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Dear Educators,

Thank you for attending the California Film Institute's DocLands screening of *Bad Press*.

We believe this film will be a powerful and engaging text to use in your classroom, and these curricular materials are designed to get students to engage deeply with film by the common-core aligned skills of developing an evidence-based interpretation of a text.

The discussion questions on the following page offer a variety of options for fostering small-group or whole-class dialogue. If your students are already familiar with a process of writing evidence-based interpretive essays, consider using the suggested essay prompt for a short writing piece. Additionally, individual handouts for before, during, and after viewing are provided as stand-alone activities to be used individually or in sequence.

Thank you so much for your tireless work!

Sincerely,

The CAFILM Education Team

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the central issues addressed in this documentary? What has changed between the start and the end?
2. What are some surprising facts you learned from this film? How do these facts shape your understanding of the central issue of the film?
3. Does this documentary feel objective and/or balanced in its presentation of the issues? Why or why not?
4. What did you see in this film that reminds you of other stories from your life or other stories you know?
5. Were there any perspectives relevant to the central issues of the documentary that were not included? How would those voices have changed the film?
6. What are some background details you noticed in this film? How do these details provide information about the time or place in which this film was made?
7. Consider other films you've seen. What makes this film unique or important? What are some connections between this film and other films?
8. What personality traits did you notice in the reporters at Mvskoke Media? How do you think these traits either helped or hindered their journalistic efforts?
9. How did the events in *Bad Press* remind you of broader issues of corruption and transparency in politics?
10. What can we learn from the events depicted in *Bad Press* about the importance of holding our elected officials accountable?

INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPT

1. *Bad Press* depicts a grassroots effort to preserve free press, transparency and accountability in a democratic society. Compare and contrast the experiences of the Mvskoke Media journalists to another figure you know from history, from your own life, or from a fictional story.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mvskoke Media

<https://www.mvskokemedia.com/>

Mvskoke Media aims to be the voice of the Mvskoke people by distributing information to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation through its newspaper, radio show, and video as well as graphic design and printing services.

The Muscogee Nation

<https://www.muscogeenation.com/>

Official website for the Muscogee Nation

Free Press

<https://www.freepress.net/>

A nonprofit organization committed to free press and independent access to media and information in order to transform democracy and hold leaders accountable.

STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2

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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. summary of the text.

ABOUT CAFILM

The nonprofit California Film Institute celebrates and promotes film as art and education through year-round programming at the independent Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center, presentation of the acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival and DocLands Documentary Film Festival, as well as cultivation of the next generation of filmmakers and audiences through CAFILM Education programs.

Follow the California Film Institute on social media



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ABOUT THE FILM

When the Muscogee Nation suddenly begins censoring its free press, a rogue reporter fights to expose her government's corruption in a historic battle that will have ramifications for all of Indian country. Rebecca Landsberry-Baker and Joe Peeler tell a nuanced, empowering tale of a modern Native community fighting for transparency and access to information in order to hold their government accountable.

ABOUT THE DIRECTORS: JOE PEELER and REBECCA LANDSBERRY-BAKER

Joe Peeler is a Sundance award-winning director and editor whose work has appeared on Netflix, HBO, FX, ESPN, Hulu, and CBS. Peeler began his career apprenticing under legendary director Peter Bogdanovich, and from there edited Lucy Walker's Academy Awards Shortlist documentary short *The Lion's Mouth Opens*, multiple episodes of the Netflix original series *Flint Town*, and Margaret Brown's SXSW premiere documentary short *The Black Belt*. Most recently, Peeler co-directed *Bad Press*, which premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and won the U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award for Freedom of Expression.



Rebecca Landsberry-Baker is an enrolled citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the executive director of the Native American Journalists Association. She is a recipient of the 2018 NCAIED "Native American 40 Under 40" award and was selected to the Harvard Shorenstein News Leaders Fall 2022 cohort. Landsberry-Baker made her directorial debut with the documentary feature film, *Bad Press*, which was supported by the Sundance Institute, Ford Foundation JustFilms, NBC, and the Gotham. *Bad Press* premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and received the U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award for Freedom of Expression.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why would a film have two directors? What might be some advantages and disadvantages of two people sharing this role? How might that decision relate to the themes of this specific film?
2. What different experiences do each of this film's directors bring to the production? How might their different backgrounds inform the style or content of the film?



BEFORE VIEWING: ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Directions:

Read each statement below. If you agree with the statement, explain why in the left-hand box under the Agree column. If you disagree, explain why in the box under the Disagree column. If you can see both sides of the issue, then explain your rationale for each side in the appropriate box.

AGREE

STATEMENT

DISAGREE

Newspapers and local press are an important source for news information.

Indian tribal governments should be required to follow the amendments of the US Constitution.

Today's media landscape ensures that everyone in America has reliable access to free press.

DURING VIEWING: TIMELINE NOTECATCHER

Directions:

Keep track of the key events, challenges, and milestones in Mvskoke Media's fight for press freedom. Describe the event briefly in a short phrase, and try to include the date. If the exact date is unclear, just estimate generally when it occurs in the overall timeline of events in the film.



AFTER VIEWING: RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Directions:

Respond to each question, referring to specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your interpretation.

1. What are the consequences of the National Council's decision to repeal the Free Press Act, and how do these consequences affect the reporters and the community?

2. How does the history of the Muscogee Nation impact the present-day struggle for press freedom?

3. What does the film depict about the process of investigative reporting, and what are some of the challenges that reporters face in this kind of work?

4. In what ways does *Bad Press* comment on larger political currents in the United States, beyond the Muscogee Nation?

5. Revisit your responses on the Anticipation Guide. Has your opinion on any statement changed? Explain what details from the movie either changed or affirmed your prior knowledge and beliefs.

AFTER VIEWING: FOUR C'S

Directions:

Respond to each prompt in complete sentences, citing specific scenes, events, and dialogue from the film as evidence for your response.

CONNECTIONS

What connections do you draw between the film and your own life or your other learning?

CHALLENGE

What ideas, positions, or assumptions do you want to challenge or debate in the film?

CONCEPTS

What key concepts or ideas do you think are important and worth holding on to from the film?

CHANGES

What changes in attitudes, thinking, or action are suggested by the film, either for you or others?

Adapted from Harvard Project Zero's Thinking Routine Toolbox:

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/resources/the-4-cs>

EXTENSION ACTIVITY: CITIZEN JOURNALISM

Directions:

Bad Press shows the importance of local, citizen journalism in ensuring accountability for leaders in localized communities. Engage in citizen journalism in your own community to better understand how your journalistic voice can support and uplift local democracy.

First, think about an issue that affects your community, such as corruption in local government or a social justice issue.

Then, research and investigate this topic either individually or in a group with your classmates. Start by using the internet and local news sources, but try to go deeper by conducting original interviews with local community members.

Once you have gathered your information, it's time to create your own news story or investigative report. You can present your findings in a written article, a video report, or a podcast episode. Remember to use the principles of truth and transparency highlighted in the film to make sure your report is accurate and unbiased.

To take this activity to the next level, consider attending a local school board or city council meeting and reporting on what you see and hear. This will give you real-life experience and help you understand the impact of responsible journalism in holding those in power accountable.

After you are finished, share the piece with your class, or consider submitting it to a news organization in your community.



ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

What is a film festival?

A film festival is an event in which multiple movies are presented over the course of one or several days. Depending on the size of the festival, all of the screenings may take place in a single theater or may involve multiple venues throughout a city. Festivals also include special events like panel discussions with filmmakers and actors. Typically, filmmakers submit their works to a festival, where a team of curators selects the best entries for inclusion in the festival. For independent and international filmmakers, festivals are often an important way to raise awareness of a film, generate an audience, and/or attract a studio to purchase the rights to distribute a film in a wider release. Acceptance into a major festival can add significant prestige to a film, with some festival awards (such as the Cannes Film Festival's Palme d'Or) considered among the highest honors a film can receive.

There are many film festivals through-

out the world, with some focusing on particular themes, such as highlighting LGBTQ films/filmmakers, specific cultural groups, or particular genres. While some of the more famous festivals may be in distant locations, there are hundreds of small festivals spread through every corner of the world and, increasingly, festivals are using streaming access to make it easier for the public to view their curated programs.

History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

Since founding the Mill Valley Film Festival in 1977, Executive Director Mark Fishkin has shepherded this once small, three-day showcase into an eleven-day, internationally acclaimed cinema event presenting a wide variety of new films from around the world in an engaged, community setting.

The festival has an impressive track record of launching new films and new filmmakers, and has earned a reputation as a filmmakers' festival

by celebrating the best in American independent and foreign films, alongside high-profile and prestigious award contenders. The relaxed and non-competitive atmosphere surrounding MVFF, gives filmmakers and audiences alike the opportunity to share their work and experiences in a collaborative and convivial setting.

Each year the festival welcomes more than 200 filmmakers, representing more than 50 countries. Screening sections include world cinema, US cinema, documentaries, family films, and shorts programs. Annual festival initiatives include Active Cinema, a forum for films that aim to engage audiences and transform ideas into action; Mind the Gap, a platform for inclusion and equity; and ¡Viva el Cine!, a showcase of Latin American and Spanish-language films.. Festival guests also enjoy an exciting selection of Tributes, Spotlights and Galas throughout the program.



The Smith Rafael Film Center, home of the Mill Valley Film Festival

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the purpose of a film festival? What are the benefits for filmmakers? For the audience? For the community?
2. How might the films at a festival differ from the films available to watch at your local movie theater?
3. What qualities do you think festival curators might look for in a film? If you are watching a festival film with a class/school group, what aspects of the film do you think made it appealing to the curators?

Get Involved!

Many film festivals, including the Mill Valley Film Festival, have student film categories. If you are a filmmaker, explore FilmFreeway (www.filmfreeway.com) for a database of worldwide film festivals where you can submit your film. The call for entries for MVFF opens in late February and closes in June. Youth filmmakers do not have to pay an entry fee. MVFF also offers many opportunities for volunteering. Find out more at <https://www.cafilm.org/volunteer/>.