

Lesson Blueprints: Documentary Analysis

Lesson Title: Documentary Interview Elements 1:3

Grade Level: Middle and High School

Note: Teachers should save all worksheets as they will be used in subsequent lessons.

Essential Question:

What are the elements of a good interview in a documentary film? Why?

Materials:

- Documentary Production Vocabulary (slide/handout)
- Documentary Viewing worksheet: Elements of an Interview
- Pens/pencils
- Means to watch CWK video “Peer Pressure” (This can be found in the Video Shorts section of the Character and Life Skills bucket.)

Note: The questions and answer sheets in this lesson are based on this documentary; however, teachers may substitute any of the CWK documentaries and create their own questions.

Teacher:

1. Begin a discussion by asking: What is a documentary? Possible answers might include:
 - Film, television show, radio show, or video about something that actually happened
 - A show that is real, not fictional
 - A show that gets people to talk about things
 - News

Tell students that it is important to note that when we document something, we create evidence of or prove something through writing, photographs, recordings, video, film, locations, etc.

2. Brainstorm documentary topics related to their school and ask which ones they think would be most interesting. Why?
3. Tell students they are going to watch a very brief Connect With Kids documentary called “Peer Pressure” two times. During their first viewing they should concentrate on the story being told during the interview with the subject. Share the documentary description: Albeth’s story can help students understand the influences their friends can have – both good and bad--and the importance of the choices they make.
4. After viewing, discuss Albeth’s story. Discussion questions and self-reflection questions might include:
 - Why did Albeth wind up in juvenile hall?
 - Why did he go back to school? What are his new goals?
 - What is his advice about friends?
 - How do your friends support and encourage you?
 - How do you deal with a friend who tries to pressure you into dangerous or risky activities?
 - How are your peers a positive influence in your life?

5. Next have students think of Albeth's story as the interview section of this documentary.
 - What was the topic and focus of this interview?
 - Why was Albeth chosen to be interviewed for this documentary?
 - How did the interview keep us engaged and interested?
 - What are we supposed to learn from this documentary interview?
 - What else you would have asked Albeth?
6. Distribute the Documentary Viewing Worksheet and/or mount the slide of the Documentary Production Vocabulary and briefly discuss the new vocabulary.
 - **footage:** When you record anything to video, the material is called "footage." It is a throwback to the days before digital recording when "film" was the standard media used for documentaries.
 - **interview:** An interview is a meeting or conversation in which a reporter asks one or more persons questions about a specific topic.
 - **subject:** In this case, the subject is the person being interviewed
 - **B-roll footage:** "B-roll" footage is the video that supports whatever is talked about in an interview or material that supports the story.
7. While watching the documentary the second time, have students look for elements of production as charted on the worksheet. Tell students to use the worksheet to take notes.
8. After watching, ask students to share their observations. Ask the students whom they thought Albeth might have been talking to in the interview. Why don't we see the interviewer? Why don't we hear the questions? (**Possible answers:** *Albeth is the main focus so we don't need to see the interviewer; the questions are only important to get Albeth to tell a story.*)
9. Brainstorm a list of questions students think the interviewer asked Albeth to get him to talk about his experience. Write the list on the board.
10. Have students form groups of two or three people to form an interview team. On the back of their worksheets, each group will write two or three ideas for an original documentary interview about something that is happening or is an issue at their school.
11. Next, they should list at least one person or the title of a person in their class or in their school they could interview who would have an interesting story or view on their selected topic.
12. Finally, student groups should create at least three (3) questions to ask their subject in the interview. Students should save their work (consider collecting or use classroom system for saving classwork).

Conclusion:

Finish by asking students: In your opinion, what is the most important part of a documentary interview? Why?

Documentary Viewing: Elements of an Interview

Student: _____

Documentary Production Vocabulary:

- **footage:** When you record to video, the material captured is called “footage.”
- **interview:** An interview is a meeting or conversation in which a reporter asks one or more persons questions about a specific topic
- **subject:** In a video interview, the subject is the person being interviewed
- **B-roll:** “B-roll” is the video that supports whatever is talked about in an interview or material that supports the story visually.

While watching the documentary video a second time, take notes in the chart below. You will use these notes in discussion and in subsequent lessons.

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|---|--|
| <i>How much of the subject do you see? Describe the image.</i> | |
| <i>To whom is the subject talking? How do you know?</i> | |
| <i>What is the location of the interview? Why do you think it was chosen?</i> | |
| <i>Where does the subject look? Why doesn't he look directly into the camera?</i> | |
| <i>What — if anything — happens in the interview section?</i> | |
| <i>Where does the light come from? How do you know?</i> | |
| <i>What questions does the interviewer ask the subject? Write at least three (3) possibilities.</i> | |

Documentary Production Vocabulary

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| footage: | <i>When you record anything to video, the material is called "footage." It is a throwback to the days before digital recording when "film" was the standard media used for documentaries.</i> |
| interview: | <i>An interview is a meeting or conversation in which a reporter asks one or more persons questions about a specific topic.</i> |
| subject: | <i>In this case, the subject is the person being interviewed.</i> |
| B-roll footage: | <i>"B-roll" footage is the video that supports whatever is talked about in an interview or material that supports the story.</i> |

Teacher Guide Page: Possible student responses to discussion questions about Albeth's story

Discussion questions and self-reflection questions

- Why did Albeth wind up in juvenile hall? *(He was caught with a gun; his friends ran and he took the blame.)*
- Why did he go back to school? What are his new goals? *(He knew he needed an education to be able to live the way he wants, to buy clothes and nice things, to get ahead.)*
- What is his advice about friends? *(Be careful about how you pick your friends; pick friends who are going to get you to do good things, not get in trouble.)*
- How do your friends support and encourage you? *(Ask students about friends in school, in their neighborhoods, in their places of worship, etc.)*
- How do you deal with a friend who tries to pressure you into dangerous or risky activities? *(What do they say? What do they do? Who taught them this?)*
- How are your peers a positive influence in your life? *(How do your peers encourage you? How do they show you the right thing to do to improve your life?)*

Possible student responses to discussion questions about the interview process

- What was the topic and focus of this interview? *(Albeth's story about how his friends got him to be in a gang and then disappeared when the police arrested him and took him to juvenile hall.)*
- Why was Albeth chosen to be interviewed for this documentary? *(Albeth is a good example of someone who learned a hard lesson; he suffered but kept his head up high; he had a bad experience but he's learned from it and is making a better life; he learned to value education.)*
- How did it keep us engaged and interested? *(The documentary switched back and forth from Albeth's face and story to pictures that supported the story.)*
- What are we supposed to learn from this documentary? *(Choose your friends wisely; choose friends who will get you to do good things; if you flash a gun, you're going to juvenile hall.)*
- What else you would have asked Albeth? *(These will range from wanting to know about his experiences in juvenile hall to what he says to those friends now.)*

Teacher Guide Page: Documentary Viewing Worksheet

Possible answers might include:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>How much of the subject do you see? Describe the image.</i></p> | <p><i>From his chest to his head; we see his face.</i></p> <p>Note: This is so we don't see the microphone pinned lower on his shirt AND to only focus on his facial expressions.</p> |
| <p><i>To whom is the subject talking? How do you know?</i></p> | <p><i>Talking to an interviewer; his eyes are on the interviewer; if he talked to the camera he would be talking to us, the viewers, but we're not there.</i></p> |
| <p><i>What is the location of the interview? Why do you think it was chosen?</i></p> | <p><i>Outside; we don't see his house; this way it could be anywhere; anybody can relate to being outside; filming outside gives better light for the camera.</i></p> |
| <p><i>Where does the subject look? Why doesn't he look directly into the camera?</i></p> | <p><i>Looking at the interviewer; if he looked at the camera it would be as if he were talking to the audience; he is telling his story to another person with him.</i></p> |
| <p><i>What — if anything — happens in the interview section?</i></p> | <p><i>Albeth talks; he tells his story</i></p> |
| <p><i>Where does the light come from? How do you know?</i></p> | <p><i>Sunlight; it is on his side; he's not squinting into the sun</i></p> |
| <p><i>What questions does the interviewer ask the subject? Write at least three (3) possibilities.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>• Tell us how you wound up in juvenile hall.</i><i>• How did you feel when your friends left you?</i><i>• How do you feel about your experience now?</i><i>• What did you learn from this experience?</i> |