

# Discovering the Arts

## Careers in Film

### Teacher's Guide



**Grade Level:** 9–12

**Curriculum Focus:** Performing Arts

**Lesson Duration:** Three class periods

## Program Description

From the directors and cinematographers behind the camera to the actors in front of it, students discover the spectrum of careers available in the film industry.

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## Onscreen Questions

- How does a Foley artist work with the editors and director of a film?
  - What are some of the challenges of wildlife filmmaking?
  - What are the responsibilities of a production designer?
  - What must an independent filmmaker do to make a movie?
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## Lesson Plan

### *Student Objectives*

- Describe the differences between an independent film and a film produced by a major studio.
- Research the life and work of an independent filmmaker.
- Create a visual display highlighting the selected independent filmmaker and his or her contribution to the development of independent films.

### *Materials*

- *Discovering the Arts: Careers in Film* video
- Computer with Internet access
- Newsprint and markers
- Paper and pencils
- Art supplies (as needed)

## Procedures

1. Introduce the topic by asking students to name their favorite movies. Begin a list on a sheet of newsprint, and add to the list throughout the lesson.
2. Ask students if they know the difference between films made by major studios and independent films. Help students understand that major studios tend to focus on “blockbuster” films, such as action films and thrillers. Independent films, however, may be made in a specialized genre, such as a wildlife film, or they may focus on topics that are controversial. Independent films are often produced on a limited budget.
3. Ask students to name some independent films. Explain to students that independent filmmakers have made significant contributions to the development of film. They have introduced topics not previously addressed in mainstream films. To familiarize students with the kinds of projects that independent filmmakers select, and the process they go through to make a film, have students watch the segment entitled “Behind the Scenes,” from *Discovering the Arts: Careers in Film*.
4. Tell students that they will learn more about independent filmmakers by selecting a filmmaker and researching his or her life and career. Based on their research, students will develop a visual display highlighting the filmmaker’s career. This display could take the form of a poster, a scrapbook, or a slideshow presentation.
5. Help students make a list of independent filmmakers to research. Give students time in class to work on their projects. As a starting point for their research, suggest that students visit the following Web sites:
  - <http://www.genordell.com/stores/lantern/indep.htm>
  - <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/insideindies/infocus/indie05/index.html>
  - <http://www.indiefilmpage.com/film.html>
  - <http://www.britannica.com/ebi/article-9275951>
6. During the next class, give students time to finish their projects. Then ask for volunteers to share their presentations with the class. Discuss similarities and differences among the filmmakers. What sets independent filmmakers apart from those working with major studios?
7. Conclude the lesson by revisiting the list of movies that the class made at the beginning of the lesson. Were any of the movies independent films? If so, what issues did these films address? How are they different from mainstream films? Do students have other independent films that they would like to add to the list?

## Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students showed a clear understanding of the differences between a major studio film and an independent film; completed an extensive amount of research on the life and work of an independent filmmaker; and prepared an accurate, highly creative visual display about their filmmaker.
- **2 points:** Students showed some understanding of the differences between a major studio film and an independent film; completed a satisfactory amount of research on the life and work of an independent filmmaker; and prepared an adequate visual display about their filmmaker.
- **1 point:** Students showed little understanding of the differences between a major studio film and an independent film; did not complete their research on the life and work of an independent filmmaker; and did not complete a visual display about their filmmaker.

## Vocabulary

### director

*Definition:* The person responsible for interpreting the film script, instructing the actors, and choosing set and costume designs

*Context:* The director has a vision of what the film should look like and conveys that vision to the cast.

### genre

*Definition:* An artistic endeavor characterized by a certain form, style, and content

*Context:* Movies in the action film genre usually feature a well-known actor, use special effects, and are designed to appeal to a wide audience.

### independent film

*Definition:* A film produced and distributed without the financial support of a major film studio

*Context:* Independent films are made with limited budgets.

### major movie studio

*Definition:* A studio that produces financially well-supported films for general audiences

*Context:* Traditionally, major movie studios have avoided controversial topics and have been reluctant to support unknown directors and new actors.

### **producer**

*Definition:* The person who approves the project, selects the script, hires the director, and handles the financial and business decisions necessary to complete the project

*Context:* The producer of an independent film works hard to make sure that the film is completed within a set budget.

## *Academic Standards*

### **Consortium of National Arts Education Associations**

The Consortium of National Arts Education Associations has developed national guidelines for what students should know and be able to do in the arts. To view the standards online, go to [artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards.cfm](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards.cfm).

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Analyzing, critiquing, and constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions
- Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the past and the present

### **The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)**

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
- Individual Development and Identity

### **Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Career Education: Arts and Communication: Aesthetic Experiences – Understands the principles, processes, and products associated with arts and communication media; Practice Creativity: Uses critical and creative thinking in various arts and communication settings
- Language Arts: Viewing – Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process, Gathers

and uses information for research purposes; Reading: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

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## DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

### *How to Use the DVD*

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

**Play Video** – This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

**Video Index** – Here the video is divided into sections indicated by video thumbnail icons; brief descriptions are noted for each one. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

**Curriculum Units** – These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. Total running times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

**Standards Link** – Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

**Teacher Resources** – This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

### *Video Index*

#### **I. Sound FX (9 min.)**

Watch a Foley artist at work, and examine the vast array of ordinary objects she uses to create authentic and extraordinary sound effects for film and television.

## **II. The Great Outdoors (10 min.)**

See what it takes to be a wildlife filmmaker, and discover that much of the work takes place in the editing room.

## **III. Moving Pictures (9 min.)**

Join an independent animator who works her way through the finishing touches of a film project.

## **IV. Making Magic (10 min.)**

Tag along with a set designer for a film, and get a rare inside look at this creative craft.

## **V. Behind the Scenes (9 min.)**

Meet the team behind the independent film company Five Sisters Productions, and learn what goes into producing an independent film.

## **Curriculum Units**

### **1. A Foley Artist's Job**

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: How would a movie be different without special sound effects?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: What is the job of a Foley artist?

A: A Foley artist adds or choreographs sounds to a motion picture, enhancing or rebuilding the sounds where necessary. Sometimes ordinary household items are used to create sound effects for film.

### **2. Sounds for a Scene**

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: Have you ever collaborated on a project?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: How does a Foley artist prepare for a scene?

A: Before recording the sounds, a Foley artist goes through props to choose those that will create the sounds. It is also necessary to prepare safety equipment for a scene, such as eye protectors and gloves for shattering glass.

### 3. Wildlife Filmmaker

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What special skills must a wildlife filmmaker possess?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: How much time does a wildlife filmmaker spend in the wild?

A: From start to finish, about 1 percent of a wildlife filmmaker's time is spent outside and 99 percent inside editing the film.

### 4. Shooting Wildlife Footage

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What passions might a wildlife filmmaker have?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: How does wildlife-filmmaking equipment differ from equipment for other types of films?

A: Wildlife filmmakers use smaller, lighter, and more diverse equipment because they move around and shoot where it is difficult to set up heavy film equipment. As seen in the video, Dan's camera is about 25 percent smaller than a camera for shooting television programs, and he relied on a lipstick camera to get the underground shots of the puffin.

### 5. Animating Movies

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What skills are necessary to produce animated films?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: How is animation defined in the video?

A: Animation is the illusion of creating movement, acting, and character from a still image.



## 6. Designing Sets

### *Pre-viewing question*

Q: Who might be the most important people on a movie set?

A: Answers will vary.

### *Post-viewing question*

Q: What factors contribute to the success of a production designer?

A: As seen in the video, the production designer's experience with architecture, art, illustration, and interior design, as well as his ability to work well with other members of the production team, contribute to his success.

## 7. Meeting Challenges on the Set

### *Pre-viewing question*

Q: What challenges might a production designer face on a movie set?

A: Answers will vary.

### *Post-viewing question*

Q: Do you have the skills and talent needed to work as a production designer?

A: Answers will vary.

## 8. Independent Productions

### *Pre-viewing question*

Q: What type of person do you prefer to work with?

A: Answers will vary.

### *Post-viewing question*

Q: What is the main difference between making an independent film and a film for a major studio?

A: Independent film producers do not have traditional financial sources or a distributor in advance.

A movie studio supplies that type of backing for a movie it produces.