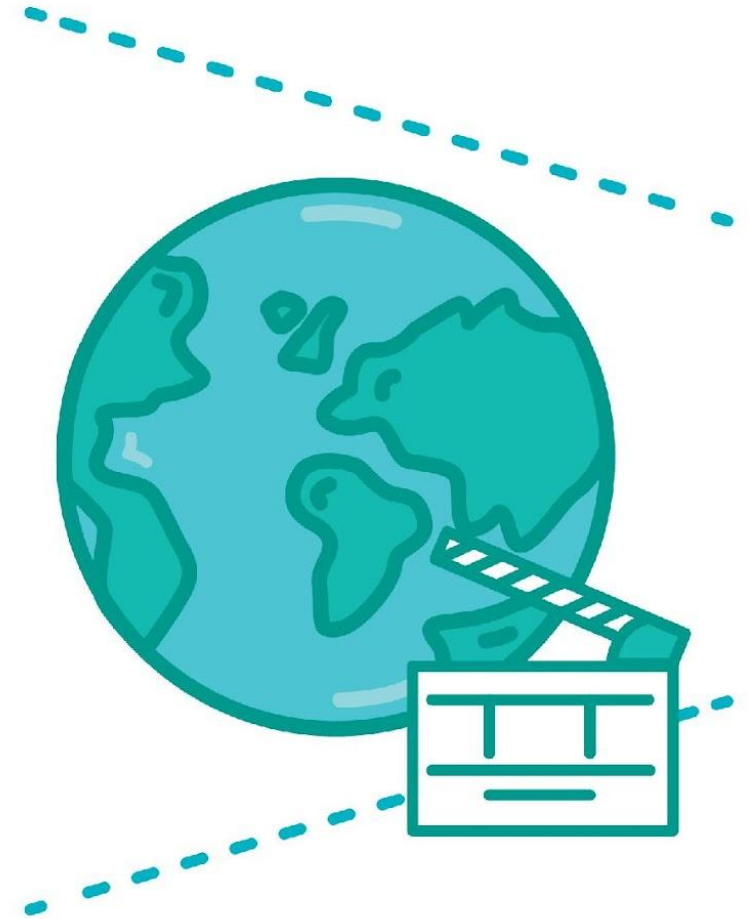


What is a documentary?

What is a documentary?

The main purpose of documentary filmmaking is contained within the name: document.

When making a documentary you are trying to document an aspect of reality, focusing on a story, event or individual.



Documentary techniques

Voiceover – commentary by the filmmaker or actor, spoken to camera, or added to the soundtrack during editing.

Vox pops – ordinary people in the street are asked their opinion on a particular subject.

Interviews – allow people being filmed to speak directly about events, prompted by questions asked by the filmmaker/interviewer.

Re-enactment/reconstruction – filmed artificial scenes of an event which have been reconstructed and acted out based on information about the event.

Archive footage – existing footage of something already filmed from a long time ago that has been saved. You can use this in your documentary to show historical events, borrowing from the BBC archive for example.

Documentary convention examples



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Archive



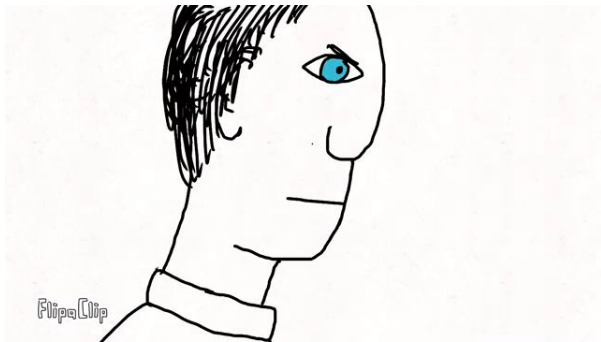
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Interview



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Voiceover



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Animation



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Re-enactment



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Vox pops

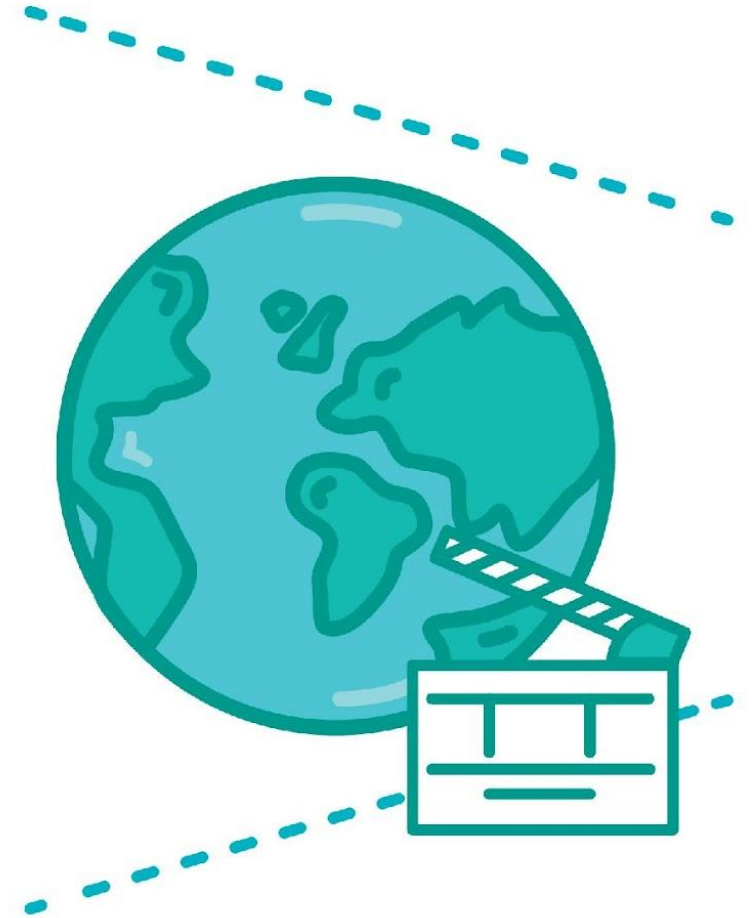
Your climate subject

Think about a climate issue and how this relates to your local area, and think about the following questions:

1. What effects can you see in your area?
2. Are there any positive developments you think could be made in your local area?
3. Is there anyone you could interview for insights into your topic?

Planning your documentary

- Gathering evidence.
- Deciding on a style for your documentary.
- Constructing a storyboard.
- Planning interview questions (if relevant).



Gathering evidence

Having reliable information about your chosen topic will make planning and structuring your documentary easier while also ensuring that your content is factual.

When researching the topic you may wish to pull out:

- Key facts and statistics
- Information about people and places that are affected
- Information about your source

Storyboarding

Storyboards help you plan on paper how your entire film will look and prepare you for your shooting days and the final edit. Even if your drawing skills are not very good (stick people or even photos are fine), having a storyboard can help visually explain your idea to your crew.



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Interview questions

When writing questions and conducting your interview:

- Ask open questions to encourage your interviewee to speak more on the subject. Open questions often start with 'why', 'what' or 'how'.
- Use your research on the topic as a prompt to form your questions or to get interviewees' opinions on it.
- When conducting your interview, listen carefully. You might want to include a follow-up question on the spot in addition to the questions you have planned.

Scheduling your shooting

It is important to draft up a schedule to ensure you can gather all the footage you need for your documentary. If you are working in a group you could split up the responsibilities to save time.

1. How much time do you have available to shoot?
2. Do you have different locations to visit?
3. Have you contacted interviewees and are they available when you need to shoot?
4. Will you need to source any royalty free stock video footage or shoot b-roll footage? If so, have you factored in the time to gather this?

Time to shoot – top tips

1. Use your schedule to make sure all the things you plan to do are captured.
2. Refer to your storyboard when capturing your shots and to 'check off' the parts you have shot.
3. Shoot in landscape mode.
4. Watch back the sections you film to ensure they look and sound as you planned, but remember that you will have time for editing. These raw sections are sometimes referred to as rushes.

Editing your documentary



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TO PLAY THE HIGHLIGHT CLICK ON THE IMAGE ABOVE

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Documentary showcase

Ideas for showcasing your documentary:

- Show them as part of a student-led climate assembly
- Hold a documentary film festival at your school and invite family to come and watch
- Upload the films to your school's Virtual Learning Environment and get people talking about climate change
- Enter your film into the CovCreative Film Festival and invite your parents to come and watch.
- Enter your film into Into Film's Film of the Month Competition to expand its reach.