

Documentary Filmmaking: Find Your Story

Objectives

- To explore opportunities in the UK film industry
- To explore what a Documentary is
- To learn how to begin planning a Documentary project

Storytelling is a powerful tool humans have used from the moment we were capable of communicating with one another. Telling stories is how we communicate vital information and we do this on a daily basis: from recounting your day at school to your parents at dinner; to talking about that time you went to the beach and had the most amazing ice-cream you've ever had!

Film and Television are visual mediums used to tell stories and are a big part of the UK economy. The UK Film Industry turnover in 2017 was £14.8 billion and in 2018 there were 15,595 companies in the UK Film Industry (source- BFI). That's a lot of jobs and opportunities within the film industry for you to get involved with.

There are many roles in the film industry including:

- Producer Director
- Sound Designer
- Art Director
- Production Designer
- Camera Operator
- Sound Recordist
- Script Writer
- Gaffer
- Best Boy
- Props Handler
- Rigger
- Grip
- Colourist
- Editor



What is a 'Documentary'?

- Using pictures or interviews with people involved in real events.
- A film or television programme that provides a real life report on a particular subject.

Unlike fictional films, documentaries are films that capture real world events and people.

You have most likely seen many documentaries before, such as Free Solo, Tiger King and Planet Earth.



Task One: Produce a Treatment for a Three Minute Documentary

When thinking of an idea for a documentary, start by asking yourself what subjects excite you? Frustrate and anger you? What intrigues you? Subjects explored in documentaries can range from the climate crisis to civil rights to religion but you could dive into more niche subjects like the celebrity lifestyle, the filmmaking process or extreme sports.

Even after picking a subject you might find it overwhelming to find a particular story to tell. At this point, try narrowing your subject down. Think about Tiger King: the broad subject is the big cat crisis in America but the documentary tells the particular story of one eccentric man who owns and sells tigers. Or Free Solo: the subject being free solo climbing (climbing without safety equipment) which tells the story of a man who attempts to free solo climb El Capitan. Find the most interesting story within your chosen subject.



Research Tips:

- Watch some documentaries!
- Start researching your subject with a simple Google search
- Look up books, films and articles that explore your subject choice
- Watch interviews with documentary filmmakers to see what their approach is
- Consider contrasting opinions and viewpoints within your story!

With enough research and a good understanding of the story you want to tell, you can now produce a treatment for your three minute documentary. A treatment helps audiences to visualise the story and states how they will experience the film.

This document is usually the size of a single A4 page and consists of:

- Two sentences that summarises the whole story
- Half a page that outlines the story in more detail
- A sentence or two that clarifies the themes of your story

Conclusion:

Documentaries have the power to tell compelling stories of events your audience may have been involved with themselves. With your treatment, you can then start thinking how you can go into production, shoot your documentary and tell the story you want to share with the world!

Further resources:

[Screenskills](#)

[BFI Film Academy](#)

[Doc Society](#)



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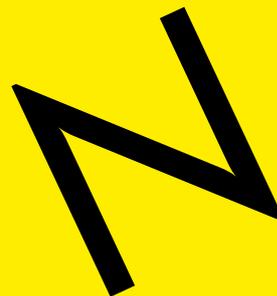


[www.nua.ac.uk](#)

Useful Links

Creative Careers: <https://discovercreative.careers/#/>

UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>



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