiction filmmaking dates back to the earliest motion picture reels.

The definition of documentary expanded as filmmakers experimented with technology and the goals of nonfiction filmmaking. Avant-garde documentarians, like Dziga Vertov in the 1920s, believed that the mechanical eye of the camera gave a truer image of reality than the human eye and pointed his lens at newly industrialized cities. Leni Reifenstahl's propaganda films from Nazi Germany used the nonfiction form to convey a political message, a slanted truth. The international cinema vérité or observational movements of the 1960s attempted to remove authorship from the documentary. The observational filmmaker hovered like a "fly on the wall," watching the world without commentary or interviews. Many modern documentaries often seek to raise awareness about a social, environmental, or political issue, guiding their audiences toward civic participation and activism.

While watching a documentary, it is important to remember the core concepts of media analysis described above. The nonfiction format can be deceptively subjective, as all filmmaking involves an inherent selection process: in the images that are shot, the music and narration that accompanies them and, most significantly, the way in which they are all edited together. One important aspect of media literacy involves analyzing a documentary for its message and authorial intent in order to better understand its point of view and purpose.

A Brief Timeline of the Documentary

1895 The Lumiere brothers developed the first motion picture film reels, capturing brief, unedited clips of life around them called "actualities" (e.g., Train Arriving at the Station).

1900-1920 Travelogue or "Scenic" films became popular, showcasing exoticized images from around the globe.

1926 John Grierson coined the term "documentary" to describe Robert Flaherty's romantic nonfiction film *Moana*.

1929 Dziga Vertov, with the Soviet Kino-Pravda movement, released the experimental nonfiction film, *Man With a Movie Camera*.

1935 Leni Reifenstahl released *Triumph of the Will*, the infamous propaganda film that chronicled the 1934 Nazi Party Congress.

1939 John Grierson collaborated with the Canadian government to form the National Film Board of Canada, with the initial goal of creating Allied propaganda in support of the war.

1960s The cinema vérité movement began in Europe, shortly followed by "direct cinema" in the U.S. Portable cameras and sync sound allowed filmmakers to capture intimate footage with minimal intervention.

1988 The U.S. Congress mandated that the U.S. government support the creation of independent non-commercial media, and the Independent Television Service (ITVS) was founded.

2000s The widespread use of digital cameras and editing software made the documentary medium vastly more affordable to independent and amateur filmmakers. Video sharing sites such as YouTube and Vimeo allowed amateur filmmakers to broadcast their work.

Present Day The term "documentary" has come to encompass a wide range of nonfiction cinema. Contemporary filmmakers continue to push the boundaries of truth in film and to explore new avenues and applications for the medium.



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The Making of a Documentary

Idea, Issue, Story

Like narrative films, most modern documentaries structure their content around a traditional story arc, with a beginning, middle, and end; feature distinct characters and protagonists; and offer a conclusion, theme, or thesis to the audience. Documentary filmmakers begin their projects with an idea or an issue that they wish to explore more deeply, and through research and planning, develop a comprehensive plan before they begin shooting. Unless they are making a historical film, documentarians cannot ever control the trajectory of their stories or subjects over time, since they are capturing real-life events. As a result, many filmmakers may find their stories change or evolve in theme and focus over the course of production.

The Production Process

To capture candid moments on film, modern documentary makers often leave the camera running, collecting far more footage than the final film requires. They may do this during interviews or in observational-style encounters with their subjects. To get increased access and an observational aesthetic, documentary makers often use handheld cameras and natural light, rather than staging a more formal filming environment.

Post-Production and the Documentary

Because a documentary film gathers so much footage, a large part of the film's construction occurs in the editing room, where you work with what you've captured. For example, a documentary editor will sift through long interviews just to find a few phrases that will summarize the film's message. To

emphasize important points and build the story, some documentaries will use a voiceover, a scripted narrative that ties the footage together into a coherent statement. An original score complements the voiceover to unify the visuals and shape the mood of the film. Audiences often underestimate the power of sound to generate an emotional response. Many documentaries also use charts, graphs, animation, re-creations, and/or historical footage to add context, emphasize key points, or illustrate events they were unable to capture on camera.

Distribution

Once a film is completed, the filmmaker needs to help it find its audience. Many documentaries are made independently on small budgets, but what's the point of all your work if no one sees or hears your message? Some documentaries will be released in theaters around the country or get programmed on public or cable TV channels, but most documentary filmmakers will start by submitting their work to film festivals, in hopes of attracting distributors for the theater and television markets. Many filmmakers also make their films available through a variety of online distribution channels and use social media to reach their target audiences.