

Using Documentaries In The Classroom

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KEY QUOTE:

“Documentary has a critical role to play in education. The rapid advances in media technology have forced educators like myself to rethink notions of literacy and adapt our curricula accordingly. If students are watching, listening, and producing even more than they are reading, we must ensure they have critical frameworks for analysis. We can use documentaries to raise questions around voice, truth, ethics, and a range of themes relevant to the shifting literacies of the 21st Century.” (Liz Miller, Concordia Univ, quoted in [POV Magazine](#))

INTRODUCTION:

This page is for teachers who may already use documentaries in instruction, or those who wish to begin using them in the classroom. Like all media, documentary producers have a point-of-view and it is up to the audience (our students) to be able to decipher it, deconstruct it and understand all of the techniques used which make docs believable.

Using docs in instruction can get your students thinking critically and help them better understand both “[media literacy](#)” and “[the language of film.](#)”

If you are not already familiar, you should read/download:

- the [core concepts of media literacy](#)
- the [critical thinking/viewing questions](#)
- more [questions](#) from the curriculum “Know TV”

Some questions for your students to consider:

- what is a documentary?
- who creates them and for what purposes?
- what are the steps/stages to getting docs written/produced?
- how are they distributed; where might you find them?
- how do docs differ from other films?
- what techniques are used in documentaries that may not be used elsewhere?
- who are the audiences for docs?
- where can you go to see them?