

CITY OF SAN JOSE'S Arts Express Program Presents:

Cinequest
Youthquest / Critics For A Day

Teacher Guide

Grades 4-6

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About the Arts Organization

Cinequest is a premier motion picture institute that produces the Cinequest Film Festival, a yearly showcase of over 200 independent films, many of which are U.S. or World premieres. The festival draws over 60,000 participants and viewers to downtown San Jose. In addition, Cinequest brings the festival to viewers around the world through their Cinequest Online program; produces its own DVD label to distribute independent films; honors emerging and established talent in independent film through the Maverick awards.

About the Program

"Critics for a Day" exposes students to a selection of independent short films submitted to the annual Cinequest Festival. During the program students will learn some of the basic film terminology, such as live action, animation, and editing, and frameworks for evaluating a film such as genre and performance. Selected students will have an opportunity to briefly share their reactions to the films.

Learning Objectives

Students will—

- Experience a variety of independent film genres and styles through viewing a series of short films;
- Be introduced to filmmaking on a very basic level;
- Acquire basic vocabulary for evaluating a film.

Historical and Cultural Context

A Brief History of Short Film

- The first short films were made in France and the United States during the 1890's. Lasting about 1 minute, these films were very popular and many were usually screened during a full-length show.
- By the early Twentieth century, film technology had advanced and filmmakers were able to make longer films. In addition, they had developed the technique to make drawings look like they were moving, leading to the first animated short films. Before the introduction of television, feature films were usually screened with a newsreel, or a short film about current events, and at least one live-action or animated short, all for one price.

- As television became more popular, short films were no longer shown in theatres, although they were broadcast on television during its early days. By the 1960's, shorts were no longer regularly seen on television or in movie theatres.
- Film festivals, which have been around since the early 1900's, started showing more and more short films in the 1960's. Film festivals became the venue for films that weren't made by the major movie studios, but by independent filmmakers who usually had less money than the large studios in Hollywood. Many independent filmmakers launched their careers making short films that played at various film festivals. Today, there are hundreds of film festivals held yearly around the world, as well as many websites that collect short films that people can download onto their computers.

Vocabulary—

Feature- A full length film running more than sixty minutes

Close Up- A Shot where the actor or prop fills the entire screen

Point of View shot- A camera shot where the camera is looking at what the character is seeing

Panning- The movement of a camera from side-to-side

Nickelodeons- The original movie theatres where films were shown for a nickel

Editing- The process of taking the individual camera shots and making them into a single story

Script- The written form of the story of the film

Prop- Anything used in a film that is not an actor.

Set- Where a film is made. Can be in-doors or outdoors.

Special Effect- anything requiring the replacement of 'real' footage including computer replacement.

Animation- A film which uses drawings to simulate movement of characters

Documentary- A film which is shot without actors capturing a real life event

Stunt- a risky part of a film. Can be as simple as someone falling off a chair or as big as someone jumping off a building.

Screenwriter- The writer of The Script

Director- the person in charge of the actors and interpreting the script

Cinematographer- The person in charge of the cameras and shot selection.

Genre- The type of movie, whether it's comedy, western, detective science fiction etc.

Preparation for the Program

1. Review the history of short film. Ask students to talk to their parents and grandparents about the movies they watched when they were young. Where did they see them: in a movie theater, drive in, community hall, or other public space? What were they about? What were their favorite movies and who were their favorite actors?
2. Ask students what their favorite films are and why. Ask which genres (comedy, drama, romance, sci fi, horror, animated) they are familiar with.

Curriculum Connections--CA Visual and Performing Arts Standards

Note: The California Visual and Performing Arts Standards were created based on the premise that each student is receiving comprehensive and sequential arts instruction in all four major arts disciplines. Since this is rarely the case, the following standards may not correspond to the grade levels served by the Arts Express program.

Artistic Perception

1.2 (Grade 6) Discuss works of art as to theme, genre, style, idea, and differences in media.

Historical and Cultural Context

3.1 (Grade 2) Explain how artists use their work to share experiences or communicate ideas.

Aesthetic Valuing

4.1 (Grade 5) Identify how selected principals of design are used in a work of art and how they affect personal responses to and evaluation of the work of art.

4.4 (Grade 2) Use appropriate vocabulary of art to describe the successful use of an element of art in a work of art.

Resources

Extensive timeline of milestones in the history of film: <http://www.filmsite.org/milestones.html>

Pre-history of cinema: <http://www.precinemahistory.net/introduction.htm>

Film Education Resources: <http://www.teachwithmovies.org/index.html>

Family Guide to Films: <http://movies.yahoo.com/mv/moviemom/>

Extending the Experience

Camp Cinequest is a hands-on, weeklong camp held in the summer for students that will provide an introduction to film technique and production. Working in small groups, students will learn how to make a 1-2 minute short film from the beginning stages to the final product. Camp counselors will assist in writing the script, shooting, casting, lighting, filming, recording sound, and editing. Professional filmmakers and Cinequest staff will serve as mentors to participants. Space is limited—for more information, visit www.cinequest.org.