 Analysing a Documentary

Pre-viewing questions

Title:

Date released:

Composer:

What key ideas about life will be explored in this documentary?

Viewing questions

Type of documentary:

Advocacy for social concerns

Biography

Investigative

Research

News/special events

Identifying conventions of documentaries

For each of the following features of documentaries, write down examples from the text.

| Features | Examples |
| --- | --- |
| Visuals (mise-en-scène)   * The composition of the text; what is placed in the frame, including camera movement, angles, shots, props and lighting |  |
| Visuals (storytelling)   * How information is conveyed and the story told; archival footage, documents, text on the screen, re-enactments, symbolism |  |
| Editing   * Pacing, rhythm, cutting, montage, transitions |  |
| Audio   * Music, sound effects, voice over, dialogue, interviews |  |

Post-viewing questions

1. What is the mood or tone of the documentary? Refer to quotations or film techniques with their examples to support your ideas.

What emotions or intellectual response does this text evoke from the viewer?

1. What is the central idea of this documentary? Refer to quotations in your response.

1. Consider the effectiveness of the film in exploring aspects of our world. What specific features have contributed to the success of the text?

1. How do you think filmmakers wanted the audience to respond? Did the text have this effect on you?

1. What questions do you have for the filmmaker?

Apparent subject and deeper subject – In two sentences, state what you believe to be the overall theme (implied meaning) or point of the text and what is the explicit meaning that is shown directly through the actions of the text.