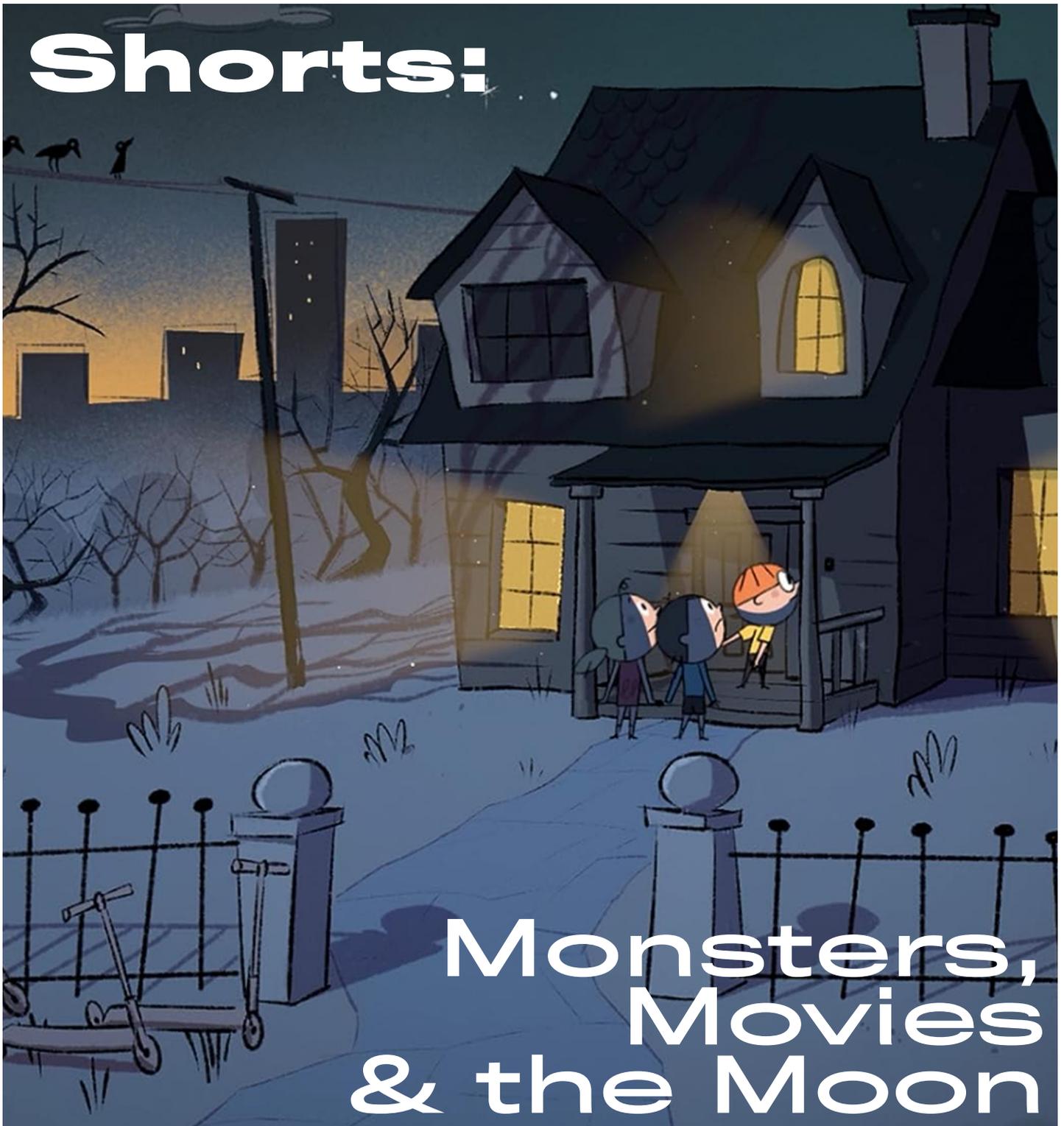


# MVFF EDUCATION

## Shorts:



# Monsters, Movies & the Moon

**CURRICULUM GUIDE**  
GRADES: 4-9

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Dear Educators,

Thank you for attending the 46th Annual Mill Valley Film Festival's screening of the shorts collection *Monsters, Movies & the Moon*.

This year, our MVFF Education film selections continue to focus on increasingly relevant issues of global empathy and active citizenship, and we believe the films will be fun and engaging texts to use in your classroom. 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 prompts for a short writing piece. Additionally, individual handouts for before and after viewing are provided as stand-alone activities to be used individually or in sequence, with a particular emphasis on social-emotional learning. We have also included a handout that provides some context for the film festival experience, which may help to introduce your screening experience.

Thank you so much for your tireless work!

Sincerely,

The CAFILM Education Team

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which film do you think had the most original story? What was the story? How did it provide a fresh perspective on its subject?
2. Which film do you think had the most unique visual style? How did the visual style enhance the story and make it original?
3. This collection of films pays tribute to some classic movies. What does “classic” mean to you? Which classic movies do you think are being referenced and celebrated in this collection of short films? What are the characteristics a movie needs to become a “classic”?
4. In filmmaking, a trope is any element of the story that’s shared with many other similar stories. What are some of the movie tropes you noticed in this collection of films? What other films have you seen that included similar tropes?
5. What connections can you make between the stories in these films? What are some of the universal themes these films have in common?
6. How or why is film an important medium for bringing stories to life? How is it a powerful tool for teaching us life lessons even while we’re being entertained?

## INTERPRETIVE ESSAY PROMPTS

1. Select one of the six films and analyze how crazy monsters, classic movies, or trips to the moon imparted important values and life lessons that we can connect to our own life and the world right now.

## 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



## STANDARDS

### Common Core State Standards ELA-Literacy

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3

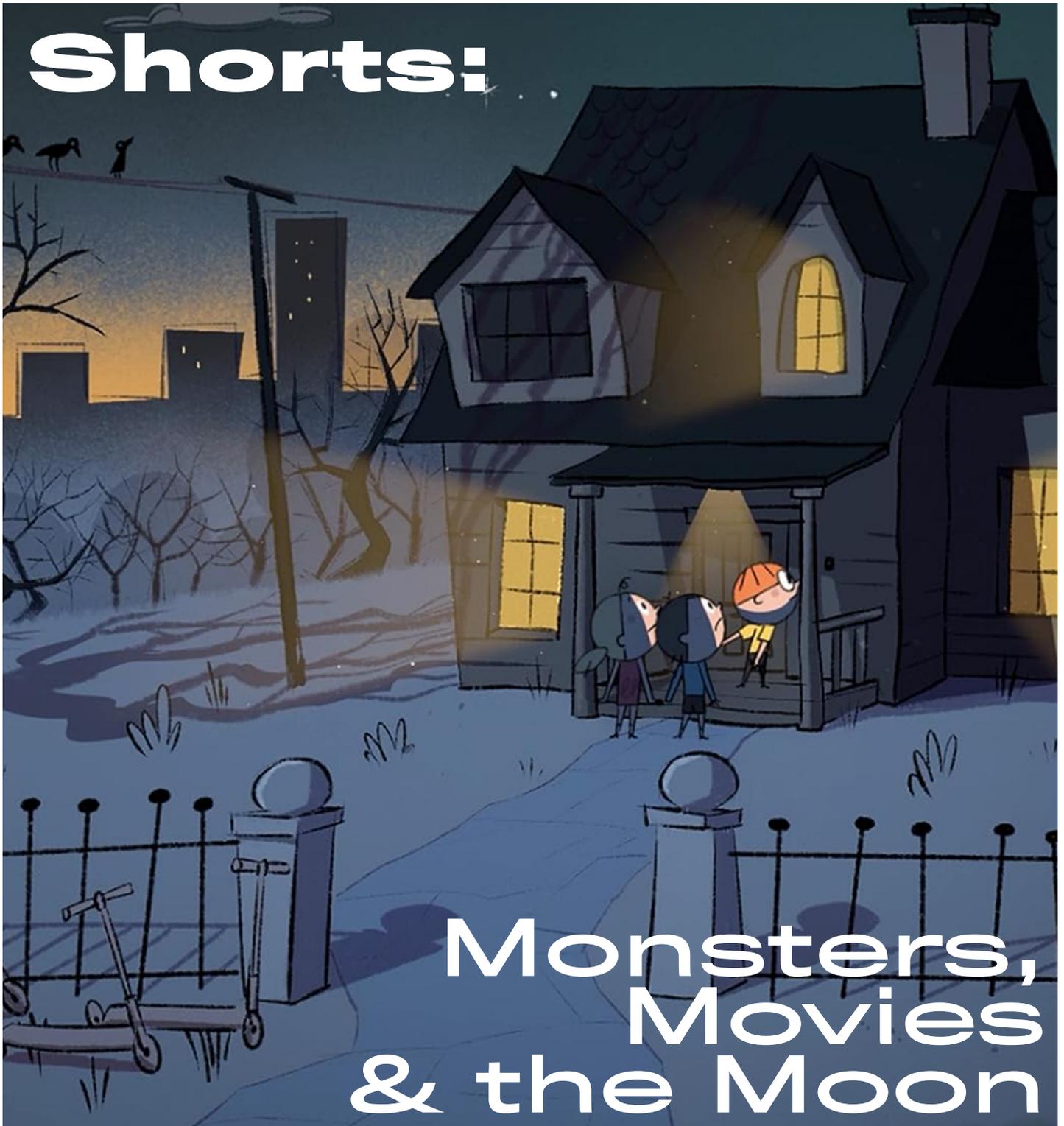
Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

#### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Shorts:



# Monsters, Movies & the Moon

## ABOUT THE FILMS

Take a wild ride from Oakland to Zimbabwe in this fun and fanciful collection of stories filled with crazy monsters, classic movies, and magical trips to the moon.

**Key Themes:** Animation, Black Culture, African Culture, Film History, Storytelling, SEL

## ABOUT THE FILMS

### **Weirdos**

Paul Hollingsworth | US 2023 | 6 min

Could Jasmine and her middle school frenemies be humanity's best chance at stopping a monster invasion?

### **Operation Frankenstein**

José María Fernández de Vega | Spain 2022 | 11 min

A trio of mischievous siblings discover part of a mannequin in a dumpster and see it as a perfect opportunity to build their very own Frankenstein monster.

*Note:* Operation Frankenstein is not included in the online screening of this program.

### **The Lake Merritt Monster**

Benjamin Mulholland | US 2022 | 16 min

When Ollie's mother is attacked by a monster hiding in the depths of Lake Merritt, he sets out on a mission to find her—discovering instead a hidden network of monster hunters tasked with protecting Oakland from its own dark underbelly.

### **A Life in Technicolor**

Alex Ramirez | US 2022 | 19 min

Alone in her apartment during the pandemic, Natalie turns to her favorite classic movies to keep her company. When her life in color gradually begins to turn to black-and-white, she takes a magical tour through film history, recreating a dazzling array of classic movie scenes.

### **Gugu naGogo**

Taku Mbudzi | Australia 2022 | 20 min

When a lunar eclipse interferes with their magical late-night letter exchanges, 12-year-old aspiring astronomer Gugu must find a new way to reconnect with her beloved grandmother in Zimbabwe.

### **New Moon**

Jeff Le Bars & Jérémie Balais | US 2022 | 11 min

Young Jay Jay and his mother Edie enjoy a warm summer night listening to the sounds of Aretha Franklin from the radio under the light of the new moon. Together, they embark on a magical journey to rediscover lost dreams and nurture new hopes.

# BEFORE VIEWING SEE, THINK, WONDER

## Directions:

Before watching the films in this collection, take a look at images from the six films. Make some observations and thoughtful interpretations about what you see, what you think, and what you are wondering about before viewing.



SEE What observations can you make by looking at these images?	THINK What thoughtful interpretations can you make by looking at these images?	WONDER What are you curious about?

# DURING VIEWING NOTEATCHER

**Directions:**

Use this notecatcher to keep track of the films you will see so you will be able to dig a little deeper later with some interpretive analysis work. After each film, write a one-sentence summary of the story in your own words. Then, use six words to record your personal review of the film.

Title	Director(s)	One Sentence Summary	Six Word Review
Weirdos	Paul Hollingsworth		
Operation Frankenstein	Jose Maria Fernandez de Vega		
The Lake Merritt Monster	Benjamin Mulholland		

# DURING VIEWING NOTECATCHER

Title	Director(s)	One Sentence Summary	Six Word Review
A Life in Technicolor	Alex Ramirez		
Gugu naGogo	Taku Mbudzi		
New Moon	Jeff Le Bars & Jeremie Balais		

# AFTER VIEWING LIFE LESSONS

## Directions:

Besides being entertaining, film is a powerful medium that can teach us valuable life lessons. Film-makers use this engaging medium to entertain us with stories that impart values and wisdom that we can connect to our own life or the world right now.

1. Identify a life lesson you learned from one of the films in this collection of shorts.
2. Use specific details and examples from the film to show which film taught you this life lesson and how.
3. Reflect on how the lesson you identified connects to your own life and the value it has in the world right now.

Life Lesson	Which film taught you this? How?

How does this lesson connect to your own life? This could be something from your past, the present, or something you're thinking about for your future.

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What value does this lesson have in the world right now? This could be something everyone could learn and apply to their everyday lives.

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# 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. Of all the films featured in the program, which one was your personal favorite? Why?

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2. Which of the three monster shorts, *Weirdos*, *Operation Frankenstein*, or *The Lake Merritt Monster* did you find the most impactful? In your opinion, which of these monster films had a greater symbolic significance or social meaning that made it more impactful?

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3. Which of the two moon shorts, *Gugu naGogo* or *New Moon*, did you most connect with? Which of these films reminded you of something from your own life? How or why?

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4. In *A Life in Technicolor*, Natalie turns to her favorite classic movies to keep her company. Which scenes from classic movies did you recognize? Which scenes were you curious about? What movies do you like to rewatch? Why?

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5. Which of these films would you like to see a sequel to? In other words, which of the stories should be continued? How?

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# DISCUSSION NOTECATCHER

**Directions:** Use this notecatcher to record what you take away from discussing the films.

Ideas I Heard During Discussion	Mind-Pop Ideas Ideas that came to my mind during discussion.
	One Important Thing I Learned During Discussion

# EXTENSION ACTIVITY

## FILM REVIEW

### Directions:

After watching all the films in this collection of shorts, select one and write a review of the film. Use the graphic organizer to include all the details you remember from the film. Then, put it all together in one-page of writing.

Film Title & Director:	Genre:
Characters:	Setting:
Plot (6-8 Sentence Summary):	My Favorite Part:
Central Theme or Lesson Learned:	
Film Rating and Recommendation: Would you recommend this film to a friend? Why or why not?	



# ABOUT FILM FESTIVALS



An opening night screening at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

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## 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.

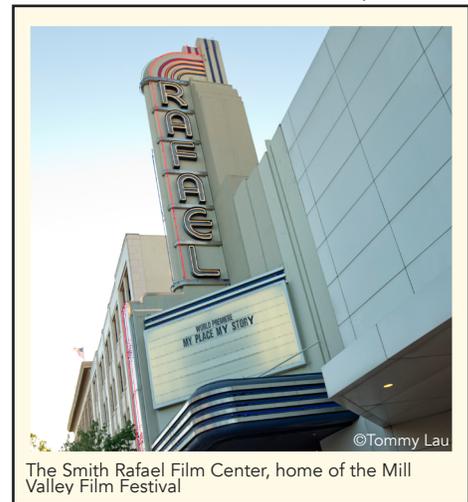
## History of the Mill Valley Film Festival

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

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## 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](http://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/>.