

## **Exploring Film Genres for Telling Hero Stories: Documentary Shorts**

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**Subject Area:** Art/Music, English/Language Arts, Social Science, Technology/Media Literacy, Other subject

**Grade Level:** 5-8, 9-12, college

### **Overview/Purpose:**

A documentary is a real story about a real hero.

### **Objectives:**

In making a short film, you want to think about your audience. People love stories, especially a story in which they care about the main character. Often what endears people to characters is watching them go through trials and tribulations.

How has your hero overcome obstacles and dealt with challenges in his/her life's journey?  
How has your hero achieved his/her goals?  
What makes your hero unique?  
What feeling do you want to leave the audience with at the end of the film?

### **Resources/Materials:**

### **Activities and Procedures:**

**In preparation for making your documentary short keep these simple guidelines in mind:**

You are documenting the STORY of someone's life.

What fascinates you about your hero?

Why this person?

How has this person inspired you?

Where will you shoot to best capture the world of your hero?

What part of his/her life are you most interested in? (Keep a narrow focus for a short film.)

**Begin with writing the SCRIPT - Keep it simple.**

Outline the main points you are interested in.

Research your subject.

Make a list of questions.

Structure the beginning, middle, and end.

Write, re-write, and re-write some more.  
Get feedback.

### **STRUCTURE:**

In structuring a documentary short, you can combine establishing shots, interviews, re-created scenes, montages and B-roll footage in a variety of ways to create an interesting story. Try to avoid the "talking head" problem of only shooting standard interviews.

Establishing shots are wide exteriors of the location to establish where the story takes place.

Interviews are the documentary standard. It is the best way to gather information. Choosing the background carefully and designing your shots will make them more interesting. ALWAYS use a good microphone for clear audio.

Re-created scenes are shot with actors re-creating a part of your hero's life. Some scenes have dialogue, some do not.

Montages are usually created by combining music and stills (or footage without dialogue) in sequences to help tell the story.

B-roll footage is filming the activities or environments in which your hero's journey takes place. For example, if your hero is a dancer, then footage of your hero dancing will make the interview more interesting when s/he talks about his/her experience of dance.

### **PRODUCTION RESOURCES FOR STUDENT FILMMAKERS:**

[How to Make a Short Film About Your Hero](#)

[Cinematographic Techniques for the Digital Filmmaker](#)

[Working With Images](#)

[Creating and Recording Sound](#)

### **OTHER LINKS:**

[Radified Screenwriting Guide](#) - A helpful link about screenwriting.

**This is your short film so be creative and have fun!**

**Assessment:**

1