

M3 Adding your voice to the issue


(Module 3: Making documentary films that matter)

Activites

1. Finding the story
 2. Pre-production.
 3. The Shoot.
 4. Post-production.
 5. Film festival
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It is recommended that students have undertaken the activities in **Module 1: Understanding youth homelessness** in preparation for the activities in this module. With this introduction to the issue of youth homelessness, each group will now create a documentary, short film or photo essay to raise awareness in their local community of issues surrounding youth homelessness.

Module 2: Act Now – Making change and taking action provides a step-by-step process of taking action on social issues that also supports the development and distribution of students' films as awareness raising campaigns.



A1

Activity One

Finding the story



Divide students into small groups. The groups may already have been formed as part of the activities in Module 2.

Ask groups to **brainstorm** a list of three to four sub topics or issues that they wish to explore in relation to youth homelessness through their documentary, short film or photo essay.

Groups can use one or more of the following questions as a guide to generate ideas for their production.

- What are the underlying causes of youth homelessness?
- What are the direct and indirect effects of youth homelessness on the individual, the community, the country?
- What is being done to help bring youth homelessness to the public's attention?
- What is being done to aid those who are negatively impacted by youth homelessness?
- Why does this topic interest us?
- What is unique about our points of view on this topic as adolescents?
- What changes would we like to see in the way people confront youth homelessness?
- If you were going to make a documentary about youth homelessness, what would you focus on and why?
- Which perspective do you think is more accurate — an adult's or a young person's? Why?
- What can a young person's perspective reveal that an adult's might not?

- Who is the audience for your production and what are the key messages that you want them to get from your film, story, photo essay?



Distribute copies of the **Documentary film making student workbook (Section 3, Appendix 3)** to students to support the following activities and preparation of their production.

Ask groups to complete the **synopsis** of what their documentary, short film or photo essay will be about in the template provided in their **Documentary film making student workbook**.



The synopsis should include:

- a working title for their production
- the type of production they will develop – e.g. photo essay, documentary, short film, a paragraph describing the message, story or information that will be conveyed in the production.

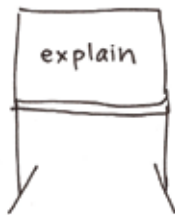
A2

Activity Two

Pre-production

Step 1

Treatments



Explain to students that they are now going to think about their production in greater detail. They will start to **explore** the story or message in more depth and will also start to look at the **Who, What, When** and **Where** of the story.



Direct students to the DIY Doco website (http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/learning/diydoco/s2s_dev_treatment.htm) and ask students to complete Activity 1 and Activity 2 exploring different treatment options for documentaries.

Although this site is primarily focused on documentaries this activity can be used for short films and photo essays also.

Groups should use the following questions as guidelines to develop the treatment for their production:

- Which people involved in this situation might help shed light on the topic?
- What locations should be the focus of the production? (Consider time and cost restraints, as well as issues of privacy, such as will it be possible, safe, and legal to film?)
- Who should be the “star/s” of the production? (This could be a student in the group, or another child or young adult)



- What techniques will be used to capture both the reality of the situation and the way it is perceived by a young adult?
- Once groups have completed typing up their treatment in Activity 2 of the DIY Doco website they can print it out and maintain as a reference as they complete the following activities.

Step 2

Storyboarding



Explain to groups that the next step in the pre-production process is storyboarding. **Explain** that storyboarding is a two dimensional plan of the final production. During this step groups create a working outline for their productions that includes the timing of their production

(e.g. what is going to happen when) and the interaction of their visual assets with their audio assets (e.g. how do your images and video footage interact with the voiceover and music?)

Instruct groups that they should plan for their productions to be no more than 3 minutes long.

Provide each group with a piece of large cardboard and ask groups to rule 5 or 6 rows horizontally across the cardboard. Alternatively, you could provide each group with an enlarged version of the storyboarding template from the **Documentary film making student workbook** and a packet of Post-it notes.

Ask groups to write down their ideas for video footage and images that they plan to use. Each of these individual ideas needs to be transferred onto a separate Post-it note which includes a name for the footage and a phrase describing what it entails.



Instruct groups to develop their script and time how long the script will take to play through. Remind groups that their production should be no longer than 3 minutes. Transfer the script onto individual **Post-Its** by writing approximately 5-10 seconds worth of script onto a single Post-It note.

Using the sheet of cardboard or Storyboarding template place the corresponding video and image Post-It notes in order above the appropriate script Post-It notes.

Using the Post-its will allow groups to move things around or take them out as the story starts to come together.

Ask each group to share their storyboard with another group and students provide feedback and ideas about the proposed production.

A3

Activity Three

The Shoot

The length of this activity will be dependent on the type of footage groups need for their productions. If time permits allow students to set up a formal shoot during the lesson where they identify locations, organise actors and other logistics.

For more information about setting up a shoot and detailed information in regards to using video cameras, sound equipment and other logistics, check out the School Torque website at www.schooltorque.com.au.



The **Documentary film making student workbook** contains some detailed information about filming and photographing images. Ensure that students understand the need to get release forms and permission from all people who appear in the footage. Further information about this is contained on page 113.

Figure 8 below provides some general tips that you can use as a summary.

Figure '8' : General rules for shooting

The most basic rule is to think carefully about your shot. What do you want to include in the frame? Don't include anything that is not relevant to the purpose of your shot.

- Decide what you are going to shoot before you press 'record'.
- Explore your subject, the light, the background and the angle, to obtain the optimum shot. Then press 'record'.
- Start recording before the scene or action starts and keep recording for at least 5 seconds at the end of the shot. This helps greatly in editing.

- Ensure that each take is at least 10 seconds long.
- Steady yourself against the wobbles. Where possible use a tripod or otherwise adopt a steady stance, brace yourself on a tree, against a pole or wall.
- Don't overdo the use of the zoom control.
- Steady the shot by widening the lens angle on the zoom control where appropriate.
- Beware shooting against a bright background, as it will silhouette your foreground, (unless that is what you are after)

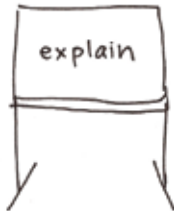


Provide time for groups to collect original footage (video or still photos) and collate or create music, sounds and voiceovers.

A4

Activity Four

Post – production



Explain to groups that now that they have collected all of the audio and visual assets for their production it is time to pull them all together into the final product.

Explain to students that post-production is the process of combining the audio and visual assets of the production and mixing these elements using transitions, music, sounds and colour to create the effect wanted for the final production.



Direct students to the DIY Doco website to explore post-production techniques and mixing elements further. (http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/learning/diydoco/s2s_post_mixing.htm).

Ask students to work through the **Mixing Elements activity** to explore how transitions, music, sound and colours can be used to create the mood and message of the final production.

Show students a range of different ways of producing a short film, documentary or photo essay. The following examples are accessible online:

Documentary - THE OASIS short films

http://www.theoasismovie.com.au/short_films/shortFilms_char/_char.php

Photo essay – ActNow

– Australian Homelessness

http://www.actnow.com.au/Multimedia/Australian_Homelessness.aspx

Short film – Seeing

<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/play/1640>
Seeing

Ask groups to **identify techniques** that are used in each of these examples that create mood and portray messages effectively.



Provide groups with access to digital editing software and equipment in order to create their final product.

Direct students to the following sites to view online tutorials about how to use the most popular video editing software programs:

Windows Movie Maker tutorial

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZXK68NS7gU>

Adobe Premiere, Final Cut Pro, Pinnacle Studio tutorials

<http://www.animationsforvideo.com/html/tutorials.htm>

iMovie 09

<http://www.apple.com/ilife/imovie/>

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Activity Five



Film festival

Once groups have finalised their films, set up a **“Film Festival”** lesson to premiere all of the productions. Ask each group to introduce their production prior to the viewing providing an overview of the story or message they are portraying and some of the techniques they have used to develop their production.

THE OASIS website has information about “How to Host a Screening” which provides ideas that will support you to set up your Film Festival at <http://www.theoasismovie.com.au/education/commScreenings/organise.php>.