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AP[®] English
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**Using Documentary Film as
an Introduction to Rhetoric**

2008
Curriculum Module

AP[®] English Language and Composition
Curriculum Module:
Using Documentary Film as an
Introduction to Rhetoric

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Using Documentary Film as an Introduction to Rhetoric

Introduction to Documentary Film Module

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“Nonfiction is booming.” So begins an article in the National Council of Teachers of English’s *The Council Chronicle*. Indeed, nonfiction is gaining a stronger presence at nearly every level of education these days. Once the focus primarily of freshman English, nonfiction texts have become part and parcel of many high school textbooks; we hear of middle-school curricula being “infused” with nonfiction, and even the earlier grades are seeing more nonfiction texts in the English classroom. Standardized testing may be driving some of this interest. Concern over boys’ declining interest in reading novels, especially those that focus on relationships, has also provoked exploration of this genre. We’ve recognized that nonfiction is rich, varied, and interesting, including the traditional *belles lettres* pieces as well as editorials, columnists, speeches, memoirs, letters, biographies, and pretty much any type of analysis—and argument.

Although documentaries have sparked classroom interest as nonfiction claims more of our instructional time, we acknowledge them as an independent and celebrated art form on their own. They are “texts” to be “read” as part of the development of overall literacy skills. They have the potential to engage students who live and learn in a world of visual stimuli. Not incidentally, they answer the call for differentiated learning as students approach them through avenues other than “reading,” and they match standards that call for critical viewing. Finally, although once the realm of the independent filmmaker, documentaries now have a broader, commercial appeal that has resulted in funding and festivals, such as the American Film Institute’s annual SILVERDOCS or Duke University’s Full Frame Documentary Film Festival.

Perhaps most important, documentary films can serve as a bridge to critical thinking, reading, and writing—essential literacy skills. As John Golden writes in his NCTE book *Reading in the Reel World: Teaching Documentaries and Other Nonfiction Texts*, “. . . [as] we are teaching our students how to ‘read’ documentary film, we are also giving them the tools and the ability to read nonfiction print texts.”

The five articles in this module all suggest ways to bring documentary film into the classroom in creative, thoughtful ways. I’ve been using documentary in my freshman composition classes for a few years, but last spring I developed a full-scale approach to

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give my students a foundation in the basics of rhetoric. In “Introducing Rhetorical Analysis Through Documentary Film,” I describe starting with *An Inconvenient Truth* and leading students to develop their own analysis of the rhetorical strategies filmmakers use to achieve their purpose: in other words, we read film as argument. (Now that Al Gore has won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, this film might seem even more compelling, certainly more topical, but this honor would not change my approach.)

On an even more specific level in “Introducing Style Analysis Through Documentary Film,” John Golden starts with this question: “What does writing style mainly come down to? Choice. Choices in words, phrases, tone, etc.” He explains the filmmaker’s choices of visual, audio, and text in documentary film as analogs to diction and then the connections between and among images, sound, and text as analog to syntax. Jennifer Pust focuses on “Recognizing Fallacies, Bias, and Visual Arguments in Popular Documentaries.” She defines fallacies as “not necessarily indicators of flawed logic, but rather . . . attempts to move and/or manipulate the audience,” and offers examples from *Super Size Me*, *Bowling for Columbine*, and *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*. Mary T. Christel turns to earlier work to explore “the distinctions between persuasion and propaganda.” She guides us through an examination of Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will*, a text designed “to move the viewer to embrace Adolph Hitler as the embodiment of Germany’s political and economic revitalization in the mid-1930s.” Finally, John Brassil looks toward synthesis in his analysis of the recent documentary *Why We Fight*: “In effect, [director Eugene Jarecki] uses a wide array of visual and spoken source material to shape his argument.” John draws intriguing connections by examining Dwight D. Eisenhower’s 1961 Farewell Speech, which is one of the texts featured in the documentary.

All of the experienced teachers writing these modules share their classroom instruction at the same time that they offer suggestions of documentaries that work well and sources that will help to enhance our understanding of this genre. We hope this work deepens appreciation of documentary film, stimulates further conversation about documentaries and nonfiction, and leads to more effective and innovative classroom practices.

Bauman, Amy. “Documentaries: Another Way to Read.” *The Council Chronicle*. November 2006. 1–2.

Introducing Rhetorical Analysis Through Documentary Film

Renee H. Shea

Nonfiction, visual culture, argument—these three essential components of reading and writing converge in documentary film, making it an ideal way to introduce students to the fundamentals of rhetoric. What, after all, is a documentary except someone’s argument that the audience should accept this viewpoint, take this action, make this commitment, understand the rightness/wrongness of this policy, etc? To achieve this purpose, the filmmaker (or director) must understand the audience and appropriate appeals—i.e., the rhetorical situation. All in all, documentaries build on the visual world of our students while at the same time these nonfiction films focus on substantive, often controversial, issues that affect students’ lives.

As anyone who’s passed through my classroom or workshops knows, I am devoted to Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” as the perfect introduction to rhetoric. It’s a textbook of strategies, a model of the classical Aristotelian triangle, and it works. Yet, recently, I’ve turned to documentary film as a way to capitalize on my students’ interest in the visual and their prior knowledge of how images work. Further, since many documentaries involve research and presentation of a “case” or viewpoint, they invite students to engage in research while analyzing elements of rhetoric.

With my primary objective being for students to gain an understanding of what a rhetorical situation is, I turned to Hepzibah Roskelly’s article on AP Central, “What Do Students Need to Know About Rhetoric.” In that excellent essay, she explains the importance of “becoming conscious of how rhetoric works [to] transform speaking, reading, and writing, making us more successful and able communicators and more discerning audiences.” She argues that it’s not necessary to become familiar with lists of specialized terms but rather to understand a few key concepts. These include

- the rhetorical triangle of speaker, audience, subject, and their interdependence
- the context and purpose in which the speaking or writing occurs
- appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos

I broke these out a bit more specifically to add the following:

- kairos
- counterargument

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- types of evidence: facts, statistics, personal experience, expert testimony, humor, induction, and deduction

For better or worse, during my initial forays into documentaries, I did minimal work with the language of film, pointing out basic techniques such as archival footage, juxtaposition, camera angles, and audio track. Essentially, I wanted students to become critical viewers of the visual images, the audio track, and the verbal texts (whether as voice-over or words on the screen).

The assignment freshman students wrote was a relatively brief (1,500 words) documented essay analyzing a film of their choice:

In this essay, you will analyze the rhetoric of a documentary film, specifically its purpose, audience, persuasive appeals, and its effectiveness. Essentially, you are analyzing the argument that the filmmaker makes, how he or she develops it, and the extent to which he or she is successful in achieving the purpose. A major part of your grade on this essay (content and development) will be your understanding of how the filmmaker presents his or her case: e.g., through statistics, expert testimony, personal experience, humor, archival footage, sound track.

To introduce rhetorical analysis, I chose Al Gore's Academy Award-winning film *An Inconvenient Truth*. Over several class periods, we watched (most of) the film, stopping frequently to discuss strategies Gore and Davis Guggenheim, the director, use to develop an argument. (It is worth noting that the study guides available online for classroom use stress the science and applications to science class but do not explore the rhetoric of the documentary itself.) *An Inconvenient Truth* served my purposes well for several reasons. First, I doubted that many of my students would choose this film on their own, and, teacher that I am, I felt it addressed a topic important to them. Second, it is a well-crafted and skillfully executed example of the documentary genre. Third, it is open to interpretation: some claim that it is a siren call to do something about global warming; others see it as Gore's siren call for a presidential nomination.

We began at the beginning: that opening sequence with the idyllic nature scene, the pleasant music, the Thoreau-like reminder of nature as beauty, refuge, and spiritual inspiration. Following are notes on rhetorical features and strategies I called to students' attention as we viewed the first 30 minutes of the film (in sequence):

- **Setting:** An academic-looking lecture hall. This setting emphasized the seriousness of the endeavor: Gore the "policy wonk" with his slide show. Students noted that this setting, returned to repeatedly throughout the film, stressed the importance of reason through association with a university setting.
- **Humor:** He introduces himself with the self-effacing statement, "I'm Al Gore. I used to be the next president of the United States." Students commented on the

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fact that he's known as "kind of a nerd," so it was easy to discuss ways in which Gore is establishing his credibility as a knowledgeable and serious person, but one who also has a sense of humor—i.e., he is establishing ethos.

- **Archival footage.** Black-and-white footage of Gore during the presidential campaign is spliced in as he is introducing himself—and establishing ethos as an elected official as well as a concerned public citizen.
- **Juxtaposition.** Visual images, especially photographs are used to great advantage in this documentary, and students noted right away that the footage of belching smokestacks early on contrasted with the idyllic natural setting of the opening image.
- **Context of Hurricane Katrina.** While some students claimed that the occasion—kairos—was the urgency of global warming, others pointed out the immediate occasion of Katrina claimed national attention for this issue. With Gore's face on the left, footage of Katrina fills the rest of the screen.
- **Purpose.** Right before we see the actual title of the film, Gore states what is certainly one (and some might argue the only) purpose of the documentary: that it is time to make significant changes in response to the reality that global warming (or climate change) is not a political issue but an ethical or moral one.
- **Lots of logos.** There's no other way to say it! Gore provides hard data about global warming, using time-lapse photography, graphs, charts, statistics—yet he presents this information not as pure lecture but with the visual advantage of huge, colorful, moving displays of quantitative data, even one where he himself has to ascend on a lift to show that the carbon dioxide levels are literally "off the charts."
- **Inductive reasoning.** Although presented as a series of juxtapositions, the before/after photos are the specifics that support the generalization that global warming is real, global warming is becoming more urgent, global warming is changing our world, etc.
- **Humorous anecdote.** He tells stories, lots of stories, and one at the outset is about his grade-school teacher who dismissed a student's questions about whether South America and Africa ever "fit together." "That's ridiculous," the teacher responded. It is worth noting that Gore points out (humorously, ironically) that the teacher "went on to become a science advisor in the current administration."
- **Expert testimony.** From the outset, Gore calls on experts in the scientific community, starting here with his professor at Harvard, Roger Ravelle. Since he met Professor Ravelle while at Harvard, a prestigious school, students were quick to see that this may be an appeal to logos, but ethos is not far behind.

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- **Cartoon (humor)**. After Gore explains global warming with charts, graphs, and written text, he offers an alternative explanation of cartoons. Since this explanation includes what politicians in 2063 are doing to address the problem—dumping a giant ice cube in the ocean—hyperbole, even satire, is at work.
- **Contrasting photos: juxtaposition**. One of the major rhetorical strategies Gore uses, he repeatedly juxtaposes photos of Kilimanjaro at two points, then Nepal, then the Italian Alps, making the point dramatically that change is occurring. Logos and pathos work together with these examples.
- **Drama—pathos**. When Gore begins to describe the accident that nearly claimed the life of his young son in 1989, he narrates while black-and-white photos from the hospital show the desolation he felt. He explains how this experienced “turned my whole world upside down . . . my way of being in the world . . .” and made him ask “How should I spend my time on this earth.” His answer: increasing awareness of and working to save our threatened environment.

And this is just the first 30 minutes! This initial stop-and-go viewing (which took at least a full hour) gave way to watching longer clips and taking notes for our discussion. Plus, once we had established the rhetorical situation, students were quick to pick up on meaning, purpose, effect, and their interaction.

To encourage active and critical viewing, I developed some of my own materials (especially graphic organizers) and used others from John Golden’s excellent book *Reading in the Reel World: Teaching Documentaries and Other Nonfiction Texts* (NCTE, 2006). After our initial discussion, I asked students to take notes on a graphic organizer (Figure 1), which allowed us to watch longer clips, then discuss, then return to the film; admittedly pretty tedious in its detail, it was one way to encourage students to begin using the language of rhetoric that was introduced. This organizer also became part of their note-taking when students viewed a second film before writing their essays. In addition, I wasn’t even above including a quiz as part of their essay grade. But mainly, we watched and discussed, watched and discussed. As usual, students wanted models before they ventured out on their own, and I provided a few. I wanted, for instance, to illustrate how appeals to pathos, logos, and ethos are often combined, so I wrote this example:

In *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore appeals to logos and pathos in the presentation of scientific concepts. The entire film is presented in the context of a lecture hall, which gives a sense of the seriousness associated with a university setting. Yet, there is emotional content when the camera pans the audience, made up of real people of various ages and ethnicities. Gore points out charts and graphs to emphasize climate changes and temperature ranges, but the medium of a film allows these to be projected giant-size, in color, and with movement. Statistics such as changes in the Gulf Stream, higher levels of carbon dioxide, and the consumption of fossil fuels are not deadly dull because the multi-media approach delivers such information in a dynamic form. The director uses time-lapse photography to stress the dramatic changes in the appearance of the earth because

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of the effect of global warming. The color and movement add to the drama while making a valid scientific point. Gore calls on expert testimony in a number of ways. Early in the film, he recalls a professor of his who predicted the effects of global warming. As a scientist at one of the foremost universities, the scientist has status; his photo and Gore's stories about him humanize him as well. Later in the film, Gore calls on expert testimony again, not by naming anyone specifically but by pointing out the nearly universal agreement about the seriousness of the problem as evidenced by scientists published in juried journals, that is, those with the highest credibility among other scientists.

Perhaps, one of the most compelling reasons to use documentaries in class is that they are a way to help students understand and recognize bias and how it works. *An Inconvenient Truth* engages students right away in questions about purpose and effect, such as these:

- Is that image of Gore with the American flag waving in the background an example of effective juxtaposition that reminds us of his public service and commitment? Or is it a logical fallacy that manipulates us to associate Gore with patriotic fervor?
- When Gore narrates the near-death experience of his young son and how that affected him, is he shamelessly appealing to our emotions, or is he emphasizing that we often fail to value what is precious until we are in danger of losing it?
- Is that analogy between his son's life and our environment effective, simply inaccurate, or downright sentimental?

As students began thinking about their own essays, I realized that many were starting to think that their essay had to be organized around the terms we were studying. In other words, with a thesis that read something like, "To achieve his purpose . . . Al Gore appeals to pathos, logos, and ethos," they thought they could just organize a paragraph on purpose, one on audience, another on logos, etc. To combat this view, I developed more samples, not full essays but outlines such as the one in Figure 2, where I contrasted two possible interpretations. In fact, if I had to name my biggest hurdle with this assignment, it was helping students to see that rhetorical analysis is a means to an end, i.e., a way to express their own assessment of the documentary, rather than an end in itself.

Research is a natural way to demonstrate the conversation, debate, or dialogue that documentaries tend to generate. Although Al Gore hardly occasions the controversy of a Michael Moore, *An Inconvenient Truth* had its challengers as well as its advocates. I began with reviews by simply directing students to Rotten Tomatoes (www.rottentomatoes.com), a veritable treasure trove of full-text articles. I wrote a paragraph to model how they might incorporate reviews without stating their own position (Figure 3); then as an exercise they revised it to support a particular opinion by

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using the same reviews or others. Going beyond film critics, they could also consult more extensive analyses by political analysts, such as George F. Will (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/09/AR2006060901550.html?sub=AR>) or even more scholarly endeavors, such as the George Marshall Institute (<http://www.marshall.org/article.php?id=462>).

The next step was for students to write their own rhetorical analysis of a documentary film. Working in groups, they chose one film to view and examine collaboratively in preparation for writing papers individually. In addition to the rhetorical analysis, they had to research the film: reviews, background information, interviews with directors; some even watched the director's cut on the DVD. Choices included *Super Size Me*, *Born into Brothels*, *The Boys of Baraka*, *Jesus Camp*, *Just for Kicks*, *Ghosts of Rwanda*, *The Laramie Project* (a documentary-style film), and *Bowling for Columbine*. Some of them really "got it," as the following excerpts attest:

- In *The Boys of Baraka*, the kairos of the film is apparent in the opening heading that reads, "In the city of Baltimore, 76% of African American males do not graduate from high school"; the next frame omits all of the words except for "76% do not graduate." By doing this, the filmmakers appeal to logic with statistical information, and they appeal to pathos by stressing the gravity of the situation that is going on with Baltimore city schools. (Brandon)
- Throughout the documentary *The Murder of Emmett Till*, Stanley Nelson [the director] effectively appeals to pathos by using archival footage, personal testimonies, and juxtaposition. To get his audience to care about the film, Nelson uses archival footage to show where Till's body was found by a boy fishing. The narrator Andre Braugher states, "This is the muddy back woods Tallahatchie River where a weighted body was found, alleged to be that of young Emmett Till." After showing that footage, Nelson takes us to an interview with Mamie Till Mobley, Emmett's mother. She states, "I saw a hole which I presumed was a bullet hole and I could look through the hole and see daylight on the other side" . . . (Latoya)
- In *Bowling for Columbine*, Moore uses cartoon characters at one point and at another he has photographs of the military fighting with music from the kids' show *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* playing at the same time. Whether that irony is fair, the strategy is effective because Moore attracts the viewer's attention. Moore has been criticized because he makes fun of important issues, but he does it on purpose because some people might not understand the importance of the topic until something blatant catches their attention. (Aaron)

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Nonetheless, as with any first-time assignment, there were triumphs and defeats. The enthusiasm for the films and student conversations using concepts such as counterargument and ethos are heartening. On the other hand, I learned some lessons about background information, pacing, and—on the practical side—the logistics of making films available. I also began to deepen my understanding of which films are the better teaching vehicles, which are of high interest, and when the two coincide.

In the more intellectual and pedagogical realms, I am still learning about film itself. I'm reading and trying to educate myself, but I welcome collaborations with colleagues who are more knowledgeable. In addition, there are rhetorical issues that are trickier when it comes to film. For example, who is the "filmmaker"? Is it the director? What about the producer, organization, or backer putting up the money to make the film? Those issues challenge the traditional ways of looking at ethos, and they are interesting questions for teacher and student alike. All in all, my forays into documentary film are yielding worthwhile approaches to critical reading, writing, and viewing—and, I hope, better preparing my students for the twenty-first century.

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Figure 1

Rhetorical Strategy	Example from the Film	Effect
Establishing ethos through visual elements		
Establishing ethos through audio track		
Establishing ethos through written text		
Appealing to logos through expert testimony		
Appealing to logos through quantitative data		
Appealing to logos through inductive reasoning		
Appealing to logos through deductive reasoning		
Appealing to pathos through visual elements		
Appealing to pathos through audio track		
Appealing to pathos through personal anecdote		
Appealing to pathos through humor		

Figure 2

Guidelines for Essay #2

Your assignment is to do a rhetorical analysis of a documentary film. That is, analyze the purpose of the film, the audience to whom it is geared, and the strategies that are used to reach that audience.

Example 1:

Thesis: In *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore wants to reach a large audience, particularly nonscientists, to stress the urgency of responding to global warming.

- I. He establishes the ethos of a public servant whose concern stems from ethical and moral rather than political motivation.
- II. He provides an enormous amount of technical information by taking advantage of a multimedia format.
- III. He appeals to pathos by juxtaposing what was or is with what might be—and, in fact, is likely to occur.
- IV. Gore acknowledges several counterarguments, but he refutes them with humor or alternative explanation.
- V. He uses his personal experiences as a father and brother to stress the deep commitment he has to this issue.

Conclusion: *An Inconvenient Truth* effectively sounds the alarm for global warming by offering an accessible explanation that blends scientific information and human interest.

Example 2:

Thesis: Although Al Gore claims that only moral and ethical concerns about global warming prompted him to make the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, the film is a thinly disguised promotion for another bid for the presidency.

- I. Throughout the film, he establishes the ethos of a successful politician who has not been given his due.
- II. He intersperses his scientific and technical presentations with criticisms of the Bush administration.
- III. He manipulates his audience into feeling a sense of urgency by exaggerating the effects of global warming through before-and-after contrasts.
- IV. He mentions counterarguments but dismisses them with sarcasm and derisive humor.
- V. He uses the artistic elements of documentary film to pull at his audience's heartstrings by describing the near-death of his son and the cancer death of his sister, neither of which is directly related to his subject.

Conclusion: Al Gore may have a sincere concern about the environment, but *An Inconvenient Truth* is only a means to further his ambitions for the presidency by reaching a large number of potential voters.

Figure 3

Although most reviews of *An Inconvenient Truth* are positive, the film has its critics. Many reviewers applaud the film for calling attention to the urgency of global warming as a “moral” issue, as Gore describes it, rather than a “political” issue. Critic Roger Ebert is complimentary all the way through. He writes, “The director, Davis Guggenheim, uses words, images and Gore’s concise litany of facts to build a film that is fascinating and relentless.” He admits that he is being effusive in his praise but believes that superlatives are warranted. “You owe it to yourself to see this film,” Ebert insists. David Denby, writing for *The New Yorker* magazine, admits that the film has faults, but these “are nothing compared with its strengths.” He praises the film’s presentation of scientific concepts and data for being “detailed, deep-layered, vivid, and terrifying.”

Nonetheless, some critics tend to be severe in their questioning of both the politics and emotional content of the film. Writing for the Web site www.filmthreat.com, Phil Hall calls the film “a 96-minute commercial on the deification of Al Gore.” He criticizes Gore for “exploit[ing] family tragedies to show how sympathetic he is to the suffering of others . . .” and points out that global warming “actually accelerated during the 1990s, when Gore was the number two man in the Clinton White House.”

Introducing Style Analysis Through Documentary Film

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Introduction:

When I mention the word “style” to my de-tracked Pre-AP® English classes, the students generally think of Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan, and other Hollywood celebrities. At first, I used to get frustrated at their lack of knowledge of a writer’s style, but I soon realized that they might be onto something. What does writing style mainly come down to? Choice. Choices in words, phrases, tone, etc. And what does fashion style come down to? Choice, too, although, in many cases, bad choices. What do Paris’s fashion choices say about her attitude and what she wants to communicate to her audience? How do other celebrities promote other images through their choices? I’ve even bought into this approach so much that I will have students bring in fashion magazines and we’ll spend part of a class period deconstructing the style and images of various celebrities. Be careful, however, because once the students start, it’s hard to turn them off, and when the *GQ* magazines are closed, the English teacher in the front of the room is the next likely target.

Although the students would like to remain with the fashion definition of “style,” I begin to move them to the terms necessary for them to understand style: diction and syntax. What follows are the activities that I like to use to help students begin analyzing texts for style. These are very much introductory activities, but I’ve noticed that with AP classes having more open-admissions policies, students are not always well equipped for some of the basic skills that we assume they already possess. If you find this to be true for some of your students, the following activities, which can be completed in two to three class periods, might be time well spent.

A core assumption that these activities make is that students can improve their critical thinking, analytical, and even writing skills by practicing first with a visual text and then transferring that ability to a print text. You’ll notice below that I ask students to analyze the style used in a documentary film and then to analyze the style used in a written text. These two texts do not necessarily have much in common in terms of subject matter, but it is the skill that students practice that connects the texts. While there is some research showing how critical visual literacy can improve print-text abilities (Eken, 2004, Vetrie, Hobbs, 2007), my primary evidence for justifying this link between visual and print texts is anecdotal experiences in my classroom, where previously disengaged, passive readers turn into the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drews of literary analysis—hunting for every meaningful clue—when presented with a visual text to analyze. Once they

recognize that they do, in fact, possess good analytical skills and have a chance to improve them, students more willingly and successfully examine print texts.

Activity One: Letter Writing and Analysis

The first activity I like to do with my students is to have them think about the ways that they vary their own writing style depending on their audiences, subjects, and purposes. The best way I've found to introduce this concept is through letter writing. I start by asking them to write a note to a friend complaining about a rule they have at home and then to write a letter to a parent/guardian trying to convince him or her to change the rule. This could be about bedtimes, curfews, driving privileges, after-school jobs, and so on.

Next, they look closely at the word choice in each letter, and they should try to explain why they chose the words they did. This is where I introduce the term "diction," and we look at the use of slang/formal language and the specific connotations of various words they chose. Why, for example, would a student use the word "hate" when writing to a friend and "disagree with" when writing to a parent? Students pick up on the word choice connection to style pretty quickly, but many need help thinking about connotation and how the diction relates to tone and author's purpose.

More difficult to introduce to students is the concept of "syntax." I've found that grammar instruction has been far from comprehensive for today's students. Although they often do not know the terms (simple, compound, or complex sentences, for example), they are, nevertheless, able to comment on the syntax in other ways. I ask them to look at their sentence length, their use of punctuation, and even the use of rhetorical devices like repetition or juxtaposition. I generally like to (re)introduce the terms "declarative," "imperative," "interrogative," and "exclamatory" sentences and ask them to identify each type in their letters. As with diction, they should try to explain why they made specific choices.

The last part of the activity is for them to write one more letter, this time trying to be conscious of the elements of style they learned about. The topic will remain the same, but the audience will be more general and public. Afterward, you and the students should take a moment to reflect on what they have learned about style from this activity.

See Figure 1 for a sample handout that I use with my students for Activity One.

Activity Two: Viewing and Analysis

After students have a basic understanding of the main elements of style analysis, I show them clips from a few documentary films before looking at more challenging print texts to analyze. Before working with film in the classroom, you ought to make sure that your students have at least a basic understanding of some of the key terminology of film analysis. When students possess the language of film, they can more readily transfer those skills to print texts, and without the terminology, students tend to discuss film in terms of

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like and dislikes. While I've included a basic list of film terms here (see Figure 2), there are many widely available sources for you to get further information about the use of film and media in the English classroom (Teasley and Wilder, 1996; Golden, 2001; Christel and Krueger, 2001; Golden, 2006). Be sure to go over the terms list (or one like it) so that students know what they ought to be looking for as they take notes on the clips.

Especially for documentary film, it is important that students understand what makes up the three tracks—visual, audio, and text—commonly found in nonfiction films. These are the elements of film that I ask my students to relate to in terms of “diction.” It is also important that you ask students to pay attention to the editing in these clips. How the images, sound, and text are connected and presented to the viewer is what I connect to “syntax.” Take some time for students to practice looking for examples from the three tracks with any documentary on this list or with any film you have.

Once I feel students have a good grasp of the film terminology, I show them a clip of a documentary *without* sound so that they can really concentrate on the images and the editing. See Figure 3 for a sample form that I use with my students as we work through this activity. One of my favorite clips to use for this exercise is the opening sequence in *Born into Brothels* (0–0:02:17) where the directors show images of a light bulb and moths, the deplorable conditions of life in Calcutta's red light districts, and close-ups of young girls' eyes. These are edited together to contrast the innocence of the girls with the sordidness of the brothels. This is an easy one for students to recognize and discuss how the choice of images and editing contributes to the filmmakers' purpose. You may be persuaded, as I often am, to play the clip again *with* sound. The song is very effective at adding to the tension of the scene.

Next, I show students another clip, this time with sound. One I like a lot is from the middle of *Mad Hot Ballroom* (0:59:05–1:03:57), which is about an elementary school ballroom dancing program. In this scene, the director shows a variety of images of happy, smiling kids playing with each other and with their parents while a gentle tune plays on the soundtrack. Unlike the previous clip, this one includes dialogue from the children about what it's like to be their ages; students should note this under the “sound” heading on the worksheet. For editing, students ought to pay attention to how the images, the music, and what the students are saying support the overall idea that even though it's a little confusing to be 11, overall, it's okay.

The last clip I show students for this activity is one that contains a text track so that they can see how all three tracks of a documentary can be edited together for specific purposes. In this clip (0:02:41–0:08:38) from the film *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism*, an examination of the biases of the Fox News network, the director uses the repeated text track identification of “former Fox News” personnel, graphics showing Rupert Murdoch's growing influence, the song “Dirty Laundry,” and many others in order to show that Fox News is not an objective news outlet. After discussing the clip, I try to lead students to a discussion of the director's style. What specific choices did he make to achieve his purpose? I ask students how the parts of documentary (images,

sound, and text tracks) are like diction in a written text and how editing is like syntax. They usually see the connections fairly easily, which is a good thing because the next activity asks them to apply what they've learned about style to a print text.

Activity Three: Reading Print Texts and Style Analysis

I start this activity by asking students to recall our work about diction and syntax. As a class, we generate a list (see Figure 4) of aspects to consider when we talk about these and other literary terms. Some classes may need more or less direct instruction, depending on the skill level of your students. Then, I give them a print text along with a note-taking form (see figure 6) that looks similar to what they used for the film texts. I like to use editorials, personal narratives, and political speeches for this activity. I've included excerpts here from Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (see Figure 5), which has also been a successful text for analyzing style. In the first section, I ask students to point toward specific diction and syntactical choices Sinclair made that help to establish his tone. Students comment on the word choice in this section: fetid, blackening, ghastly, dead, and unhealthful. They also like to discuss the rhetorical questions he poses throughout the book and especially that, despite everything we've seen, Sinclair ends the section with Jurgis saying, "Tomorrow, I shall go there and get a job!" In the second section, I ask students to analyze his style in order to explain the author's purpose. Besides grossing the students out and making them swear off sausage forever, they like to note the short, declarative phrases separated by semi-colons where the author describes the butchering process, compared with the longer sentences where he waxes philosophical about the ethics of the slaughter.

Activity Four: Transformation

The final activity that I do with my students to introduce style is for them to take a portion of the print text they analyzed in the previous activity and transform it into a portion of a documentary film. I ask them to select a part of the text that has some interesting stylistic choices and one that they can imagine visually. The way they transform the print into film is to create a storyboard, which is a visual representation of what would be seen and heard in the finished version of the film. I always remind them not to worry about their artistic talent and allow them to work in pairs or even to describe—not draw—the visual information. There is space on Figure 7 for six shots, but they certainly can do more than six. Try to encourage them to think about the stylistic choices the author made and try to remain as true to the original as possible. Also, be sure to review the role that editing plays in film and ask students to consider how music and text will go with the images.

As they present their storyboards to their classmates, direct students to explain the reasons for the choices they made. Afterward, I always ask students to describe what changed and what remained the same as they transformed the print to a visual text and why? What elements of style were easiest and hardest to capture and why?

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Through these activities students gain confidence and practice in analyzing texts for style. Even though they still might prefer discussing the style worn at the latest Golden Globe Awards, you can rest assured that they are now prepared to talk about more than Hemingway's beard and combat boots.

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Figure 1

Activity One: Introducing Style Analysis

Writing Letters

1. You will write two letters about a rule that you have at home with which you do not agree. In the first letter, to a friend, you are complaining about the rule, and in the second, to your parent/guardian, you are trying to convince him or her to change the rule.
2. Look over the two letters and highlight any words or phrases that are the same in both letters. Then, circle any significant words or phrases that are unique to each letter. What do you notice about the “diction” in each letter? What changed, what remained the same, and why? How does diction affect purpose?
3. Now look over how you constructed your letters. Do not think about the words used, but rather, how the words are assembled in your letter. What is similar and different in the kinds of punctuation used, your sentence length, and your types of sentences? How do your choices in “syntax” help you with your purpose of each letter?
4. Next, write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about the issue you have raised in the previous letters. Before you write, consider the following for what would be relevant, appropriate, and useful for your audience:

Purpose:	
Diction:	
Syntax:	

5. Last, explain what you learned about diction and syntax and the effect they have on audience and purpose.

Figure 2

Activity Two: Viewing and Analysis

Film Terms

Parts of a Documentary:

Visual Track

These are the images that are seen on-screen. They could be primary footage shot by the filmmaker (A roll), cutaways that support or counter other visuals perhaps shot by the filmmaker (B roll), or they could be found (archival) footage from some other source used to meet the new film's purposes.

Audio Track

This is the sound heard during the film. It could include the voices and dialogue of people in the film, narration, music, and sound effects.

Text Track (or Graphic Track)

This is the written information that appears on screen added by the filmmaker in postproduction. Examples are subtitles, identifications, charts, and graphs.

Other Important Terms:

Editing

How the visual, audio, and text tracks are assembled. Consider, for example, how the music or images work to support or juxtapose each other.

Framing/Shots

Are we seeing the image in a close-up, medium shot, or long shot? Why?

Camera Angles

Is the camera filming the image from above (high angle), below (low angle), or eye-level? Why?

Lighting

Is the scene filled primarily with lots of light or with darkness and shadows? Why?

Camera Movement

Does the camera move or is it stationary? Is it tilting, panning, or dollying? Why?

Figure 3

Activity Two: Viewing and Analysis, (cont)

Film Notetaking

Clip #1: Without sound

Visuals:	Editing
:	

Clip #2: With sound and visual track

Visuals:	Sound	Editing
:		

Clip #3: With visual, sound, and text track

Visuals:	Sound	Text	Editing
:			

Figure 4

Activity Three: Analyzing Style in Written Texts

Terms List

Aspects to consider when you are writing about the following:

1. Diction

- Formal or informal language
- Connotation and denotation
- Concrete or abstract word choice

2. Syntax

- Sentence length
- Sentence types
- Sentence structure
- Punctuation
- Rhetorical devices
- Sentence patterns: openings

3. Tone

- Author and/or speaker's attitude toward subject
- How do diction and syntax create this tone?
- How does tone relate to author's purpose?
- Are there changes in tone in the piece? When? Why?

4. Theme

- What is the author's purpose?
 - How does the author's style illustrate the theme?

Figure 5

Activity Three: Analyzing Style in Written Texts, (cont)

Excerpts from *The Jungle*

From Chapter 2: *Jurgis and Ona Rudkus have recently moved to America from Lithuania seeking a better life for their family. They have heard of work being available in the vast meatpacking plants of Chicago. This is their first look at the plants:*

It could not move faster anyhow, on account of the state of the streets. Those through which Jurgis and Ona were walking resembled streets less than they did a miniature topographical map. The roadway was commonly several feet lower than the level of the houses, which were sometimes joined by high board walks; there were no pavements—there were mountains and valleys and rivers, gullies and ditches, and great hollows full of stinking green water. In these pools the children played, and rolled about in the mud of the streets; here and there one noticed them digging in it, after trophies which they had stumbled on. One wondered about this, as also about the swarms of flies which hung about the scene, literally blackening the air, and the strange, fetid odor which assailed one's nostrils, a ghastly odor, of all the dead things of the universe. It impelled the visitor to questions and then the residents would explain, quietly, that all this was "made" land, and that it had been "made" by using it as a dumping ground for the city garbage. After a few years the unpleasant effect of this would pass away, it was said; but meantime, in hot weather—and especially when it rained—the flies were apt to be annoying. Was it not unhealthful? the stranger would ask, and the residents would answer, "Perhaps; but there is no telling."

A little way farther on, and Jurgis and Ona, staring open-eyed and wondering, came to the place where this "made" ground was in process of making. Here was a great hole, perhaps two city blocks square, and with long files of garbage wagons creeping into it. The place had an odor for which there are no polite words; and it was sprinkled over with children, who raked in it from dawn till dark. Sometimes visitors from the packing houses would wander out to see this "dump," and they would stand by and debate as to whether the children were eating the food they got, or merely collecting it for the chickens at home. Apparently none of them ever went down to find out.

Beyond this dump there stood a great brickyard, with smoking chimneys. First they took out the soil to make bricks, and then they filled it up again with garbage, which seemed to Jurgis and Ona a felicitous arrangement, characteristic of an enterprising country like America. A little way beyond was another great hole, which they had emptied and not yet filled up. This held water, and all summer it stood there, with the near-by soil draining into it, festering and stewing in the sun; and then, when winter came, somebody cut the ice on it, and sold it to the people of the city. This, too, seemed to

the newcomers an economical arrangement; for they did not read the newspapers, and their heads were not full of troublesome thoughts about "germs."

They stood there while the sun went down upon this scene, and the sky in the west turned blood-red, and the tops of the houses shone like fire. Jurgis and Ona were not thinking of the sunset, however—their backs were turned to it, and all their thoughts were of Packingtown, which they could see so plainly in the distance. The line of the buildings stood clear-cut and black against the sky; here and there out of the mass rose the great chimneys, with the river of smoke streaming away to the end of the world. It was a study in colors now, this smoke; in the sunset light it was black and brown and gray and purple. All the sordid suggestions of the place were gone—in the twilight it was a vision of power. To the two who stood watching while the darkness swallowed it up, it seemed a dream of wonder, with its talk of human energy, of things being done, of employment for thousands upon thousands of men, of opportunity and freedom, of life and love and joy. When they came away, arm in arm, Jurgis was saying, "Tomorrow I shall go there and get a job!"

From Chapter 3: *Before beginning work at the meatpacking plants, Jurgis takes a tour of the facility with Jokubas, a local deli owner.*

It was all so very businesslike that one watched it fascinated. It was porkmaking by machinery, porkmaking by applied mathematics. And yet somehow the most matter-of-fact person could not help thinking of the hogs; they were so innocent, they came so very trustingly; and they were so very human in their protests—and so perfectly within their rights! They had done nothing to deserve it; and it was adding insult to injury, as the thing was done here, swinging them up in this cold-blooded, impersonal way, without a pretense of apology, without the homage of a tear. Now and then a visitor wept, to be sure; but this slaughtering machine ran on, visitors or no visitors. It was like some horrible crime committed in a dungeon, all unseen and unheeded, buried out of sight and of memory.

One could not stand and watch very long without becoming philosophical, without beginning to deal in symbols and similes, and to hear the hog squeal of the universe. Was it permitted to believe that there was nowhere upon the earth, or above the earth, a heaven for hogs, where they were requited for all this suffering? Each one of these hogs was a separate creature. Some were white hogs, some were black; some were brown, some were spotted; some were old, some young; some were long and lean, some were monstrous. And each of them had an individuality of his own, a will of his own, a hope and a heart's desire; each was full of self-confidence, of self-importance, and a sense of dignity. And trusting and strong in faith he had gone about his business, the while a black shadow hung over him and a horrid Fate waited in his pathway. Now suddenly it had swooped upon him, and had seized him by the leg. Relentless, remorseless, it was; all his protests, his screams, were nothing to it—it did its cruel will with him, as if his wishes, his feelings, had simply no existence at all; it cut his throat and watched him gasp out his life.

And now was one to believe that there was nowhere a god of hogs, to whom this hog personality was precious, to whom these hog squeals and agonies had a meaning? Who would take this hog into his arms and comfort him, reward him for his work well done, and show him the meaning of his sacrifice? Perhaps some glimpse of all this was in the thoughts of our humble-minded Jurgis, as he turned to go on with the rest of the party, and muttered: "Dieve—but I'm glad I'm not a hog!"

The carcass hog was scooped out of the vat by machinery, and then it fell to the second floor, passing on the way through a wonderful machine with numerous scrapers, which adjusted themselves to the size and shape of the animal, and sent it out at the other end with nearly all of its bristles removed. It was then again strung up by machinery, and sent upon another trolley ride; this time passing between two lines of men, who sat upon a raised platform, each doing a certain single thing to the carcass as it came to him. One scraped the outside of a leg; another scraped the inside of the same leg. One with a swift stroke cut the throat; another with two swift strokes severed the head, which fell to the floor and vanished through a hole. Another made a slit down the body; a second opened the body wider; a third with a saw cut the breastbone; a fourth loosened the entrails; a fifth pulled them out—and they also slid through a hole in the floor. There were men to scrape each side and men to scrape the back; there were men to clean the carcass inside, to trim it and wash it. Looking down this room, one saw, creeping slowly, a line of dangling hogs a hundred yards in length; and for every yard there was a man, working as if a demon were after him. At the end of this hog's progress every inch of the carcass had been gone over several times; and then it was rolled into the chilling room, where it stayed for twenty-four hours, and where a stranger might lose himself in a forest of freezing hogs.

Before the carcass was admitted here, however, it had to pass a government inspector, who sat in the doorway and felt of the glands in the neck for tuberculosis. This government inspector did not have the manner of a man who was worked to death; he was apparently not haunted by a fear that the hog might get by him before he had finished his testing. If you were a sociable person, he was quite willing to enter into conversation with you, and to explain to you the deadly nature of the ptomaines which are found in tubercular pork; and while he was talking with you you could hardly be so ungrateful as to notice that a dozen carcasses were passing him untouched. This inspector wore a blue uniform, with brass buttons, and he gave an atmosphere of authority to the scene, and, as it were, put the stamp of official approval upon the things which were done in Durham's.

Jurgis went down the line with the rest of the visitors, staring openmouthed, lost in wonder. He had dressed hogs himself in the forest of Lithuania; but he had never expected to live to see one hog dressed by several hundred men. It was like a wonderful poem to him, and he took it all in guilelessly—even to the conspicuous signs demanding immaculate cleanliness of the employees. Jurgis was vexed when the cynical Jokubas

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translated these signs with sarcastic comments, offering to take them to the secret rooms where the spoiled meats went to be doctored.

Figure 6

Activity Three: Analyzing Style in Written Texts (cont)

Written Text Notetaking

Excerpt #1:

Diction:	Syntax	Tone
:		

What specific stylistic choices does the author make that help to convey his tone?

Excerpt #2:

Diction:	Syntax	Tone
:		

What specific stylistic choices does the author make that help to convey his theme?

Figure 7

Activity Four: Transformation of Text

Documentary Storyboard

Select a short section (1 to 2 sentences) from one of the excerpts from *The Jungle* that you could imagine transforming into a documentary film. Draw and describe the visual, sound, and text tracks (diction). Be sure to consider the editing between your shots (syntax).

1.	2.
:	

Sound:

Sound:

1.	2.
:	

Sound:

Sound:

1.	2.
:	

Sound:

Sound:

Documentary Film as Propaganda

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Documentary Film as Propaganda

Documentary films emerged in the early twentieth century following three essential paths, as identified by Erik Barnouw. The first path was forged by Robert Flaherty, who focused on the “reportage” aspect of this genre by famously documenting the Inuits of the Hudson Bay area in *Nanook of the North*. Flaherty took his viewers into this exotic world to reveal both the hardships and humanity of a remote culture. Then came the filmmakers who explored the “lyrical” dimensions of the genre, creating city symphonies that melded reportorial images with poetic editing and evocative sound. Eventually the “advocacy” potential of cinema was realized and exploited in service of disseminating images to promote the political and social agendas of the Third Reich, and it provided an opportunity for a German actress, Leni Riefenstahl, to create films that were initially admired for their artistry and later vilified for their subject matter.

When examining a documentary as an example of propaganda, it is essential to clarify the distinctions between persuasion and propaganda. Not all media messages with a persuasive agenda should or could be considered examples of propaganda. Persuasion can be defined as a process of attracting attention, providing the message’s recipient with a series of rational and emotional appeals designed to move them to take a course of action. According to Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, “(p)ropaganda was originally defined as the dissemination of biased ideas and opinions, often through the use of lies and deception” (11). In *The Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*, Pratkanis and Aronson go on to define the evolution of a more sophisticated tool: “Propaganda involves the dexterous use of images, slogans, and symbols that play on our prejudices and emotions . . . it is the communication of a point of view with the ultimate goal of having the recipient of the appeal come to ‘voluntarily’ accept this position as if it were his or her own” (11). Propaganda also demands “mass persuasion”: the desire ideally to move a large group to adopt a uniform understanding of specific ideology. It might be helpful to introduce the media effects theory of the “magic-bullet” or “hypodermic needle” model, which proposes that persuasive or propagandistic messages have the greatest impact on recipients who are weak-minded, indecisive, or predisposed to adopt strong messages (Campbell 516). As students view the excerpt from Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will*, they should keep in mind how each element of that cinematic text is designed for maximum impact to move the viewer to embrace Adolph Hitler as the embodiment of Germany’s political and economic revitalization in the mid-1930s.

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Triumph of the Will (a.k.a. *Triumph des Willens*) is, for many reasons, truly a curiosity as an example of documentary filmmaking, most notably for the level of control that Riefenstahl had over orchestrating the events that comprised this multiple-day rally in Nuremberg in 1934. She had a team of one hundred and twenty people, including sixteen cameramen, far outside the norm of documentary filmmaking, which is usually characterized by its poverty of resources (Barnouw 13). Riefenstahl had free rein to place cameras anywhere on the parade routes and at rally events in order to capture the most evocative and powerful images to introduce Adolph Hitler to the world stage. Despite claims that she didn't "stage" any interactions, there does seem to be evidence of coaching of participants along the parade route. Even a documentarian like Robert Flaherty encouraged the Inuits to reenact cultural activities that had been long abandoned to promote a romantic notion of how "Eskimo" behave and preserve that stereotype on film. To promote Hitler's image, Riefenstahl's film was showcased at a variety of venues, including the Venice film festival, where it received an award (Barnouw 103). Prior to viewing the excerpt, students should review what they recall about Germany's economic and political situation after World War I.

This lesson focuses on screening and analyzing the opening 15 minutes of the film, including the "overture": the opening credits as well as Hitler's landing at Nuremberg and parading through the streets to the Nazi headquarters. Given that the Nazi propaganda machine believed entertaining and aesthetically appealing images worked best on drawing in their target audience, the film begins with a modest but powerful series of verbal messages, and most of the opening 15 minutes are purely and strikingly visual. The commonly available version of this film is a "special edition" DVD distributed by Synapse Films. It preserves the overture to the film, which literally keeps the audience in the dark with a black screen as the music sets the tone for what is to come. Other versions begin with the "title card" held on the screen longer than would normally be required or expected, which tends to make the viewer uneasy or wondering what is "wrong" with the tape or DVD. The disadvantage of using the Synapse version is the need to remember to activate the English subtitles; otherwise, the translation does not appear on the screen automatically. VHS versions of the film still can be found in library collections that include variants on the format, so it is important to preview the version that you locate and adapt the suggested activities and questions as needed.

Since this film relies on image rather than text or voice-over narration (a staple of the documentary genre), students should familiarize themselves with the following terms in order to discuss the visual content of the excerpt with precision and authority:

shot composition

shot	A single image
mise en scène	Elements such as setting, lighting, costuming, figure movement, etc. that is “before the camera” and constitute visual style.
camera placement	The position of the camera taking into account angle, distance, and possibly movement of the camera.
subject arrangement	The relationship of people, objects, and background to one another.
framing	The presence of vertical, horizontal, or circular elements that isolate or throw focus to particular elements in a shot.
eye level	The most natural camera position.
high angle	Position of camera above its subject, which suggests weakness or diminishment.
low angle	Position of camera below its subject suggests power or dominance.
aerial shot	An extreme high angle shot used to establish or emphasize a location.
bird’s eye view	An extreme high angle shot that is directly overhead that tends to distort an image.
over-the-shoulder shot	Camera is placed behind a person.
point of view	Camera reveals what a character actually is seeing.

camera movement

tracking	Camera moves horizontally through space.
panning	Camera swivels horizontally on a fixed based.

editing

narrative cut	Combining two shots to advance the story.
Emotional cut	Combining two shots to maximize emotional impact.
Associative cut	Combining two shots to create a visual metaphor.

There’s an instructional video, “Basic Film Terms: A Visual Dictionary,” which is a great primer on the essentials of shot composition, sound, and editing. That 15-minute video could be used to introduce students to visual and auditory examples of cinematic

techniques. Made in the 1970s, its actors' apparel looks dated but the information is still current and useful. This video is available for purchase through Insight Media and probably can be found in local and college library A-V collections.

Since Riefenstahl considered voice-over narration, "an enemy of film" she relies on a terse yet powerful series of verbal messages to introduce the film (Barnouw 103). In his analysis, Eric Barnouw offers the following transcription of that text (103, 105). The words in parentheses reflect alternative translations found in the various English language versions of the film. Discussion of these variants proves to be very fruitful in addressing the importance of diction to convey strong connotative messages.

**Produced by Order of the Führer
Directed by Leni Riefenstahl**

On September 5
1934

20 years
after the outbreak
of the World War

16 years
after the start
of the German suffering (crucifixion)

19 months
after the beginning
of Germany's rebirth (Renaissance)

Adolf Hitler flew
again to Nuremberg
to review the columns of his faithful followers

The film's only other verbal information comes later during the speeches given at the rallies, which place greater emphasis on the political ideology those speeches contain. The opening text can be examined prior to the actual screening to discuss the importance of each piece of information and how it is crucial to framing the visual information that follows as well as the diction and the tone that emerges. When students actually screen the opening credits, they need to consider the typography or font used to place the words on the screen and how that combines with the meaning of the words to further solidify an explicit tone. They also need to determine how music supports the tone of the verbal text and creates the necessary momentum that leads to the opening images of the clouds outside the cockpit window of Hitler's plane.

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When the students actually see Hitler's emergence from the plane and his journey down the streets of Nuremberg to greet the assembled masses, it is important to coach them to try as much as they can to empty themselves of what they know about Hitler. Challenge them to experience Hitler as someone watching the film outside of Germany in 1935 would. This can be easier said than done for many students, but it can afford a valuable lesson in establishing an intellectual distance for the purpose of academic discourse. It is always preferable to build in enough time so students will be able to screen a sequence more than once in its entirety as well as have a chance to examine individual shots (or frames) after seeing them in context. The first time students screen this segment, they should be encouraged to either list their impressions or create a journal response and list any questions that pertain to what they see and hear.

The choice of holding the rally in the town of Nuremberg was highly symbolic. Since much of the architecture at the town's center dates back to medieval times, it visually embodied Germany's proud and enduring cultural heritage for Hitler. Students should recognize the emphasis placed on this setting, especially during the approach of Hitler's plane and the aerial shots that take in the great spires as well as shots of buildings blanketed with banners carrying the Nazi swastika. Even before Hitler emerges from his plane, the shadow of that plane cast along streets, buildings, and the assembled masses is captured in images that chronicle the plane's progress.

Once students form a first impression, the visuals can be broken down into a series of stages: the (black screen) overture, the opening credits, plane's approach and landing, parading down the avenue, and arriving at the headquarters. Upon second viewing students should focus on the position of the camera in relationship to its subject (Hitler, the assembled citizens and soldiers) and the background or environment. A worksheet is provided to help students focus their analysis. Using this tool, they should recognize the patterns in the types of people who are isolated among the assembled onlookers and why those faces in particular dominate the shot selection made by the director and editor. They also will discover that women and children (especially girls) form the content of those "reaction shots." At one point even a cat on a windowsill seems to be making a special point to catch a glimpse of Hitler. Initially little emphasis is placed on the soldiers who are accompanying Hitler's motorcade. There is even more pointed editing when shots of Hitler are combined alternately with statues of a peasant holding two ducks and a seventeenth-century aristocrat holding a book. Those associative cuts create visual metaphors that suggest Hitler is alternately both a provider and an intellectual. It is interesting to note that one camera is literally in the car with Hitler, allowing the viewer, through the use of an over-the-shoulder shot, to share Hitler's perspective. As Hitler arrives at the headquarters, the camera tracks over a column of soldiers at waist level, revealing not their faces but their military issue belt buckles bearing the Nazi eagle insignia; then the editing cuts to a close-up of one helmeted soldier's face turning toward Hitler's emerging in a window several stories above the crowd. This sequence ends with Hitler almost shyly acknowledging the crowd.

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The lack of a voice-over narration gives the filmmaker an opportunity to use music to cultivate an emotional response in the viewer. Students should track the mood set by the music's shifts in tempo and instrumentation. It begins with a strong martial theme then moves to a lighter more lyrical strain and finally ends with a swelling triumphant melody. Since music is the dominant sound element, students should pinpoint the use of sounds from the crowd at various points in the sequence and the absence of such sound that would naturally erupt along the parade. What does the deviation from the music as the sole source of auditory information underscore about Hitler's reception? The examination of sound reveals how carefully it is controlled to maximize a desired emotional response.

Once the various visual and auditory elements are deconstructed, students need to assemble their understanding of how these strategies come together to "advocate" an image of Adolph Hitler that reveals him as a strong and well-liked leader who draws together the common citizens with a well-organized and dutiful military presence, evident in the reception garnered on the first day of this important political rally. Through careful examination of those same images, Hitler does seem strangely reserved, even ill at ease, for a man who is receiving such unmitigated adulation. His behavior doesn't seem to be the natural ceremonial demeanor of a leader, but something odder and more unsettling. Perhaps it is impossible for contemporary viewers to separate what Hitler became from these images that represent the genesis of his power and influence.

The examination of this piece of cinematic propaganda can lead to formal written analysis of the strategies that Riefenstahl uses to project a particular image of Adolph Hitler. Students could also locate examples of footage from television or film that portray other leaders in a strong and biased way. For example, who can forget the portrait of George W. Bush that Michael Moore presents in his film *Fahrenheit 9/11*? Students could analyze Moore's irreverent treatment of Bush versus Riefenstahl's heroic presentation of Hitler. Students can locate examples of propaganda that were created during WWI to warn the American public about the "yellow peril" of the Japanese as in print and nonprint formats. Even Hollywood animators created cartoons in the 1940s to promote war propaganda that startles modern viewers with their deft use of humor and beloved cartoon icons.

Propaganda in any form needs careful and critical analysis. Once students understand how verbal words, images, editing, and sound, contribute to the creation of powerful and seductive messages, they will be able to better recognize, deconstruct, and resist the lure of propaganda in its various forms in historical and contemporary texts.

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Appendix 1

Analyzing a Visual Text: Triumph of the Will

The following excerpt is from a film made by German director Leni Riefenstahl in the 1930s. It was designed to “present” Adolph Hitler to the world and was exhibited at film festivals around the world. The intention of this activity is to examine how Riefenstahl constructed an “image” for Hitler through the use of text, visuals, editing, and sound.

“First Look” Screening

Screen the opening 15 minutes of the film that include the “overture,” and the credits through Hitler’s arrival at the party headquarters in Nuremberg. Watch the sequence without taking any notes. After the screening is concluded, jot down the strongest verbal messages and visuals that help to project an image of Hitler.

Closer Scrutiny Screening

Analyze the sequence considering the following elements:

- Describe the type of music used throughout the sequence and the emotional response that it is designed to provoke in the viewer.
- What impression is made by the use of a specific font and design of the opening credits?
- How does the opening text in those credits use “loaded” language? How is the viewer intended to feel about post-WWI Germany as a result of reading that information?
- What feeling is evoked by the aerial images of the city of Nuremberg?
- What kind of “information” is conveyed by those images of the city?
- How is Adolf Hitler presented in a manner that is designed to “humanize” him, or make him an appealing and attractive figure? Cite three distinct examples.
- What is the content of most of the shots that don’t focus on Hitler himself? Why are they used? What do they emphasize?
- How is Hitler visually associated with two statues? Why make those visuals connections to the leader and what do they emphasize about him?
- How is the military presence revealed prior to Hitler’s arrival at the Party **[[From fact-checking: Unclear whether or not Party should be upper case]]** headquarters late in the sequence? Which aspects of the soldiers are presented in close-up and in a fragmented manner? What does this emphasize about them?

Follow-up Analysis

Formalize the notes that you took to analyze the sequence by creating a written response that examines how the cinematic techniques work in concert with one another to create a cohesive portrait of this political and military leader, Adolph Hitler. To what extent does the opening sequence portray him in a manner that is appealing and powerful?

Recognizing Fallacies, Bias, and Visual Arguments in Popular Documentaries

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Documentaries have always contained some amount of directorial choice and influence: even when a filmmaker simply records events, she still selects what to frame, what to edit, when to start and stop rolling the camera, and what music or other effects to add to develop the film's overall meaning or presentation of a topic. Still, a new type of documentary has emerged in mass culture—one that is less of a factual, objective presentation of ideas and more of a visual debate—an argument relayed in images and sound.

The text *Everything's An Argument* clarifies that logical fallacies are not necessarily indicators of flawed logic, but rather are attempts to move and/or manipulate the audience:

Certain types of argumentative moves are so controversial they have been traditionally classified as *fallacies*, a term we use in this chapter. But you might find it more interesting to think of them as *flashpoints* or *hotspots* because they instantly raise questions about the ethics of argument—that is, whether a particular strategy of argument is fair, accurate, or principled. Fallacies are arguments supposedly flawed by their very nature or structure; as such, you should avoid them in your own writing and challenge them in arguments you hear or read. That said, it's important to appreciate that one person's fallacy may well be another person's stroke of genius (384–385).

Appeals to pathos—particularly scare tactics, slippery slope arguments, and appeals to pity—all attempt to move the audience to experiencing ideas on an emotional, instinctive, and almost visceral level. Three popular documentaries, Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me* (2004), Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), and Robert Greenwald's *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* (2005) all employ emotional appeals and logical fallacies, in addition to carefully established facts and reasoning, to argue their points. In each of these films, the directors assert particular positions on their respective issues. Attuning students to the full range of techniques these documentaries employ will make students more careful readers and more active viewers.

Throughout all of these documentary clips, students will see appeals to pathos—emotional appeals—as well as facts, statistics, and more traditional appeals to logic and reasoning. As students view each documentary segment, they should consider the visual and auditory elements, the tone created, and the thesis or point of view that the

filmmaker asserts. Each section that follows begins with an overview or definition of a fallacy (or fallacies) illustrated by the documentary clip, a detailed description of the segment of the documentary, and “Questions to Consider” to guide class discussion around the documentary segment.

The graphic organizer “Examining and Questioning Documentaries: Analyzing Visual Arguments” (see Appendix 1) can be used to help students track their thinking as they view each segment. For students who need more support or who are new to visual analysis, the other student handout, “Questions to Guide and Support Analysis of Documentaries” (see Appendix 2) can be presented first, or be photocopied on the other side of the graphic organizer, depending on student needs.

All of us are bombarded with visual arguments every day in advertising, film, and print; however, many students may still assume that a documentary results from someone’s happening to catch an event on tape, rather than being a carefully crafted visual argument. As such, today’s students must be savvy enough to recognize the director’s choices, claims, evidence, and use of logical fallacies and emotional appeals—learning to distinguish between films as the objective reporting of facts and films as a form of visual argument.

Appeals to Pathos and the Bandwagon Fallacy

The bandwagon fallacy, or *argumentum ad populum*, is a fallacy that is committed whenever someone asserts that an idea is right because it is popular. Appeals to pathos include all kinds of emotions, including fear, pity, anger, pride, joy, and so on—and become manipulative or unfair when emotions cloud or overpower the facts.

The ending sequence of Robert Greenwald’s *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* employs visual images, running text, camera effects, montage, background music, and voice-overs to create a sense of hope and urgency. This monolith can be stopped by the actions of a few committed ordinary citizens, Greenwald asserts, and the final sequence provides opportunities for students to recognize appeals to pathos—especially pride and hope—in addition to the bandwagon fallacy. Just as many persuasive essays end with an inspiring “call to action,” this film ends with a visual imperative—people must band together to keep companies like Wal-Mart from destroying their neighborhoods.

Review the term “call to action” if needed—what is the purpose of leaving one’s audience with a concrete, tangible step to take? What are the benefits of ending a persuasive text on an inspiring, triumphant note, as opposed to ending with scare tactics?

Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price (Robert Greenwald, 2005)
01:32:36–01:34:48

This clip represents the “call to action” segment of a traditional persuasive essay. After asserting Wal-Mart’s negative impacts on individuals, small businesses, communities, and the global economy, the film relays the story of a community in Inglewood that protested the opening of a Wal-Mart Supercenter in their neighborhood.

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This sequence begins with the announcement from Lou Dobbs that the residents of Inglewood “are voting today on whether to approve the construction of a new shopping development dominated by Wal-Mart.” The scene cuts to a local gathering where residents await the vote, complemented by a voice-over from a reverend who has been interviewed earlier in the film as to her opinions regarding the impact of Wal-Mart in the neighborhood. Gospel music begins to quietly build in the background. Next, the camera pans over a map of the proposed development site, and another voice-over of a newscaster announces “and now, the votes are coming in.” The scene jumps back to the local restaurant where a community member announces “3,100” and the rest of his statement is drowned out by cheers and applause. The camera pans over the cheering crowd, cuts to community members holding protest signs and cheering, and the gospel music builds.

Next, we see another group of people outside holding a sign that reads “No to Measure 04-A: No to Deception” with another voice-over from a newscaster proclaiming, “This small group of people took on a giant and won.” The next scene jumps back to the reverend, who is now cooking in her kitchen, then back to the cheering crowd in the restaurant, then to another crowd who is chanting in unison, “David beat Goliath! David beat Goliath!” This begins the final montage sequence, which presents an array of still photos of protests across the country and headlines from various cities that have voted against Wal-Mart centers in their neighborhoods. Additional voice-overs read the headlines while the titles scroll over the pictures of people holding protest and union signs; occasionally the photographs themselves use the Ken Burns effect and the camera pans over them.

The CEO of Wal-Mart, Lee Scott, is shown one last time, saying, “When you have a group of people, a small group of people, who don’t want you in the community, does that mean you’re not gonna go there?” as the still photos of protestors slide over his face and cover his face and shoulders as he speaks. This fades out to black, and three still photographs appear side by side, of “Thornton, Colorado,” “Sanford, Maine,” and “Plainfield, Illinois,” with the word “VICTORY!” appearing in capital letters diagonally over each photograph in turn, and the voiced-over headlines resume as the gospel music continues. The next series of photographs appear, first two at a time, then four, then six, all with cities and states, and headlines or the word “VICTORY!” The voice-overs begin to jumble together, overlapping each other, and spliced in is Lee Scott’s comment “don’t want you in the community.” As the photographs, headlines, and titles continue, the word “Victory” flashes in red, yellow, or white lettering across the center of the scene, culminating in the word “Victory!” in flames imposed over a billboard that reads, “Don’t ‘Wal-Mart’ Bridgeport. Not here! Help us fight. Call 582-4189” and finally fades to black, with the word “Victory!” in flames remaining as the final image.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does this final sequence make use of biblical allusion, and what effect(s) are created by these biblical elements?
2. What are some of the ways that this segment appeals to pathos? How do the visual images, text, voice-overs, and music combine to create different emotions and moods, and how do these emotions reinforce the “call to action”?
3. What is the effect of repeating Lee Scott’s comment “don’t want you in the community”? Are the sliding photographs effective?
4. How does this segment make use of the bandwagon fallacy? What are some of the ways the director asserts both the popularity and possibility of standing up to giant corporations like Wal-Mart?

Appeal to Tradition

This is a fairly common fallacy, often expressed as “it’s always been that way,” or the belief that because an idea has a history or is older it still holds true and should be followed. While tradition and history should be considered, students should question appeals to tradition as they do other logical fallacies, to determine whether the tradition and history is actually still relevant.

In Chapter 5 of Michael Moore’s film *Bowling for Columbine*, Moore presents the gun ownership supporters, particularly the members of the Michigan Militia, as following tradition and the ideas outlined by the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Bowling for Columbine (Michael Moore, 2002)

Chapter 5, “Michigan Militia”

00:08:06–00:08:58

The segment opens with two members of the Michigan Militia shooting bowling pins, which connects to the title of the film, *Bowling for Columbine*. As a Militia member loads his gun, Moore narrates, “The Michigan Militia became known around the world when on April 19, 1995, two guys living in Michigan who had attended militia meetings, Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, blew up the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people. The Michigan Militia wanted everyone to know that they were nothing like McVeigh and Nichols.” During the narration, the scene cuts to photographs of McVeigh and Nichols, then back to two Militia members shooting targets, then a close-up of the gun as it fires repeatedly. The next cut shows four Militia members on the ground firing, as Moore stands several feet behind them with his hands in his pockets, shifting from foot to foot. The scene cuts to an interview with one of the Militia members, who, as he is trying to fasten his pack around his waist, states, “This is an American tradition . . .

it's an American responsibility to be armed. If you are not armed, you're not responsible. Who's going to defend your kids? The cops? The federal government?" and another man responds, off-camera, "No, none of them." The Militia member being interviewed continues, "It's your job to defend you and yours. If you don't do it, you're in dereliction of duty as an American. Period." The scene cuts to Militia member #2, who says, "We're just here to let them know we're here to help. We're not the bogeymen that we're made out to be."

Questions to Consider:

1. What seems to be Moore's attitude toward the Michigan Militia? How do you know?
2. What effect(s) does Moore create by showing the wide shot of the Militia members shooting targets while he stands behind them?
3. The first Militia member who is interviewed cites as his reason for participating in the militia, "This is an American tradition...it's an American responsibility to be armed. If you are not armed, you're not responsible. Who's going to defend your kids? The cops? The federal government?" He refers indirectly to the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which states, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a Free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." The Militia member argues based on an appeal to tradition—that because the Founding Fathers asserted the importance of a "well-regulated militia" and "the right of the people to keep and bear arms," all Americans have a responsibility to have weapons and know how to use them. Do you accept his reasoning? Does Michael Moore seem to agree with him? Explain.

Faulty Analogy and *Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc*

Two other common fallacies are the "faulty analogy," where two things are compared and suggested to be equivalent, but the comparison may not actually be reasonable, and "false causality." Often, two things will be observed to occur simultaneously or sequentially, and people assume that one causes the other. "False causality" is also often referred to as "correlation without causation," or by the Latin terminology, *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* (After this, therefore because of this). Students should be aware that just because two things are often observed together does not necessarily imply that one causes the other, and that whenever writers (or in this case, filmmakers) assert a connection or analogy between two ideas, we as thinkers must first question whether the comparison is reasonable, and second, whether the two ideas or events do have a cause-and-effect relationship.

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Chapter 8 of *Bowling for Columbine* suggests a connection between one of the main employers of Littleton, Colorado, the defense contractor Lockheed Martin, and the Columbine school shooting.

Bowling for Columbine Chapter 8, “Littleton”

00:23:38 00:25:57

OPTIONAL: Chapter 9 (montage sequence, “What A Wonderful World”)

00:25:57– 00:28:17

NOTE: Chapter 9 includes graphic images and violence, including close-ups of corpses, people being shot, a child in a hospital bed, bodies being thrown, and screaming as the plane crashes into the World Trade Center on 9/11. Use professional judgment—this film is R-rated, and this segment is one that many students and parents may object to.

This segment from Chapter 8 opens with a panning shot of the Lockheed Martin sign in Littleton, Colorado, with the credit “World’s Largest Weapons Maker” displayed at the bottom of the screen. The scene cuts inside the Lockheed Martin facility. Moore interviews Evan McCollum of Lockheed Martin’s Public Relations, (title shown) who stands on an assembly floor in front of a large missile-like object that reads “US Air Force.”

McCollum says, “This facility, where we’re located right now, and two other major facilities, where our employees work, are either in or very near Littleton, so we have over 5,000 employees at these facilities, quite a number of whom live in Littleton, many of whom have children who attend Columbine High School.”

The camera pans to two blue signs that read “ATLAS FINAL ASSEMBLY,” and “TITAN FINAL ASSEMBLY,” then back to McCollum as he continues: “I suppose in one way you can say that what happened at Columbine High School is a microcosm of what happens throughout the world.”

Next the camera focuses on the side of a truck that reads “We Are Columbine” with a ribbon logo. Michael Moore says, off-camera, “You know these signs we see around here, the ones that say, ‘We Are Columbine’? Is that how you, Lockheed Martin, feels? That you’re the biggest employer here in Littleton, you’re the biggest weapons maker, ‘We Are Columbine’?” Camera cuts back to McCollum as he responds, “I think we probably embody that spirit, that yeah, we’re all members of this community, and it behooves us to help one another and to reach out to assist one another, yeah.” Then Moore narrates over the next section: “He told us that no one in Littleton, including the executives at Lockheed, could figure out why the boys at Columbine had resorted to violence.” As Moore narrates, first McCollum gestures toward what is built, then Moore touches the metal object suspended in the air and puts his palm flat on it, pushing on it. The camera returns to McCollum as he says, “Why, why would kids do this? Some of the

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root of that probably has to do with their anger about various issues. And we became aware of a program that provides anger-management training. And so we made a \$100,000 contribution to the Jefferson County Schools to use this training in the schools. We hope to help both teachers and students learn alternative ways to deal with anger.” The camera cuts away from McCollum, pans through one of the cylindrical objects, and focuses in on a blue banner that reads “QUALITY EQUALS MISSION SUCCESS” as Moore says, off-camera, “So you don’t think our kids say to themselves, ‘Well, gee, you know, Dad goes off to the factory every day...’” Cut to assembly floor—inaudible conversation between two workers, in front of another missile-shaped object, and a yellow bumper sticker displayed on the side of a red cart that reads “Union Yes”). Cut to a wide-angle shot of the assembly floor with these two workers, one handing something to another man while Moore continues, “and, you know, he built missiles.’ These are weapons of mass destruction . . .” Camera cuts back to McCollum, who nods as Moore asks, still off-camera, “What’s the difference between that mass destruction and the mass destruction over at Columbine High School?”

The camera remains on McCollum as he responds, “I guess I don’t see that connection, that specific connection . . . because the missiles you’re talking about were built and designed to defend us from somebody else who would be aggressors against us.” Cut to blue banner that reads “IT HAS TO BE FOREIGN OBJECT FREE.” Cuts back to McCollum as he continues, “Societies and countries and governments do things that annoy one another, but we have to learn to deal with that annoyance or that anger or that frustration in appropriate ways.” Camera pans from McCollum’s pointed hand down the length of the room, over the missile-shaped object, as McCollum says, “We don’t get irritated with somebody and just cause we’re mad at them . . .” camera cuts back to McCollum, “drop a bomb or shoot at them or fire a missile at them.”

Questions to Consider:

1. Moore suggests a correlation between the industry of Lockheed Martin and the Columbine tragedy when he asks, “What’s the difference between that mass destruction [the building of missiles at Lockheed Martin] and the mass destruction over at Columbine High School?” What are some visual or nonverbal ways that Moore suggests this connection in this segment?
2. McCollum rejects the connection between Lockheed Martin’s industry presence in Littleton and the school shooting, and he attributes the Columbine tragedy to other factors. To what extent do you agree with the connection Moore suggests? What other factors may have influenced the perpetrators of the Columbine shooting?

OPTIONAL: Chapter 9 (montage sequence, “What a Wonderful World”)

00:25:57 – 00:28:17

Chapter 9 contains a montage sequence of just over two minutes, while the song “What a Wonderful World” plays. This montage includes both black-and-white and color historical footage. Text at the bottom of the first segment reads, “1953: U.S. overthrows Prime Minister Mossadaq of Iran. / U.S. installs Shah as dictator.” The montage closes with the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center, and ending text reads, “Sept. 11, 2001: Osama bin Laden uses his expert CIA training to murder 3,000 people.”

Questions to Consider:

3. How does using archival footage, both black-and-white and color, add to this montage?
4. What effect is created by juxtaposing these disturbing and at times, horrific images, with the song “What a Wonderful World”?
5. Does this montage sequence strengthen or weaken Moore’s assertion from the previous chapter between the missiles that Lockheed Martin provides and the Columbine tragedy? Explain.

Scare Tactics and Appeals to Authority (Ethos)

One of the most common emotional appeals is to use scare tactics—to convince the audience to fear the opposition. It’s important to remember that fallacies need not be logically unsound; appealing to scare tactics often relies on presenting the actual facts, but arranging or presenting them in a way that exaggerates or heightens fear. By enumerating the diseases and health conditions one-by-one in this segment, Spurlock underscores the number of health issues created by fast food consumption. The final image—adult onset diabetes—serves as a transition to the expert testimony that follows.

In addition to emotional appeals (pathos) and offering facts and logical reasoning (logos), savvy arguments also include appeals to authority—ethical appeals or “ethos”—that rest on the credibility, knowledge, and trustworthiness of the speaker. Claims about medical issues become more urgent and more authentic when stated by doctors than by a filmmaker on a one-month fast-food binge. This clip opens and closes with appeals to ethos: it begins with the comments of a former Surgeon General, David Satcher, M.D., and ends with both Tommy Thompson’s press conference at the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and the opinions of Dr. William J. Klish of the Texas Children’s Hospital.

Spurlock uses appeals to ethos by opening and closing with these health experts; the credibility of these three men, and the logical appeals they advance through stating facts and statistics, offset the scare tactics used in the middle of the segment. By juxtaposing the number of health conditions with the statements of health experts, Spurlock makes the litany of diseases and maladies that much more believable and scary.

***Super Size Me* (Morgan Spurlock, 2004)**

Chapter 11, “The Impact”

00:29:09– 00:30:15

This segment opens with the former surgeon general, sitting in front of a bookshelf, speaking about the health costs and impact that fast food lifestyles have had on children—he gives the statistic that “in the last 20 to 25 years, we’ve actually seen a doubling of overweight and obese children and adolescents.” The scene cuts to a McDonald’s, with people walking in and out in front of it, while Spurlock narrates, “and this weight gain has been linked to countless health problems later in life, such as hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, gall bladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, and respiratory problems, endometrial, breast, prostate, and colon cancer, dyslipidemia, steatohepatitis, insulin resistance, asthma, hyperuricemia, reproductive hormone abnormalities, polycystic ovarian syndrome, impaired fertility, and adult onset diabetes.”

As Spurlock reads the list, large square cartoon images portraying each disease fly in to the center of the screen, then miniaturize, and begin tiling over the McDonald’s, beginning with the upper-left hand corner, and proceeding to the right and down across the screen, until the last image covers the square in the lower-right hand corner. The squares dissolve, and the camera focuses on the body of an overweight young woman, from her shoulders to her knees, while Spurlock continues, “In fact, if current trends continue, one out of every three children born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime.” As he says this, the camera zooms out to reveal the young woman and her friends standing in front of what appears to be a school building, with two flags posted on either side of the building entrance. The young woman and her friends have their faces blurred.

Next, the camera presents an exterior shot of the United States Health and Human Services building, then cuts inside to a press conference in which Tommy Thompson, the United States Health and Human Services Secretary, states, “At least 17 million Americans now have Type 2 diabetes, about one out of every 20 people.” The scene then cuts to William J. Klish, M.D., of Texas Children’s Hospital, who is seated in a hospital waiting-room setting, and continues, “If the diabetes starts before the age of 15, you lose somewhere between 17 and 27 years of lifespan.”

Questions to Consider:

1. Why might Spurlock have used cartoon illustrations of each of the diseases or health conditions? Are these illustrations effective? What does Spurlock achieve by having these illustrations tile over the McDonald’s exterior?

2. Aside from protecting the privacy of the individuals filmed, why might the faces of the overweight people be blurred?
3. Based on this segment, who might Spurlock’s intended audience be?
4. Spurlock uses all three major rhetorical appeals—ethos, pathos, and logos—in this section. Which of these appeals is most convincing? Explain.

Slippery Slope

The slippery slope fallacy often appears in conjunction with scare tactics: both are alarmist, and while both often include or refer to actual facts, the slippery slope fallacy suggests that when one event occurs, an upsetting, disturbing, or increasingly negative series of events will inevitably follow. The slippery slope fallacy assumes that one event will set off a chain reaction, a domino effect, that takes many forms—but always ends in disaster.

Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price (Robert Greenwald, 2005)

Chapter 2, “Out of Business”

00:10:15– 00:12:46

Chapter 2 includes the story of the Hunter family, small-business owners who closed their hardware store when Wal-Mart entered their community. This section begins with Jon Hunter walking into the Middlefield Banking Company, holding envelopes, as he narrates, “I put this business plan together, with the help of different organizations and people. I went to several banks to check on funding.” The camera follows Jon inside the bank’s doors, then as he turns around to exit the bank and continues speaking, “When I got an appraisal on the business and the buildings,” then cuts to him outside, looking through binoculars, “the appraiser actually came in and devalued the building.” As Jon loads his rifle, he explains, “And here I figured it would be appreciating after ten years.” His name is displayed again at the bottom of the screen as he continues, “And they came in with a lower value. And I questioned him, ‘How can this be? With inflation, the economy’s not great, but it still should be holding its value.’ And he said, ‘No. Anytime a Wal-Mart’s coming into a town, they knock the values down, because sooner or later, there’s going to be a bunch of empty buildings, and none of them are going to be able to sell.’”

He shoots his rifle, and the scene cuts to Don Hunter, inside the now-empty store building, who says, “Any community on a grand opening is going to see a change—drop in sales. It happens regardless of whether it’s Wal-Mart or somebody else. You’ll get a drop in sales. So there will be a dramatic change of some type. How long it’ll last—it can’t last forever because you can’t stand the overhead, if you don’t have the business, so something has to happen . . . and let’s hope it doesn’t come to that point, but you never know.” Screen fades to black. Camera then reopens and zooms in on a bright orange flyer,

which reads, “INVENTORY CLOSEOUT SALE: AFTER 43 YEARS, H&H HARDWARE IS CLOSING” followed by a cut to the store window, in which a sign reading “For Sale: Lennon’s Listings, Lennon Realty, Inc.” is posted.

The scene cuts back inside the store, where Jon is speaking (though he is in shadow), “Well, right now, after we liquidate the product, I’m in the process of trying to sell the . . .” and the camera pans across the store—the empty shelves and remaining items, “we own the building, so I’m trying to sell the building.” The scene cuts outside, where Jon is atop a ladder, posting a bright yellow sign that reads, “FOR SALE—Prime Location, 16,000+ square feet, 4 units . . .” The scene cuts to a horse-drawn carriage riding in front of the H&H Hardware store (which has an American flag hanging out front) and Jon says, “I’ve got a couple people on the line that want to talk to me within the next couple of days” (cut inside to a series of shots of the darkened store) “and hopefully we’ll work something out” (cuts back to the exterior of the store, zooms out to reveal the H&H Hardware sign, which is illuminated), and Jon continues, “where we can sell the property,” (cuts back inside to the darkened store and now completely empty shelves) “and I’ll be able to pay all my bills and walk away without any debt.” Cuts to Jon inside, standing by a filing cabinet, “That’s if it all works out right.” Cuts back to him in shadow in the darkened store, looking over the shelves, “I pray that it will.” Dissolves to the exterior of the store at twilight, and the lights turn off, both inside the store and the neon H&H Hardware sign. Fade to black.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why might Greenwald open with one family’s story? Even though this is one small business’ story, what might this scene suggest about similar small businesses?
2. What effects does Greenwald create by fading to black, and by shooting the final scene of the store at twilight?

Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price (Robert Greenwald, 2005)

Chapter 3, “Razing Main Street America”

00:12:47– 00:13:55

This scene contains a more overt use of the slippery slope fallacy, using montages and music. It opens in sepia tone, with Weldon Nicholson, a former Wal-Mart Store Manager Trainer, who claims, “I remember that like it was yesterday. The hell with it. Wal-Mart will buy the damn town. We’ll shut them down.” The scene cross-fades Nicholson, over a pan shot (still in sepia tone) over empty streets and Main Street buildings, and continues with jump cuts to other shots, both panning and still/zooms of empty storefronts and empty parking spaces. Nicholson, continues, “We used to drive through towns, going, ‘6 months. 3 months. 6 months of when we’d be closing them. You drive all the way up to

New York City on Route 80, you can pull off at Clarion, or any of those towns there, and you'll see a Wal-Mart up on the hill. You'll see a Perkins and maybe a Burger King, then you'll drive farther into the town, and you'll see an empty town. It looks like a neutron bomb hit it." Song begins—Bruce Springsteen singing "This Land is Your Land" over a series of shots of empty Main Street buildings and deserted streets, all in a sepia-tone wash. Many of the buildings have "For Rent" signs displayed in the windows. Next, the voice of Al Norman, credited as the "Founder of Sprawl-Busters," narrates, "They don't get it. When we start talking about quality of life, they start talking about cheap underwear." The scene changes to full color—a large house with a sprinkler in the front yard, and Norman continues, "I keep saying, 'You can't buy small-town quality of life at a Wal-Mart.'" The shot pans, then cuts to a dog in the back of a pick-up truck. Norman continues, "But once they steal it," shot cuts to a group of people petting a dog in front of a fountain, then a toddler playing in the fountain. Norman finishes, "You can't get it back at any price." Scene cross-fades past a church, down a street, then over the street intersection sign "Main" and fades back to sepia tone as "This Land is Your Land" continues.

Questions to Consider:

3. Why might Greenwald have chosen sepia tone for the empty Main Street shots? What effect does he create by jumping back to full color, and then again to sepia tone?
4. What emotions are raised by the song "This Land is Your Land"? What other techniques help convey the sense of inevitability that this will happen to all small businesses and communities?

Hasty Generalizations and Statistical Fallacies

Benjamin Disraeli is credited as saying, "There are three kinds of lies—lies, damn lies, and statistics." Statistics can be a powerful tool; appeals to logos through facts and data help writers and speakers argue their points responsibly—but students must remember that statistics should be questioned, and not accepted blindly. Students need to question the validity of sources, as well as the currency, relevancy, and accuracy of the statistics presented.

Hasty generalizations occur when people jump to conclusions based on data from a sample size that is not large enough—generally after noticing that something holds true in their personal experiences or observations, and then extracting from that a more general trend.

Curriculum Module: Using Documentary Film as an Introduction to Rhetoric

Super Size Me (Morgan Spurlock, 2004)

Chapter 18, “Fast Food Advertising”

00:44:48– 00:46:52

This excerpt begins with Margo G. Wootan, D.Sc., representing the Center for Science in the Public Interest, who continues, “By the time kids are able to speak, most of them can say ‘McDonald’s.’”

Scene cuts to a school, where Spurlock interviews five first-graders from Worcester, Massachusetts, and shows them pictures of famous people. The first picture he shows is of George Washington—one girl recognizes it, and another boy, when asked who George Washington is, responds, “He was the fourth President.” Another boy says George Washington “freed the slaves.” A third boy adds, “And he could never tell a lie.” The next picture Spurlock shows, with the question, “Who’s that?” draws blank looks from all five children—the last boy ventures, “George W. Bush?” to which Spurlock responds, “No. That’s a good guess, though,” and then reveals the picture to the audience—it’s an artist’s illustration of Jesus. The next one he asks “Who is this?” about is the Wendy’s logo—one boy identifies her as “Goldilocks” while another girl says, “I forgot the name, but I think I know.” When Spurlock asks, “Yeah, where have you seen her?” one of the boys responds, “That picture’s on the sign.” And another boy responds immediately, “Wendy.” When shown Ronald McDonald, the first two boys immediately respond “McDonald. Ronald McDonald.” Spurlock asks, “What does he do?” and the first girl responds, “He was helping people at the cash register.” The second boy answers, “He works at McDonald’s” and adds “I love their pancakes and sausage,” giving two thumbs up. The third boy explains that “he brings all his friends to McDonald’s for a happy meal.” The fourth, a girl, when asked where she’s seen him, replies, “On television...on the commercials.” And the last boy comments that “he’s the character that made McDonald’s . . . and he does a lot of funny stuff on TV.”

Spurlock follows this segment with more statistics—narrating over a cartoon of a large man in a red suit with a yellow tie, who is inside a bank vault, heaping bags of money and cash from his pockets into a pile on his left, capped by the figure “1.4 BILLION” as he announces the statistic. Spurlock says, “Companies spend billions making sure you know their product. In 2001, on direct media advertising—that’s radio, television, and print—McDonald’s spent 1.4 billion dollars worldwide. On direct media advertising, Pepsi spent more than a billion dollars.” Pepsi is represented by a smaller, but still overweight man, wearing a blue suit and red tie, who jumps out behind the McDonald’s figure, and begins heaping coins and cash into a pile on his left, capped by the figure “1 BILLION.” Spurlock goes on, “To advertise its candy, Hershey Foods spent under a mere 200 million dollars internationally.” Hershey’s is represented by a large bald man in a brown suit with a black tie, who jumps out from behind Pepsi, taking coins and cash from his pockets and putting them into a pile on his left, capped by the figure “200 MILLION.” A thin figure in a green suit peeks out from behind Hershey as Spurlock states, “In its peak year, the Five-a-Day fruit and vegetable campaigns total advertising

budget in all media was a lowly \$2 million dollars, 100 times less than just the direct media budget of one candy company.” The green-suited thin figure puts a single silver coin in a pile, capped by the figure “\$2 MILLION,” and looks dejected while the other three figures stand by their large piles and jeer at him.

Questions to Consider:

1. Margo G. Wootan claims that “most kids can say McDonald’s” by the time they can speak. What techniques does Spurlock use in this segment to make it seem that the children overwhelmingly recognize McDonald’s? What effect does he create by including the image of Jesus? What other famous people, whom Spurlock did not include, might have been more easily recognized by these children?
2. What effects do the cartoon illustrations and piles of money achieve? How do they emphasize the statistics Spurlock presents? Why might those suit colors have been chosen for each of the four characters, and what might the colors and the relative sizes of the figures (especially the green suited Five-a-Day figure) represent, both literally and symbolically? Why might Spurlock have chosen this method for relaying these statistics, as opposed to, for example, a black screen with white text, or a bar graph showing the relative amounts?

Final Thoughts

As modern documentaries and arguments-through-film continue to gain popularity and draw larger audiences, students must learn to view critically and question what they see and hear. These documentary hybrids present both fact and fallacy; recognizing the combinations of appeals to ethos, logos, and pathos will also aid students to better understand arguments in printed or spoken form. Further, discussing what color, music, and editing add to visual texts will give students greater access to critical literacy skills. Fallacies can be powerful—after all, writers, speakers, politicians, and filmmakers wouldn’t use them if they weren’t effective—but fallacies and other manipulative techniques can backfire if the user is unaware of how these strategies will be received by the audience, and these techniques, as *Everything’s an Argument* asserts, raise serious ethical questions—because fallacies move us to react, rather than to consider and weigh carefully what we read, hear, and see.

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Appendix 1

Examining and Questioning Documentaries: Analyzing Visual Arguments

Name of film: _____ Director: _____

Chapter title or segment running time: _____

What Do You See?:		What Do You Hear?:	
Describe the images: What do you literally see?	Printed text, subtitles, or statistics	Narration, interview, or voice over	Background music / sounds

What Do You See?

What tone or feeling does the filmmaker create?	What point might the filmmaker be trying to make?	What ideas, images, or sounds do you find persuasive or convincing?	What questions or points of disagreement do you have?

Discuss and Reflect: What potential “flashpoints,” appeals to emotion, or logical fallacies do you notice in this segment?

Drawing conclusions: On a separate paper, evaluate the effectiveness of this segment—is the argument convincing? Why or why not? Remember to acknowledge complexity.

Appendix 2

Questions to Guide and Support Analysis of Documentaries

Visual analysis

Figures : Are people in the frame? What do they look like?

Figure/ground contrast : What do you notice about the people or the background?

Patterns and Grouping : Are any images repeated? Do people or items seem posed? What is the relation between the people or the objects in the frame?

Movement : Does the scene contain still photographs or moving images? What direction is the movement, for example, from left to right, or top to bottom?

Framing/Marginalizing : What is centered? What is near the edges of the shot?

Color : What colors, if any, dominate the scene? What feelings might the color(s) produce?

Sound analysis

What background music is used? Does it have lyrics? Does it match the feeling of the scene, or does the music differ from the visual images? What effects does the music create?

What is said in this segment? Does the spoken segment or narration match the visual, or is there a disconnect between what is seen and what is heard?

Acknowledging Complexity

As you write about visual arguments, it is often helpful to consider both what you agree with and what you find unsettling or unconvincing. To assert a thesis strongly, however, requires that you make determinations about what you see and read—not simply state that there are two sides to everything. It's often helpful to keep in mind the “Yes, But . . .” or “No, However . . .” approach when considering persuasive texts to help develop your own point of view and thesis. If you can identify where you begin to disagree with the viewpoint the filmmaker asserts, you will have something to write about.

Transition words to help acknowledge complexity:

while	although
even though	however
granted	ultimately

Synthesis on the Screen: Why we Fight

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From the time the synthesis essay was announced as a new component of the AP English Language and Composition Examination, teachers have wondered how to show their students what a successful “synthesis” looks like. In compelling ways, Eugene Jarecki’s filmed documentary *Why We Fight* provides an effective synthesis model. As the work’s director, and therefore its chief rhetor, Jarecki uses a wide array of visual and spoken source material in order to shape his argument. In effect, he weaves these sources together, all the while explaining and elaborating upon his film’s title and its central text.

To the delight of AP English Language teachers, Jarecki unifies *Why We Fight* by emphasizing a portion of an important speech: President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s 1961 Farewell Address. In connection with a thematic unit concerning the truth of war, I’d previously had students view another powerful documentary, Errol Morris’s Academy Award–winning *The Fog of War*. In that film, Morris documents and examines the details of former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara’s life as his primary means to present “lessons” out of an important man’s extensive story. However, I was intrigued by Jarecki’s different choice: instead of a documentary driven by biography he creates a synthesis driven by the most intriguing ideas of a single speech.

As students learn the ropes of rhetorical analysis, many encounter President John F. Kennedy’s Inaugural Address, delivered just three days after Eisenhower’s January 17, 1961, farewell. Kennedy’s most famous speech is filled with rhetorical flourishes, elegant moves, and powerful phrases, all delivered at an engaging pace, by a vigorous, fresh speaker. Almost certainly, the bracing energy and trappings of JFK’s inaugural address marginalized, at least initially, Eisenhower’s comparatively dour rhetorical offering. As Jarecki’s film shows, Eisenhower delivered his remarks from a drab White House room to a television audience likely more interested in anticipating his successor’s arrival than reflecting upon his serious warning: that the emergence of the military-industrial complex was a significant threat to democracy in the United States. Black-and-white television images of Eisenhower delivering the speech are nearly as flat as his delivery—part of the context for understanding Eisenhower’s Farewell Address involves appreciation of television’s impact in January 1961. However, the speech stands up to close reading and analysis. And eventual student viewing of Eugene Jarecki’s *Why We Fight* is deeply enhanced by such a reading.

Accordingly, my students read and annotated the entire speech prior to class, and followed up with discussion of the context, the speaker and his aims, the content, the audience, and the speaker’s tactics. Then, we headed for AmericanRhetoric.com, which

harbors full audio and video versions of the speech. Since they had previously studied Kennedy's Inaugural Address, many students were struck by Eisenhower's "long-winded" commentary and awkward gestures, such as when he fiddles with his glasses and stumbles over the teleprompter's script. Still, they singled out several passages for special attention. Several students identified a predictable Cold War-era call for military readiness ("A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. Our arms must be mighty, ready for instant action, so that no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk his own destruction.") while others noted persistent calls for balance. Thankfully, most students discerned the president's warning about the military-industrial complex:

Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations.

This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.

The above portion of the farewell address plays a central role in Jarecki's documentary. It is important to note that Jarecki does not use Eisenhower's entire speech; in deciding what to put in and what to leave out, Jarecki synthesizes his source to suit his own purposes. Jarecki surrounds key phrases of the speech with other key images and remarks of other prominent "characters" in the documentary. In effect, he recognizes that his audience needs further explanation, examples, and content if they are to understand the true substance of Eisenhower's remarks. Through synthesis, Jarecki makes his argument.

Intriguingly, Eisenhower's remarks are most prominently featured on the menu screen of the DVD version. When showing the film to a class, it is worthwhile to let the entire menu sequence play as it provides a virtual "highlight reel" of Eisenhower's speech.

First, there is sound, as a television announcer introduces the 1961 home audience of “ladies and gentlemen” to the president. Next, when Eisenhower appears, we do not see the straight and steady perspective of the source broadcast; Jarecki gradually moves in, bringing us closer and closer to the president. Eisenhower’s words, accompanied by solemn piano notes, continue even as his image gives way to shots of mid-twentieth-century soldiers in combat, rolling armaments, and John F. Kennedy delivering his first presidential speech. Words, sound, and images all matter. At the end of the menu sequence, Eisenhower fades from view as a single bell tolls.

The actual documentary opens not with Eisenhower but with shots of bright blue desert sky that towers over parked, dormant military aircraft. The first voice we hear is that of the 1961 television announcer introducing the farewell address. Shots of the 1961 press in action follow, then, after a “Good evening, my fellow Americans,” Jarecki excerpts the speech for the first of several times. During this initial excerpt, Jarecki cuts away from Eisenhower back to the introductory desert scene while the words play on.

Four significant portions of the film employ clips from Eisenhower’s speech. On each occasion the context for their use is different. For instance, two of Jarecki’s major sources, former CIA agent Chalmers Johnson (1967-1973) and retired Air Force and Pentagon officer Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski, provide commentary near the end of the film that amplifies particularly sobering and prophetic elements of Eisenhower’s speech. Johnson asserts that we have failed to heed Eisenhower’s call to vigilance while Kwiatkowski explains how her values diverged from those of the military-industrial-Congressional complex. In effect, Jarecki cites the knowledge and experience of these sources to illustrate his thesis: that Eisenhower’s warning has, unfortunately, been ignored.

The juxtaposition of Eisenhower’s argument with selected compelling visual evidence, such as news and military footage from several twentieth-century wars that involved the United States, propels Jarecki’s film. In effect, Jarecki uses the speech as a “character” in the film. At times he moves the speech into the forefront then slips it into the background as he elaborates on the speech’s meaning by combining its words with provocative images and insights from other sources. In effect, these sources become “source characters” who move through the documentary. Jarecki does not simply drop source characters into his film, he uses their presence, moving them in and out in order to develop his points. He is in control of the sources as he makes his own argument.

Jarecki’s sources vary. Some of the source characters represent a reasonably balanced array of “expert” perspectives. Although American warfare practices are at issue, words and images of prominent individuals who work on the “right” side of public policy and industry are regularly integrated into the film. Frank messengers include Senator John McCain; Richard Perle, fellow at the American Enterprise Institute; and William Kristol, editor of *The Weekly Standard*. Their views typically contrast with those of Joseph Cirincione of the Center for American Progress, Charles Lewis of the Center for Public Integrity, and Gore Vidal, author of *Imperial America*. While these divergent voices never

share the same room, thanks to the flow of the documentary, they intermittently share presence on film and in the beholding eye and mind of the viewer.

Many of Jarecki's other source characters represent a spectrum of "ordinary" citizens who have their own particular answers to his implied question "Why do we fight?" We meet Anh Duong, who fled Vietnam in 1975 as a child refugee and now, ironically, works in a lab that specializes in explosive technologies. Like so many of her fellow Americans, she values "freedom." An unnamed Raytheon armaments worker expresses her own ethical/economic dilemma: "I don't guess I'm real proud of the fact that I make bombs, you know, for what they're used for, I think about, when I see something explode over there, did my hands actually help make that, you know? I'd really rather be helping Santa make toys . . ." We hear from and see military pilots who communicate the pride they commonly experienced by doing their duty as they dropped the first bombs of the Iraq war. And just as Jarecki presents ordinary Americans offering their views on why we fight, Jarecki includes contrasting interviews with shell-shocked Iraqi citizens who live with the direct consequences of dropped bombs.

But the most compelling source character voices and stories in the film belong to William Solomon and Wilton Sekzer. In the immediate aftermath of his mother's death, young Solomon considers his own economic situation and comes to see military enlistment as solving his problems. Jarecki does not offer Solomon's story of faith in the military without a challenge; while the audience has just heard Will tell his story, acoustic music and an Army recruitment video play while the young man guzzles a quart of milk. Suddenly, a screen message appears: "Between 2002 and 2003, the Pentagon spent \$1.2 billion on advertising intended to increase recruitment." When we first meet Sekzer he is a sad figure, a retired Brooklyn cop who lost a son in the 9/11 attacks on New York City and now looks for meaning in his son's death. He seeks, through his nation's military action, some sort of retribution. Jarecki purposefully returns to Sekzer several times, each time revealing another dimension of an apparently simple ex-cop who, it turns out, harbors complicated motivations. After we discover his efforts to inscribe a bomb destined to fall in Iraq with a message in "Loving Memory" of his son, we learn, through sound and images, that Sekzer is a Vietnam combat veteran, a person who knows what it means to make war for his country. Ultimately, Jarecki invites his audience to empathize with Sekzer's sense of deep betrayal when he comments on President George W. Bush's eventual admission that no connection existed between the 9/11 attacks and Saddam Hussein's regime. Jarecki shows us Bush, then cuts back to Sekzer whose sadness and isolation appear more complex and pervasive than we could initially appreciate. By the end of the film, Jarecki has presented an array of images and voices that have emphasized not only the substance, but also the apparent futility of Eisenhower's 1961 warning.

Jarecki's argument can, of course, be seen in light of his array of choices involving images and source characters. The sources he presents in support of his explanation are not in agreement but speak to each other. Bound together by the film, they invite the members of the audience—including, of course, students—to reconsider their own views, then join the debate about warfare.

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How well does *Why We Fight* work with AP students? The film not only provides an occasion for analysis but, through its synthesis, invites student reengagement with Eisenhower's thesis. In his reflections on the unit, one discerning student suggested that he had gained a perspective of his own: "Eisenhower's speech is referenced repeatedly as the ideal attitude towards the military-industrial complex: constant vigilance. Testimony from people who have been affected by or involved in recent conflicts like the Iraq war are used to illustrate how the United States has deviated from the suggestions of President Eisenhower. The contrast between the 'truth' of situations and government explanations of them suggests hidden motives behind . . . foreign policy." Finally, this documentary asks students what it means to assume the continuing responsibilities of citizenship. In an interview with the BBC, Jarecki comments on the story of William Sekzer, saying that "if a viewer can see [such] a man on the screen . . . who, after losing his son in 9/11 . . . comes to understand that the extraordinary patriotism . . . of his youth was misguided, and turns in another direction, that's the kind of learning I think everyone should seek."

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