

“Documentary is the creative treatment of actuality.” – John Grierson

“Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn’t go away.” – Philip K. Dick

Rationale: This teaching sequence has been designed to support teachers and students in ATAR English. The resource can be used in both ATAR 11 and 12 English, however, some assumptions of prior knowledge of representation, generic conventions and perspectives have been made.

Curriculum Links:

Year 11 ATAR English – Unit 1	Year 12 ATAR English – Unit 3
<p>Examine the language, structure and features of imaginative, interpretive and persuasive texts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explaining the ways language features, text structures and conventions communicate ideas and perspectives 	<p>Analyse and critically appraise how the conventions of texts influence responses, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how expectations of genres have developed and the effect when those expectations are met or not met, extended or subverted
<p>Create a range of texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using appropriate form, content, style and tone for different purposes and audiences in real and imagined contexts using evidence-based argument using appropriate quotation and referencing protocols using strategies for planning, drafting, editing and proofreading using accurate spelling, punctuation, syntax and metalanguage 	<p>Create a range of texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using and experimenting with text structures and language features related to specific genres for particular effect sustaining analysis and argument using strategies for planning, drafting, editing and proofreading using appropriate quotation and referencing protocols
<p>Reflect on their own and other’s texts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigating the impact and uses of imaginative, interpretive and persuasive texts. 	<p>Reflect on their own and others’ texts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> comparing and evaluating the impact of language features used in a variety of texts and genres.
<p>Year 11 ATAR English – Unit 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year 12 ATAR English – Unit 4
<p>Investigate the representation of ideas, attitudes and voices in texts, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysing the ways language features, text structures and stylistic choices shape perspectives and interpretations analysing the effects of using multimodal and digital features 	<p>Evaluate different perspectives, attitudes and values represented in texts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysing content, purpose and choice of language analysing the use of voice and narrative point of view

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysing how attitude and mood are shaped 	
<p>Analyse and evaluate how and why responses to texts vary through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ways ideas, attitudes and voices are represented 	<p>Evaluate how texts offer perspectives through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the selection of mode, medium, genre and type of text the ways viewpoints and values are represented the selection of language features that generate empathy or controversy.
<p>Create a range of texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using imaginative, interpretive and persuasive elements for different purposes, contexts and audiences developing and sustaining voice, tone and style using strategies for planning, drafting, editing and proofreading 	<p>Create a range of texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using appropriate language and stylistic features to sustain a personal voice and perspective synthesising ideas and opinions to develop complex argument substantiating and justifying their own responses using textual evidence
<p>Reflect on their own and others' texts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysing the values and attitudes expressed in texts evaluating the effectiveness of texts in representing ideas, attitudes and voices 	<p>Reflect on their own and others' texts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysing and evaluating how different attitudes and perspectives underpin texts

Documentary Information:

Name: *Fyre: The Greatest Party That Never Happened*

Released: 2019 on Netflix

Writer and director: Chris Smith

Producers: Chris Smith, Mick Purzycki, Danny Gabai

Introduction to Documentary:

Before you watch the documentary, complete the following multiple-choice test. This test is for you only so you can get an idea of what you know and what you need to know. The answers to the test are on the last page.

1. The purpose of documentary films is to:

- a) Entertain
- b) Educate
- c) Expose
- d) Inform
- e) All of the above

2. The person doing the voice-over in a documentary is called:

- a) Narrator
- b) Speaker
- c) Storyteller
- d) The reader
- e) The voice

3. Footage shot in the past and used in a documentary film is called:

- a) Old footage
- b) Previous footage
- c) Archival footage
- d) Past footage
- e) It doesn't have a name

4. Documentaries that expose something the viewer previous didn't know is called:

- a) Expository
- b) Experienced
- c) Exposé
- d) Extended
- e) All of the above

5. Documentaries were originally created to:

- a) Expose
- b) Record history
- c) Mass produce content
- d) Educate
- e) Tell the truth

6. Ideas in documentaries are:

- a) Presented
- b) Represented
- c) The truth
- d) A version of reality
- e) All of the above

Learning Sequence:

Watch the trailer for the documentary first and write down what you think it's about.

Watch the documentary and note down your initial impressions. Use these questions to guide your viewing:

- How are we first introduced to the Fyre Festival?
- How are you positioned to respond to Billy?
- What is the relationship between the voiceover and the footage? How does the juxtaposition between the two craft a perspective?
- What is the perspective offered in the film? Whose perspective are we viewing this from?
- The structure of the documentary is important in developing the audience response to Billy. Why would the documentarians begin with the promotional video for the festival and then have voiceovers from different news outlets saying the event was a disaster and the founder is facing 20 years in prison? How does this encourage the audience to respond to Billy before we even hear from him?
- The audience is positioned to question and distrust Billy and his motives from the get-go. How does this structure encourage a particular perspective of Billy and what is that perspective?
- There is a lack of professionalism from the organisers of the festival. How are they being unprofessional? How does this position the audience to respond to them?
- What happens to Ja Rule? Where is he at the end of the documentary and why isn't he interviewed? Why would the producers not include him when the festival fails?
- What is the role of the 'influencers' in this documentary? How are they both used and using the festival to promote themselves? Do you think they are complicit in the outcome of the festival and should be held accountable?
- Do you think we get to know enough about the consequences for Billy? Why/why not?

Listen to the lecture

Documentary Conventions. NOTE: this list is not exhaustive and pertains particularly to *Fyre: The Greatest Party That Never Happened*. This list also contains conventions that are not specific just to documentaries but have been used in the *Fyre* documentary for particular purposes.

- Handheld camera (phone camera footage particularly)
- Reenactment
- Interviews
- Archival footage
- Diegetic sound
- Music and sound effects (non-diegetic sound)
- Editing and sequencing
- Inclusion and exclusion of details/people

One of the important generic conventions of documentary is the idea that it represents a version of reality. While the events portrayed have taken place, the editing/sound/inclusion and exclusion of information is what will shape how the viewer perceives this reality.

Whenever you are analysing a documentary, ask yourself: What generic conventions are being manipulated to make the audience think/feel/believe this?

Producers and documentarians have a purpose with the documentary, so question that purpose. What are they getting out of creating this documentary? It doesn't have to be malicious or harmful; it can be to entertain, educate, highlight, question etc.

Conventions of Voice: NOTE: this list is not exhaustive and pertains particularly to *Fyre: The Greatest Party That Never Happened*.

- Characterisation
- Language features (visual language in this case)
- Inclusion and omission of people through interviews – whose voice is heard and why?
- Editing (part of visual language but particularly prominent in this film)
- Non-diegetic sound shape the voice of the characters they are describing

You can discuss narrative voice and representation of voices within film. Films do have a narrative voice, but it is generally easier to answer a 'voice' question by analysing the representations of voices. When you have ascribed a character an archetype, you can then discuss the construction of this character as the representation of that voice. For example, if Billy is the voice of the villain/cheat/hard-working everyday man (you decide what he is based on your reading of the text), then you can use the generic conventions of the documentary to prove this reading.

E.g.: Billy MacFarland, the creator and visionary of Fyre Festival, is represented as a cocky entrepreneur and cheat who won't take no for an answer. Even though he is the main character in the documentary, his voice is silenced as he is not interviewed nor represented in a forgiving light. The omission of his voice represents him as disengaged and apathetic towards the thousands of people he left in discord and financial trouble. Therefore, the construction of his voice represents him as a cheat and a liar.

Conventions of Perspectives: NOTE: this list is not exhaustive and pertains particularly to *Fyre: The Greatest Party That Never Happened*.

- Context – Remember: Perspectives are a "viewpoint informed by one or more contexts." (SCSA, 2020)
- Values, attitudes, beliefs (these are part of context but are important to note)
- Characterisation (Responses to and from the character to others)
- Generic conventions

When discussing perspectives there are three different ways to look at it: ideological perspectives that underpin a text, perspectives offered in the text (often characters), and perspectives offered about ideas/events/people etc. Therefore, in a visual text like a documentary, the documentarians'

perspectives (producers, directors, writers, editors etc) will be embedded in the text, but the characters' perspectives will be constructed. When you are discussing and analysing perspectives, you therefore must discuss the construction of the character. This includes discussion of generic conventions of documentary, characterisation and the context.

For example: The documentary offers a scathing perspective of Billy MacFarland's behaviour and attitude towards the festival goers and organisers of Fyre Festival. Throughout the documentary he is seen drinking, a highly unprofessional behaviour when dealing with millions of investment dollars, and in one scene he even passes out on the beach in broad daylight. In one montage, the director has edited scenes together of MacFarland clinking various alcoholic beverages with others to represent him as unreliable and unprofessional. This characterisation of MacFarland offers a scathing perspective of his actions and lack of care for the people around him, particularly the festival goers and investors.

Comprehension Questions. Answer these questions in at least 3 – 4 sentences and use quotes/evidence from the documentary where possible:

- What is the documentary actually about? Why do we care? What generic conventions (conventions of documentary) are used to shape our response to the subject matter?
- The documentary is described on Netflix as: "He promised supermodels and yachts, but delivered tents and cheese sandwiches. How one man engineered a music festival disaster." How does this information position the audience to respond to Billy before watching the documentary? What perspective is encouraged here?
- How is dramatic irony used in the documentary to shape perspective?
- The context of production is important to note here. The film was released in 2019 and the production company FuckJerry (now rebranded as Jerry Media) produced the film; in fact, it was Mick Purzycki who conceptualised the idea and brought it to Chris Smith (director). How does this change the perspective presented in the documentary? (Remember that a perspective is "a viewpoint informed by one or more contexts." (SCSA, 2020)
- The use of phone camera footage in the documentary positions the audience to see the events in 'real time' and experience what the festival goers experienced. However, it has been edited to provide a particular version of reality. How does this version of reality shape the perspective of Billy and the festival experience?
- Carl Jung made a list of 12 character archetypes:
 - The innocent
 - The everyman
 - The hero
 - The caregiver
 - The explorer
 - The outlaw
 - The lover
 - The creator
 - The jester
 - The sage
 - The magician

○ The ruler

Not all these are in the documentary, but many are. Write the name of the main characters against the archetypes. How does the structure and style of the documentary create these archetypes?

- What is Billy's attitude towards the festival goers? What is the documentarians' attitude? (Remember that the producer of the documentary also promoted the festival).
- What attitudes and values underpin this text? How does the documentarian shape the perspective of the audience towards Billy through the manipulation of generic conventions?
- Billy is generally silent in the documentary apart from a few snippets of speech. How is Billy's voice represented in the documentary? What generic conventions have been manipulated to represent Billy's voice?
- What other voices are represented in the documentary and how have they been represented? Think about the voice of the festival goers, the event organisers, the influencers and models.

Quote Hunt:

The following quotes are from people in the documentary. Find out who that person is and what contextual factors motivated them saying it. It is also important to note the connotations in the words being said. Make a note of what each quote is actually saying and how it can be used to convey several meanings.

"The Uber of booking talent."

"Selling a dream, selling a vacation, selling a concept."

"Selling an idea and a concept."

"I ended up teaching myself [to fly]."

"We are selling a pipe dream to your average loser."

"It's free press. You can't pay for that kind of press."

"They were trying to tap into a culture and a zeitgeist that they believed in, and they were uncompromising when it came to marketing."

"Turn around. Turn this bus right around."

"Looking towards anything, anyone for direction."

"People were stoked to watch this thing go down."

"Flaunting the wealth that he stole."

Sample Assessments: These assessments have been written as formative (practise) assessments and are not intended to be counted towards a final grade.

Essay: Write an analytical essay answering one of the following questions.

Year 11 ATAR English:

1. Evaluate how your response to a text was influenced by the way voices were represented.
2. Discuss how the structure of at least one studied text has communicated a particular perspective.

Year 12 ATAR English:

1. Discuss how the structural and/or stylistic features of at least one studied text has represented voice.
2. Evaluate how at least one studied text has used language features to generate an empathetic or controversial perspective.

Composing: This is not meant to be done under timed conditions. This is designed to be a refined piece of writing that has been planned, drafted and edited. Aim to write 750-1000 words.

Year 11 ATAR English:

1. Write an interpretive piece of writing from Billy's perspective that responds to the documentary.
Considerations to be made:
 - a. What would his voice sound like? How will you craft this using language features?
 - b. What form would this be written in and who is the target audience?
 - c. Why would he write this?
 - d. How would he try to convince the audience to sympathise/agree/consider his perspective?
 - e. What would he include and what would he leave out?
2. Write an opinion piece about the fairness of the representations in the documentary.
Considerations to be made:
 - a. What representations will you focus on? Who did you respond the most to (influencers, festival goers, Billy, event organisers, Bahamians)? How were they represented and was it fair?
 - b. What generic conventions and language features were used to shape these representations?
 - c. What character archetypes did they represent and how did that influence the way they were represented?
 - d. Who is your audience and what is your purpose?
 - e. Where will this piece be published? What language will you need to use to make it appropriate?

Year 12 ATAR English:

1. Write an exposé (see [here](#) if you don't know what that is) about something you believe should be exposed. This could be global (global warming, animal abuse, animal testing, preservation of indigenous cultures etc.), or it could be more personal and localised (a personal injustice or slight, a secret you believe people should know about etc.)

Considerations to be made:

- a. This is not an opportunity to make unfounded or rude claims about your friends. Use this task to write something interesting and mature.
 - b. Who are you writing for and what is your purpose?
 - c. Why do people care about your exposé and if they don't, how will you make them by manipulating language features, structure and/or style?
 - d. What generic conventions do you need to consider?
 - e. What facts will you include? Exposés need facts.
2. Write an imaginative or interpretive story from the perspective of a festival goer. You can use someone who actually went as your inspiration or you can make it up.

Considerations to be made:

- a. Whose perspective are you writing from? What was their experience?
- b. How will you manipulate language features to build tension? When will your story start? Could you play with structure to engage the reader in your story?
- c. What form/genre will your story be?
- d. Who are you writing for and where will it be published? How will you manipulate language features to target that audience?

Multiple Choice Answers:

1. E
2. A
3. C
4. C
5. D
6. B

NOTE: Many of these answers can be argued and this is not an exhaustive list. However, for the purposes of this work, these answers are the most correct.