

DOCUMENTARY

Research and produce a documentary on an issue, topic, or person of importance to your community. The documentary should strive to add value to the general discussion by bringing in new information, identifying unrecognized problems, providing or suggesting new solutions, or offering a unique perspective. If the documentary is a biography, whether your subject is living or deceased, he or she should have a strong connection to the Central Valley, and the film should utilize student interviews with the subject, his or her friends and family, or those who have expert knowledge of him or her. If the individual is deceased, photos and/or video footage of that person along with testimonials and interviews from the subject's friends and family should be the backbone of the film. This is NOT a typical class biography report translated into a film; it must emphasize topics and people of LOCAL importance.

Maximum Length: 4-minutes

Key Criteria Elements Covered:

- High raw material variety (original interviews, archival footage, 3-point lighting).
- Crisp, balanced audio with hidden lavalier mics.
- Value-add storytelling and research depth.

Category: Documentary (Max 100 Points)

Length: 4 Minutes Max | **Focus:** Subject engagement, narrative structure, journalistic integrity, interview quality, audio/visual storytelling, ethics.

Criteria	Points	Scoring Focus & Key Indicators
Storytelling, Concept & Structure	0 – 25	• Clear focus, compelling thesis or topic exploration, and strong narrative arc. • Logical progression of ideas and smooth transitions between interviews and visual evidence. • Pacing retains viewer engagement while delivering informative, emotional, or educational impact.
Interview Quality & Research	0 – 25	• Subjects provide insightful, well-articulated perspectives relevant to the narrative. • Clear, well-framed interviews with appropriate headroom, lighting, and non-distracting backgrounds. • Demonstrates thorough research, accurate facts, and balanced or meaningful subject exploration.
Cinematography & Visual Storytelling (B-Roll)	0 – 20	• B-roll effectively reinforces narrative audio rather than acting as generic filler. • Smooth camera movements, proper exposure, crisp focus, and deliberate framing choices.

Criteria	Points	Scoring Focus & Key Indicators
		• Effective use of archival material, graphics, lower thirds, or contextual visuals.
Audio Quality & Mixing	0 – 20	• Clean, intelligible dialogue in interviews with no background noise, hum, or distortion. • Balanced audio levels between spoken dialogue, ambient sound effects, and musical score. • Music choices fit the mood, enhance emotional resonance, and do not overpower speech.
Ethics, Integrity & Content Safety	0 – 15	• Adheres to journalistic integrity, fair representation, and respectful handling of subjects. • Fully compliant with school-appropriate content safety guidelines. • Proper attribution and copyright compliance for external footage, images, and audio tracks.

Standard Scoring Tiers (For Festival Judges)

90 – 100 Points (Exemplary): Broadcast-ready execution; powerful subject engagement; crisp interview audio mix; professional B-roll editing and storytelling.

75 – 89 Points (Accomplished): Solid, well-crafted submission; minor flaws in audio balance, B-roll pacing, or lighting that do not detract from the main narrative.

60 – 74 Points (Developing): Functional effort; noticeable narrative gaps, inconsistent interview audio leveling, or weak visual coverage for spoken content.

Below 60 Points (Limited): Unclear message or subject focus; major technical flaws (unintelligible audio, out-of-focus footage); time limit violations or unethical framing.