



The City Symphony- The Original Reality Show

Curriculum Unit 03.01.11
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That new reality show that you watched on television last night isn't so new after all. Our grandparents and great-grandparents had their own versions of reality entertainment called City Symphonies. These motion pictures became popular when television was still in the experimental stage. This small genre of movie was unique because it was part documentary, part travelogue, part subtle propaganda, and totally an art form. During the heyday of the City Symphony, in the 1920s, the movies were still silent and accompanied by live musical performances.

The Documentary vs. the City Symphony

A documentary film presents facts, usually about people and events of historical significance, or about social issues. The City Symphony, whose roots go back to the every day images recorded by Auguste and Louis Lumière in the 1890's, began with Manhatta in 1921. This movie took the documentary film a step further by putting it in the realm of the art form.

As any good teacher would, the director of a documentary endeavors to present facts in an entertaining way without distorting the information. A documentary in its purest form uses actual footage of people and events to communicate information or viewpoints. The director uses actors only to recreate historical events. In this sense, City Symphonies are true documentaries. They use, in most cases, candid shots of common people going about their daily lives. On the other hand, City Symphonies by the juxtaposition of scenes create a montage, which tends to create a work of art. In addition, while no distortion of information about the city may take place, the images often take on a surrealistic aspect. Aesthetic effects as well as an attempt to encourage the viewer to look at everyday scenes with a new eye motivate these artistic attempts on the part of the director. The Chilean documentary film director Patricio Guzman once said that "A country without documentaries is like a family without a photo album." If that is the case, then a City Symphony is more like scrapbook with a theme.

The Term "Art Form"

When used in this paper the term "art form" in reference to film means a planned effort on the part of the director to produce a motion picture that not only conveys information but also provokes emotions in the viewer. He or she accomplishes this in several ways. The subject matter itself can be quite emotional. Thus, what is *not* filmed (that is to say left out) can be as important to the experience as what is filmed. For example, if the director decides that food is an important part city life, he or she must decide how to represent food in the film. Should there be footage of vast quantities of food in transit to the city? Should there be scenes of people buying food in a grocery store or eating in a fancy restaurant? After this is decided, to simply film these scenes would be the stuff of a documentary. The director may even show a starving child. However, when the director shows a starving child filmed in dark foreboding shadows and follows that scene with people eating in a bright cheerful restaurant, he/she has made a statement and touched the viewer's emotions and hopefully their social conscience as well. The editing of the scenes and the final placement of those scenes, as well as the use of lighting and shadows to give the film depth and texture all provoke emotions. In other words, through skillful filming of subject matter, as well as lighting and editing, the director has become an artist.

The Term City Symphony

What is a City Symphony? City Symphonies are motion pictures that capture the spirit and uniqueness of a city by assembling images of everyday life in that city. The classic City Symphony genre was a silent, black and white, avant-garde documentary that first appeared in the 1920s. As in a symphony, they have movements that vary in pace and intensity. These movies bombard our sight with images of a city (images that often are quite surrealistic) in order to capture its heartbeat and expose its soul. This style of film, usually made by experimental filmmakers such as Dziga Vertov and Walter Ruttmann, was a perfect marriage of the medium of filmmaking and the subject matter of cities, since both were products of a 19th century modernity that peaked in the 1920s.

Directors of City Symphonies

Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand

The beautiful city, the city of hurried and sparkling

waters! the city of spires and masts!

The city nested in bays! my city!

MANNAHATTA - Walt Whitman

In 1921 two Americans, Charles Sheeler (1883-1965), a painter, and Paul Strand (1890-1976), a still photographer, made a one reel documentary film based on the Walt Whitman poem "Mannahatta." The motion picture version, spelled *Manhatta*, is an abstract study of New York City that expresses the greatness

of the city by manipulating the images portrayed on the screen. What made this film different from previous movies of the type later called documentaries was that it explored the potentials of the movie camera to produce a film that was at the same time a factual representation of the city as well as an expression of art that aroused aesthetic emotions about the metropolis.

Sheeler founded the Precisionist School of art in both painting and photography. A Precisionist Artist concentrates on architectural detail, such as steel beams, window crossbars, or cables etc., to the point where we see not the whole building, factory, or bridge but an abstract image. Sheeler skillfully blended the three art forms of painting, photography, and film. He often displayed his paintings next to his photography. Further, he actually made some of his photographs from frames of his movie, *Manhatta* .

The six-minute film, *Manhatta*, gave birth to a genre later known as the City Symphony. *Manhatta* depicts a typical day in New York City from dawn until dusk. With *Manhatta* , Sheeler used film as an art medium. When viewing the movie notice the shadows on the buildings and shots looking down on the city through balustrades. While indeed a study of the city, *Manhatta* can not be called a City Symphony because it lacks the structure of a symphony, that is, in *Manhatta* we do not get the sense of musical movements where one scene plays against another to the point where we can almost hear the heartbeat of the city. In fact, the movie reminds me of experiments I did as a twelve year old with a 8mm movie camera; shooting hanging out of a window or laying on the ground. (A movie of the same era, *A Bronx Morning* (1931) by Alfred Stieglitz gives an even stronger impression of this.) By no means am I saying that Sheeler and his partner, Paul Strand, were amateurs. What I am saying is that they were experimenting with the movie camera as a tool to create art in the same way that painter uses a brush.

Yet, the movie tells a story on multiple levels. We can look at *Manhatta*, on one level as a day in the life of a city. On another level, it becomes a work of art. On yet another level, it becomes even more interesting when we look at the film, as an expression of American power and ingenuity. This may or may not have been the intent of the creators, but it is there. From the opening shot of the great city skyline, the movie pulls in and we become one of the multitude disembarking from the ferry to work in the mighty skyscrapers.

The movement of the United States into a position of world power with the Spanish-American War was only a little over twenty years past. Only three years before, the United States won the War to End All Wars. Was the Woolworth building, then the tallest in the world, included in the film as a display of the supremacy of the United States? Alternatively, did Sheeler and Strand show it purely for aesthetic reasons? What about the scenes entitled "This world all spanned with iron rails," and "With lines of steamships threading every sea." Was this imperialism or art, or both? No matter what view you take, the fact that *Manhatta* is a classic and a milestone in the film industry is undeniable.

Alberto Cavalcanti

Rien que les heures (1926), whose international English title is *Nothing But Time* , by Alberto Cavalcanti (1897-1982) is a movie described by Lewis Jacobs as a "lyrical cross-section of Paris." While it is about the people of the city of Paris, it is not quite a City Symphony because it does not seem to capture the rhythm of the city and does not have the movements characteristic of a symphony. The world had to wait one more year for Walther Ruttmann's *Berlin, The Symphony of a Great City* for the genre to become fully developed. (See below)

Cavalcanti's avant-garde film documentary, *Rien*, however, is still quite important, aside from that fact that it set the stage for the coming of *Berlin* . Cavalcanti makes a social statement by showing us the contrasts

between the wealthy and the poor of Paris. The movie also has characters that reappear throughout the movie, which tends to involve the viewer with their personal story.

And here we come to the crucial difference between *Rien que les heures* and *Berlin* in terms of their respective filmmakers' attitudes toward the people of the city. Generally speaking, Cavalcanti is more immediately concerned with people as individuals, while Ruttmann is more concerned with people as a mass.

Walther Ruttmann

In *Berlin, The Symphony of a Great City* (1927) Walther Ruttmann (1887-1941) provides the viewer with one day in the life of a city in the Weimar Republic that borders on the voyeuristic but in a more general way than *Rien*. It confines any personal story to an isolated incident that when combined with other isolated incidents make up the whole story of the city.

An architect, painter, and graphic designer, Ruttmann was born in 1887 in Frankfurt and died in 1941 in Berlin. In 1921 he experimented with abstract film forms when he produced *Opus I*. This was followed by *Opus II* in 1923. *Berlin*, a silent, black and white film, is a sixty-five minute documentary that has some abstract elements, but is primarily a montage of scenes of everyday happenings in the city from predawn to late at night.

In 1927 German filmmaker Walter Ruttmann adapted the montage theories of Dziga Vertov to this highly formal study of a day in the life of Berlin. Vertov, the Soviet cinema's most dedicated ideologue, probably would have objected to the abstraction (read: bourgeois idealism) of Ruttmann's film, but it remains a unique and sometimes inspired exercise in style for its own sake.

Using cameras purportedly hidden in suitcases, Ruttmann shows us the Berlin of 1927 with a propinquity that would not have been possible with cameras set up in the open. Whether all of the shots were candid is debatable, as certain scenes, such as the suicide of a woman, seem to be set up. Be that as it may, this film is not about individuals or individual scenes. The montage that Ruttmann gives us comes together in such a way that the city itself becomes a viable being, and we are viewing the rhythmic beating of its heart. The movie also breaks ground in that it reflects the emergence of new roles for women.

Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: The Symphony of the City*, a 1927 city film from the time of the Weimar Kino-Debatte, shows an era passionately engaged in and defined by the cinema and its new discourse. While Ruttmann's metropolitan symphony is not a production of "feminist" modernism, it does present multiple images of "new" women on the screens and streets of modernity, elucidating and illuminating, as a first step, the many facets of women's presence in modern spaces.

The question is if simply presenting an observation of Berlin is documentary filmmaking, especially during that brief period between two devastating wars. Nowhere in the movie do we get a sense of the horror of the recent past or a prediction of the horrors that are to come.

Ruttman was influenced by the Soviets, especially Vertov and the "kino-eye" group. His film lacks their spirit of daring experimentation (and pales beside Vertov's masterpiece *The Man With A Movie Camera* , made a year later, but the achievement is remarkable nonetheless.

Berlin as a Symphony

My current students and I watched *Berlin- Symphony of a Great City* . Before we did so, we discussed that symphonies are large-scale musical compositions divided into sections or movements. They usually have four movements, although some have only one while others may even have five or six. In a symphony with four movements, the first is usually fast while the second is slow. The third movement is dance-like and the fourth comes to a lively conclusion.

The students watched for the elements of the four movements, but found that the film actually had five movements each clearly marked by number and a title written in German. They definitely were able to detect the changes of pace and were able to see how Ruttman matched the film to the rhythm of the music by selection of fast or slow moving footage and by editing.

Berlin- Symphony of a Great City is indeed constructed as a symphony with several beautiful movements. As beautiful as it is, or maybe because it is beautiful, Ruttman's film is not without criticism of its subject matter.

Documentary makers from John Grierson to Jean Rouch and beyond have warned of the dangers of the beautiful image within documentary film.

John Grierson recognizes the beauty of the images but used *Berlin A Symphony of a Great City* as an example of what a documentary should not be. "For all its ado of workmen and factories and swirl and swing of a great city, Berlin created nothing." In the opinion of Professor Dudley Andrew of Yale University, Grierson made this statement because his goal was not art but social change. According to Professor Andrew, Grierson is known for being an "instrumentalist" who believed that film should serve social purposes, while Ruttman kept artistic principles in mind even as he took pictures of his city.

The Music in Berlin A Symphony of a Great City

The video version of Berlin that my students and I watched has music and we discussed that when the movie came out it was a silent film and that a live orchestra would have accompanied it in the theater. Several sources have indicated that Edmund Meisel's original score for the film, which has been lost, was an upbeat jazz composition. What would be more appropriate for a film of the Jazz Age? Later versions had new scores added. "The Kino video includes a score that is classical in form, and somewhat melancholy in tone, but it matches the film's rhythms very well."

Dziga Vertov

After the City Symphony reached maturity with Ruttmann's *Berlin*, other directors made similar films. In the 1929, Dziga Vertov (1896-1954) made a documentary of not a day in the life of a particular city but of Soviet urban life in general, using material shot in more than one city. What is unique about this film is that the audience is a part of the film. The viewer sees the empty theater that later will present the movie, as well as the cameramen who are filming it. It is especially interesting that we even get to see the editing process because the editing and special effects, such as a sequence showing moving vehicles as an overlapping butterflyed image, moves the surrealism in this motion picture up a notch from the few abstract scenes in *Berlin*.

Joris Ivens

Holland's Joris Ivens (1898-1989) was another of the avant-garde moviemakers, although his movies are not technically City Symphonies. *The Bridge* (1927) was a film study of a drawbridge in Rotterdam. *Rain* (1929) was a look at a rain shower in which he edited together footage of showers that fell over a period of several months to look like a single rainstorm. Both of these movies have been referred to as cinepoems.

Jean Vigo

Also in 1929, Jean Vigo (1905-1934) made *A Propos de Nice*. This movie, while showing a day in the life of the city of Nice, makes a critical statement about the wealthy. Again, the movie shows the awakening of the city and the preparation for the day. However, the preparations are not to accommodate the inhabitants, but for the pleasure of the town's wealthy vacationers. This movie also uses creative editing and experimentation to bring it from documentary into the realm of art.

Examples of the City Symphony in Contemporary Cinema

While the classic City Symphony was a phenomenon of the middle and late 1920s modern versions of the City Symphony have been attempted, among them M.M. Yee's *Moving Image Materials*, (1988) and Thomas Schadt's ***Berlin Symphony*** . (2002). The teacher may want to include these films in a study of the genre for comparison purposes.

The Intent of this Unit

I am planning for this unit to take approximately one month to complete. The intent of these lessons is to create a video documentary in the style of the silent, black and white City Symphonies of the 1920s that will allow the students to think of our school as a community. As with the original City Symphonies which were as much about artistic creation as they were about documenting urban society in the 1920s, the purpose of this unit is as much about creating art as it is about comparing the intricate social system of a school to that of a city.

The students will record the many "behind the scenes" activities that go on between the time of the delivery of their breakfasts in the wee hours of the morning and the late night PTO meetings that go on long after they

normally go home. I would like the students to realize not only the amount of work that goes into teacher preparation and evaluation of their studies, but also all of the other activities that are required to have the school function efficiently. Through this film, they will realize that supplies do not just appear in a closet, and administrators and other support staff have jobs that go far beyond what the students observe during their time at school. They will see that these activities come together, as do the movements in a symphony, to give them a quality education.

How the unit addresses the needs of the students

This unit addresses the needs of the students by giving them a meaningful video project that will teach them to appreciate all of the work that goes into providing them an education. The result is a product that will be a source of pride for all of the students in the school. I intend to teach this unit to my 7th and 8th grade Video Technology classes but it may be adapted for use with other grade levels and subject areas. This unit is in alignment with the curriculum of the City of New Haven.

What the students will gain from this unit

The students will gain an understanding of the complex "behind the scenes" activities that are necessary for them to have a successful school day. While they may have some vague realization that teachers prepare lessons and check homework beforehand, they will come to realize that their education is the result of many more people who are not so obvious in their contributions to the mosaic of the school day.

As the word mosaic implies, this knowledge will be gained through an artistic expression in the creation of a video in the form of a classic City Symphony "silent" film. The students will look for rhythms, patterns, textures, and moods in the material that they tape. They will then edit the visual material to match the rhythms and moods that they hear in music to create a "visual symphony." Thus from this unit the students will gain not only knowledge of the school environment, but they will also learn how to express their creativity.

Vocabulary

The first goal of the unit is to familiarize the students with the vocabulary that will be needed to produce a City Symphony movie. As a starting point, I offer the following vocabulary. Of course, each teacher will want to adjust the list to the needs of their students.

The following vocabulary should be discussed before starting this unit.

1. Arc Shot: the subject being photographed is circled by the camera.
2. Art form: a medium, such as film, through which artistic expression can be conveyed.
3. Avant-garde: the expression of experimental ideas in a motion picture.
4. Back light: illumination behind the subject.
5. Camera: an apparatus for recording images.
6. Camera angles: the angle from which a camera records a scene as from above or below the subject.
7. Close-up: a tight shot that fills the frame with part of a subject.
8. Documentary: a film concerned primarily with teaching and or expressing a particular viewpoint.
9. Director: a director has artistic control of a movie by dictating how the actors play the scene as

well as how it is shot and edited.

10. Dissolve: the image of one scene is gradually replaced by the image of the next.
11. Edit: arranging the events in a film to give it meaning or to eliminate unwanted material.
12. Establishing shot: a wide angle shot for the purpose of identifying the setting of a motion picture
13. Experimental film: a film that uses non-conventional camera angles and editing
14. Fade in: A gradual transition from complete blackness to a image.
15. Fade out: A gradual transition from an image to complete blackness.
16. Genre: a certain category of film.
17. Lighting: the artificial light used in most productions.
18. Montage: a rapid succession of images in a movie to create a connection of ideas.
19. Mood: the emotion conveyed by a motion picture.
20. Pre-production: preliminary work done before the start of filming, such as writing the script, arranging for the actors, and setting up the locations.
21. Point of view: the view from which the audience sees the action.
22. Post-production: work done on a movie after it is filmed such as editing, and special effects.
23. Production: The entire movie project. This can also mean the time during which the photography takes place.
24. Scene: a continuous filmed sequence taking place on one location or at one time.
25. Script: the written work which includes the plot, locations, and dialogue of a movie.
26. Set: the place in which a movie is filmed. This can be either on location or on a built set.
27. Special effect: an illusion created in a movie.
28. Silent Film: a film without sound usually accompanied by a live musical performance.
29. Storyboard: sequential drawings of scenes that illustrate what the camera will eventually record.
30. Surrealism in Motion Pictures: imagery or effects in a film assembled in such a way as to create a distorted image of reality.
31. Synopsis: a summary of the plot and characters in a movie.
32. Take: the recording of a continuous performance of a scene.
33. Travelogue: a filmed lecture about travel.
34. Treatment: a summary of each major scene of a motion picture, including some dialogue, and descriptions of major characters and settings.
35. Wipe: an editing technique in which one shot replaces another made by a line moving across the screen

Lesson One: Creating a Storyboard

Grade Level: 7-8

Subject Area : Language Arts

Essential Skills and Strategies: Viewing, Listening, Writing

Description:

The Students will compare the social system of a school to that of a city. They will view several silent movie City Symphonies and then make a storyboard to use as a guide to create their own City Symphony video. The video piece that they create will document the not only the school day with which they are familiar but all of the behind-the-scenes activities that allow the school to function from early morning until late at night.

Procedure:

These steps are actually a series of lessons that will take place over a period of several days. It is up to the teacher to determine how much time to spend on each step depending on the abilities of the class and time constraints.

1. Over the period of several days, the students will listen to at least two musical symphonies. Before doing so, explain to the students that a symphony usually has four parts or movements. The first movement of most symphonies is moderately fast. The second movement is the slowest, and the third has a dance-like quality. The fourth movement is a lively or triumphant conclusion. Have them listen for these movements in the symphonies.

Standards Covered:

Content Standards 4.0 Listening **Grades 5-8**. Students will develop strategic listening skills by interpreting and constructing meaning from auditory cues.

Performance standard 4.1 Students will develop strategic listening skills in order to ensure success in listening tasks.

Performance Standard 4.2 Students will demonstrate effective strategies before, during and after specific listening tasks.

2. View videos of *Manhatta*, and *A Bronx Morning*. Explain how these movies led to the development of the City Symphony. Then view City Symphonies such as *Berlin- Symphony of a Great City*, and *Man with a Movie Camera* . On video, musical scores will accompany these silent movies. Have the students note the different movements. Also, have them note how the music matches what they see. It will take at least three class sessions to complete this portion of the project.

Standards Covered:

Content Standard 5.0 Viewing Grades 5-8. Students will develop strategic viewing skills by interpreting

and constructing meaning from visual resources.

Performance Standard 5.1 Students will demonstrate strategic viewing skills that ensure success in viewing.

Performance Standard 5.2 Students will demonstrate strategic viewing behaviors before, during and after viewing tasks.

3. Discussions will take place as to what comprises a city. Then talk about how a school is like a city. Explain to the students that they are going to create a video in the style of the silent movie City Symphonies. A brainstorming session will take place and the students will compile a list of what they feel might be included in the "School Symphony." The following list compiled by my students is offered as an example of what the list might look like. The list is not in timeline order.

Getting off of the bus

Eating lunch

Learning

Thinking

Dancing

Gym

Arguments

Drama

Writing notes

Art

Passing between classes

Computers

Library

The TV studio

Cameras

Daily announcements

Watching the News

Lunchtime

Locker time

Awards assemblies Holiday assemblies

Home economics Cooking and sewing

Student council

Social Development Classes

Honor society

After school programs

PTO

Teachers preparing

The principal preparing

The lunch ladies Preparing for the day

Breakfast

The breakfast ladies

Food service truck

The lunch line

Recess

Packing up for dismissal

Morning board work

Friends talking

The hallways

The Greenhouse

The office

Late pass

Homework (passing in)

Class work

Math

English

Pregnant teachers

Custodians

ESOL kids

Handicapped kids

Wheelchairs

Bus wheels

Leaving on the bus

Soccer games

Open gym

Football team

Basketball team

Cheerleaders

Fundraisers

Report cards

Report card night

Collecting money

Industrial Arts

Nurse/ nurse's office

Supply closet

Books, paper, pencils, Pens, computers, Overhead projectors

Cameras, TV equipment

People

School pictures,

Field trips

Suburban exchange

Playground

Parking lot

Garden

Standards Covered:

Common Performance Social Studies Standards for Grades 7 and 8

The following Common Performance Standards are used in conjunction with the specific content standards to complete students' study in grade seven and grade eight.

Students will:

- Watch news shows and documentaries.
- Demonstrate understanding through written, verbal, visual, musical

and/or technological formats.

- Gather historical data from multiple primary and secondary sources.
- Explain causes and effects of various events.
- Write short narratives and statements presenting historical ideas.
- Research an issue of interest and be able to take and defend a position on that issue.
- Use the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, publishing) to complete at least two written pieces. (In our case a filmed piece.)
- Formulate questions and hypotheses from multiple perspectives , using multiple sources .

4. Students will work in small groups to plan, script, and produce a City Symphony type movie of ten to fifteen minutes. Students will create a storyboard to plan their project. Using a list similar to the one above, the students will decide what topics they want to tape. Each topic will become a scene. Using one card for each scene, they will write each scene on an index card, similar to the one below. For example, they may write *Students getting off the bus* . Then they will draw a simple illustration demonstrating the action. Later they will number each scene according to the order that the scene will take place in the video.

Title of project:	Title of Scene	Scene #
Text if any: _____	Illustration of scene	

Description of action:		

Standards Covered:

Content Standard 2.0 Writing **Grades 5-8** . Students will progress along a developmental continuum, as they become proficient writers.

Performance Standard 2.1 Students will develop strategic writing skills that ensure successful communication.

Performance Standard 2.2 Students will develop strategic writing behaviors before, during, and after specific writing tasks.

Performance Standard 2.3 Students will demonstrate performance standards 2.1 and 2.2 through a wide variety of writing tasks.

5. Using a large corkboard, the students will put the cards in the order that the scenes will appear in the final video. The cards will be grouped according to the first, second, and third movement of the video. The students should think of the action in these scenes as musical notes to be put together in a rhythm of a symphony.

Standard Covered:

Content Standard 2.0 Visual Arts Grades 5-8. Principles of Visual Organization, Structures and Functions: Students will use knowledge of these principles and their visual characteristics cohesively in each work of art and demonstrate them in different forms of art.

Lesson Two: Creating a treatment

Grade Level: 7-8

Subject Area: Language Arts

Essential Skills and Strategies: Writing:

Description:

Students will prepare a one or two page "treatment" for their City Symphony. A treatment is a written condensed version of the proposed movie or television project. It is written in the present tense and gives information about the characters, the setting, and sample dialogue from the project. The treatment also gives the proposed length of the piece, tells of equipment needed, and any other pertinent information. The purpose of the treatment is usually to convince a big name actor to work on the project or an executive producer to invest money in it. For this reason it should be well written so that it will hold the attention of the reader.

Procedure

Give the students the following directions.

"You are going to make a video in the style of the City Symphonies of the silent era. Your video will be titled "A Day in the Life of Our School." It will be an artistic representation of what happens in your school from the time the building is unlocked at 6:00 in the morning until it is closed at 10:00 in the evening.

You have already studied City Symphonies such as *Manhatta* and *Berlin- Symphony of a Great City* . In previous lessons, you have discussed how a school is similar to a city. You have also brainstormed with your classmates to create a list of what you would put in your Symphony and you have created a storyboard. You will need to review this material.

Now you must prepare a treatment for your project to convince the principal to back your project. This treatment will be similar to persuasive letters you have written in English class. With your storyboard in mind, you will write a 1-2 page summary of the proposed script. You will indicate how long the video will be. The treatment should include the target audience, the subject matter to be covered, the desired response from the audience, and the final impression the "City Symphony" should leave on the audience. Also mention what equipment will be needed, where and when you will be taping. Mention any permission for special access you will need. Also, if your video will be viewed outside of the school building, include any permission to videotape students that will be needed."

Standards Covered:

Content Standard 2.0 Writing **Grades 5-8** . Students will progress along a developmental continuum, as they become proficient writers.

Performance Standard 2.1 Students will develop strategic writing skills that ensure successful communication.

Performance Standard 2.2 Students will develop strategic writing behaviors before, during, and after specific writing tasks.

Performance Standard 2.3 Students will demonstrate performance standards 2.1 and 2.2 through a wide variety of writing tasks.

Lesson Three: Documenting a day in the life of a school

Grade Level: 7-8

Description:

Using the treatment and storyboard created in the previous lessons, the students will begin shooting their "City Symphony." Students will illustrate on video a typical school day as well as the behind the scenes activities that are required to operate a school, keeping in mind the comparison of a school to a city. The emphasis will be not only on documentation but also on looking at common objects seen at school with the eye of an artist. Through the choice of subject matter and specific video techniques, such as camera angles and lighting, students will establish a mood for each movement of their symphony.

Go back and look at the movies viewed for Lesson One. The students will look at how a movie is edited according to thematic, graphic, or rhythmic similarities and contrasts. View the movies talked about and look for these elements.

The students will then edit the video keeping in mind the movements of a symphony. They will look for the rhythm of video sequences they took. Then they will choose music to fit the pieces, using both recorded music, music they create, and music from every day life, including music boxes, the sound of sewing machines, overhead doors, school buses. They will look for natural music.

Procedure

The emphasis here should be on the "creative" use of the editing and audio equipment. Edit according to thematic, graphic, or rhythmic similarities and contrasts.

1. Use establishing shots, close-ups, extreme close-ups, etc. The emphasis here should be on the "creative" use of the video equipment. Each scene on the storyboard will be taped, although they do not have to be taped in order.
2. The students will decide on music that will illustrate the rhythm of each movement. They can use prerecorded music, music they compose using musical instruments, musical toys such as music boxes, or sounds found in the school environment such as computers, buses, furnace room sounds, sewing machines, lunchroom voices, etc.
3. The students will lay down the soundtrack for their video. It is easier to edit video to fit the soundtrack than the other way around. Using computers with video editing capabilities, the students will edit their video to fit the "Symphony" that they composed.

Materials Needed:

Two Camcorders and tripods, portable lights and reflectors, gel paper, computers with editing software, audio CD or cassette, an audio mixer, written release forms.

Duration:

This portion of the project may take several weeks.

Standards Covered:

Music Standards Grades 5-8

Content Standard 4.0 Composing and Arranging Music:

Students will create and arrange music to accompany reading or dramatizations. They will compose short pieces, demonstrating how the elements of music are used. They will arrange simple pieces for voices or instruments other than those for which the pieces were written. They will use a variety of traditional and nontraditional sound sources and electronic media when composing and arranging.

Performance Standard 4.1

Students will create and arrange music to accompany readings or dramatizations.

Performance Standard 4.2

They will compose short pieces, demonstrating how the elements of music are used.

Performance Standard 4.3

They will arrange simple pieces for voices or instruments other than those for which the pieces were written.

Performance Standard 4.4

They will use a variety of traditional and nontraditional sound sources and electronic media when composing and arranging.

Content Standard 8.0

Understanding Relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

Students will describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with those of music. They will explain how elements, artistic processes (such as imagination or craftsmanship), and organizational principles (such as unity and variety or repetition and contrast) are used in similar and distinctive ways in the various arts and cite examples.

Performance Standard 8.1

Students will describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with those of music.

a. Students will describe the relationships between music and the other arts.

Performance Standard 8.2

Students will explain how elements, artistic processes (such as imagination or craftsmanship), and organizational principles (such as unity and variety or repetition and contrast) are used in similar and distinctive ways in the various arts and cite examples.

Visual Arts Standards Grades 5-8

Content Standard 1.0

Communicate in art media, techniques and processes successfully.

Students will understand and apply these with sufficient skill, confidence and sensitivity and be able to select and analyze what makes them effective in creating works of art that successfully communicate their own feelings and ideas.

Performance Standard 1.1

Students will understand and apply media, techniques and processes with sufficient skill, confidence and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their art works.

Performance Standard 2.1

Students will use knowledge of visual organization, structures, functions and their characteristics cohesively in each work of art.

Teacher's Bibliography

Andrew, Dudley, editor. *The Image in Dispute - Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press. 1997. Several film experts chronicle how movies reflect and influence social and political changes.

Barnouw, Erik. *Documentary* 2nd revised edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993. An examination of the history of documentary film making from its invention by Louis Lumiere in 1895 to the present time.

Jacobs, Lewis, editor. *The Documentary Tradition from Nanook to Woodstock*. New York: Hopkinson and Blake, Publishers, 1971. Critics and filmmakers record the progress of the documentary since 1922.

Macdonald, Kevin, and Mark Cousins, editors. *Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of Documentary*. London: Faber and Faber, 1996. Filmmakers and critics look at the documentary film from its inception to 1995.

Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. An introduction to the theory of documentary film.

Student Bibliography

Goodman, Robert M. and Patrick McGrath. *Editing Digital video: The Complete Creative and Technical Guide*. New York: McGraw-Hill. 2002.

This book not only explains the techniques filming and editing digital video, but also has a section on different formats, including the documentary.

Hampe, Barry. *Making Documentary Films and Reality Videos: A Practical Guide to Planning, Filming, and Editing Documentaries of Real Events*. Owl Books. 1997.

This book tells how to make a documentary from the planning stages to the outcome. It includes a filmography of classic documentaries.

Lumet, Sidney. *Making Movies*. Vintage Books. 1996.

Director Sidney Lumet explains how the key elements of making a movie come together under the management of the director.

Newton, Dale and John Gaspard. *Digital Filmmaking 101: an Essential Guide to Producing Low Budget Movies* . Michael Wise Productions. 2001.

The beginner is guided through the steps of making a digital movie.

Rabiger, Michael. *Directing the Documentary*. Stoneham, MA: Focal Press. 1997.

Explains all of the steps for making a documentary from research to filming.

Rosenthal, Alan. *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos* . Southern Illinois University Press. 1996.

The making of a documentary explained in a way that makes the process understandable.

Rubin, Michael. *The Little Digital Video Book* . Peachpit Press. 2001.

Explains the basics of digital video from taping to editing.

Filmography

Cavalcanti, Alberto. *Rien que les heures* (1926)

While this movie shows a cross-section of the city of Paris, it is not quite a City Symphony because it does not seem to capture the rhythm of the city and does not have movements that are characteristic of a symphony.

Ivens, Joris. *The Bridge* (1927) and *Rain* (1929)

These are two film studies made in Holland. The first shows a day in the life of a bridge. The second shows footage of several rainstorms edited to give the impression of a single storm.

Ruttman, Walter. *Berlin, The Symphony of a Great City* (*Berlin--die Symphonie de grob Stadt* (1927)

This contrasting portrait of a day in the city of Berlin is set up in the form of a symphony with five movements that capture the heartbeat of the city. It is regarded as the first City Symphony motion picture.

Sheeler, Charles, and Strand, Paul. *Manhatta*. (1921)

This six-minute film showing a day in the life of New York City gave birth to a genre later known as the City Symphony.

Vertov, Dziga. *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1928)

This documentary is not a day in the life of a particular city but of Soviet urban life in general, using material shot in more than one city. The director experiments with many avant-garde film techniques.

Vigo, Jean. *A propos de Nice*. (1929)

This movie, while showing a day in the life of the city of Nice, makes a critical statement about the wealthy.

Endnotes

1. According to Dudley Andrew, Professor of Film Studies and Comparative Literature at Yale University, the word documentary did not come into use until around 1924.
2. A discussion of film as an art form will follow.
3. "Patricio Guzman Says His Film is Fv2.03>e1>
4. Lewis Jacobs, *The Documentary Tradition From Nanook to Woodstock* (New York, 1971) p. 13.
5. Jay Chapman, "Two Aspects of the City: Cavalcanti and Ruttmann" in *The Documentary Tradition from Nanook to Woodstock*, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York, 1971) p.37.
6. NOTE: My students found the abstract forms of this 10-minute film to be very irritating.
7. Dave Kehr, "Berlin: Symphony of a Great City" , Capsule by Dave Kehr, *From the Chicago Reader Guide to Movies* <http://spacefinder.chicagoreader.com/movies/capsules/00902>
8. Anke Gleber, "Women on the Screens and Streets of Modernity-In Search of the female Flaneur" in *The Image in Dispute-Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography*, ed. Dudley Andrew (Austin, TX, 1997) p. 66.
9. Chris Dashiell, Dashiell's Flicks The Archives "Berlin: Symphony of a Great City" (Walter Ruttmann, 1927) <http://www.cinescene.com/flicks/archivesA-D.htm#berlin#berlin>
10. Allen James Thomas, "Berlin: Symphony of a City", by Allan James Thomas Senses of Cinema <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/00/5/cteq/berlin.html>
11. John Grierson, 'First Principles of Documentary', in *Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of Documentary* eds., Kevin Macdonald & Mark Cousins (London, 1996)p.100.

Chris Dashiell <http://www.cinescene.com/flicks/archivesA-D.htm#berlin#berlin>

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