Lower Secondary: Level 1 2 3 4 5 6

# Eye openers: Media as social comment



Strand Media

Possible link

Studies of Society and Environment

# **Purpose**

Students investigate the role of the media in making social comment and develop the skills to express their own viewpoints through documentary film. They analyse the representations presented in social comment media texts and apply this understanding to construct a social comment text for presentation to a specific audience such as the local community (e.g. school showcase) or a film festival/competition.

# **Overview**

Activities are based on a learner-centred approach and are organised into the planning phases of:

#### Phase 1 — Opening eyes Students:

- develop awareness of who makes social comment, how, and why
- · identify social comment media texts and their purpose
- · investigate how social comment media texts are produced, distributed and consumed in both commercial and noncommercial contexts.

## Phase 2 — Appraising viewpoints

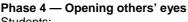
Students:

- · identify and analyse a variety of viewpoints and the vehicles for presenting these
- evaluate social, political and economic influences impacting on social comment documentaries produced by public, commercial and independent media.

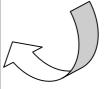
## Phase 3 — Constructing an eye opener

Students:

- apply an understanding of the features of social comment documentary
- · investigate objectivity and subjectivity in journalistic and poetic approaches to reporting
- design and create a social comment documentary in a short video format within a noncommercial production and reception context.



- simulate industry practice to promote their social comment documentaries
- · organise and run a video showcase to exhibit their documentaries to a public audience
- monitor audience responses to their social comment documentaries to inform the selection of texts for entry into a film festival/competition
- · write an evaluation that assesses the effectiveness of the event and its outcomes.





# Using this module

#### Focus and links

This module outlines suggestions for planning, teaching and assessing using core learning outcomes and core content from the Years 1 to 10 The Arts Syllabus. Eye openers: Media as social comment presents one way of planning with the core learning outcomes and may be adapted to suit the particular context of a school.

The module offers opportunities to make links to learning in the key learning area of Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE). Allow for additional time to include tasks from this key learning area to enable students to demonstrate the outcomes that have been identified. The links have been identified by citing modules developed for SOSE. It is important that the integrity of the key concepts, organising ideas and processes within the key learning area is maintained.

Activities also contribute to learning in literacy, numeracy, lifeskills and a futures perspective and can be used for gathering evidence about students' development in these cross-curricular priorities. Students are engaged with the operational dimension of literacy when they develop the ability to recognise and use the systems of signs and patterns of codes related to social comment media texts. By exploring the social, cultural, political and economic contexts surrounding texts, asking questions about why they are designed in certain ways, and identifying the target market, students are also developing the critical dimensions of literacy.

Aspects of numeracy are included in graphical design when the student must consider proportion, symmetry and balance, and in editing when students estimate frame numbers and time. Students engage in the lifeskills of personal development skills, social skills, and self-management skills when they are involved in planning and collaboratively carrying out projects with each other. Citizenship skills are developed as students critically view social commentary in the media they consume daily. A futures orientation in the activities encourages students to consider possible and probable roles for social comment documentary that may emerge in societies of the future.

Some students with physical, hearing or vision impairment may need assistance with some of these activities. Obtain advice from their support teachers.

#### Module organisation

The activities do not correspond to lessons, which means that the teacher can plan media activities in shorter or longer extended timeframes as is most appropriate to the timetable and school organisation.

At the end of the activities in each phase, you will find 'Teaching considerations'. These provide ideas, suggestions and clarification relevant to the activities.

#### **Prior learning**

To devise a unit of work appropriate for their class, teachers will need to consider students':

- prior learning in the five concepts that form the core content in media (see Syllabus, pages 51 and 52)
- · skills relating to collaboration and group work
- · skills in technological processes involved in video production
- analysis skills when responding to media texts.

# **Unit planning**

This module gives the teacher flexibility to plan and assess for demonstration of the media outcomes in the following ways:

 Planning and assessment could focus on phases 1 and 2 to enable students to have recorded demonstrations in outcomes 6.3a and 6.3b with a focus on responding in media.

- Planning and assessment could focus on phases 3 and 4 to enable students to have recorded demonstrations in outcomes 6.1 and 6.2 within a focus on production in media.
- Planning and assessment could focus on all phases to enable students to have recorded demonstrations in all of the Level 6 Media outcomes with a focus on all the Media strand processes.

#### Evaluation of a unit of work

After completion of units of work developed from this module, collect information and make judgments about:

- teaching strategies and activities used to progress student learning towards demonstrations of core learning outcomes
- opportunities provided to gather evidence about students' demonstrations of core learning outcomes
- future learning opportunities for students who have not yet demonstrated the core learning outcomes
- the extent to which activities matched the needs of particular groups of students and reflected equity considerations
- the appropriateness of time allocations for particular activities
- the appropriateness of resources used.

Information from this evaluation process can be used to plan subsequent units of work so that they build on and support student learning. The evaluated units of work may also be adapted before their reuse. For further information, refer to the 'Curriculum evaluation' section in the sourcebook guidelines.

# **Core learning outcomes**

This module focuses on the following core learning outcomes from the Media strand of the Years 1 to 10 The Arts Syllabus.

## Level statement: Level 6

Students design and produce media in a range of commercial and non-commercial contexts. They make considered decisions about the design, selection, combination and manipulation of media languages and technologies to produce meanings.

Students understand the role the audience plays in media creation as they promote media products to various audiences and consider the many meanings a text can convey.

Students examine the contexts surrounding media creation and the influences that shape the production, distribution and consumption of media.

- ME 6.1 Students apply an understanding of media languages and technologies to design and create media texts in a range of production contexts.
- ME 6.2 Students apply industry strategies to promote a specific media text to various audiences.
- ME 6.3a Students evaluate how contextual influences can contribute to personal interpretations of media.
- ME 6.3b Students evaluate social, political and economic influences operating on the production of public, commercial and independent media.

# Other key learning areas

# **Studies of Society and Environment**

If planning an integrated unit of work from this module with SOSE, ensure that activities are planned to provide opportunities for students to work using social inquiry processes. Consult the *Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment Syllabus* and associated materials for further information.

The focus of this module links to the following SOSE Sourcebook modules:

- Level 5 Talkin' 'bout my generation: Youth cultures Law and the media: Civics and citizenship
- Level 6 Identities and individualism: Youth cultures
  Mass media identities: Societies and change

# **Core content**

This module provides a learning context for the following core content from Level 6 of the syllabus in addition to the core content from previous levels:

media languages

- intertextualitymontage
- still and moving
- symbolic codesmultilayered sound
- images subtitles
- sounds
- words

media technologies

- consider continuityadopt production roles
- processes, techniques, practices
- market

audience

- multiple meanings in texts
- fan culturecensorship
- · audiences as active producers of meaning

institutionpurpose

- artistic expression
  - commercial appealcommunity service
  - government, commercial, community and independent
- form
- political and economic contexts
- context
- · regulation, ownership and ethics

# representation

- access
- · alternative representations
- self-representation

# **Assessment**

The following table provides examples of opportunities in this module for gathering evidence and making judgments about student demonstrations of The Arts core learning outcomes. When making an onbalance judgment about demonstrations of the learning outcomes, consider all the points in the 'Making judgments' column. The table is neither exhaustive nor mandatory. Assessment opportunities should be negotiated with students to maximise their demonstrations of these outcomes in a variety of ways. Reflect with students on evidence gathered to make judgments about their demonstrations.

Outcomes	Gathering evidence	Making judgments
ME 5.1 Students construct and reconstruct meaning through the application of languages and technologies in the design and production of media texts.  ME 6.1 Students apply an understanding of media languages and technologies to design and create media texts in a range of production contexts.	Students may:  conduct practical research of different media forms and technologies and experiment with using these to target their preferred audiences before starting production  create work-in-progress documents — concept outlines, treatments, scripts, shooting and editing schedules, organize and complete releases for performances, locations and copyright, perform workplace health and safety risk assessments and document the planning, and design process in a log/diary  workshop/experiment/ rehearse different aspects of language — for example, intertextuality, montage, symbolic codes, multilayered sound and subtitles, and apply technology concepts such as continuity, adopting production roles and consideration of market  incorporate a reflective process that involves production meetings to discuss and modify/re-work aspects of production and postproduction to achieve an effective social comment  work individually on design or organisational aspects of the production such as artwork or director and also perform technical roles in a production crew such as lighting operator, cameraperson, editor and/or sound recorder/mixer.  The teacher may use:  observation  consultation including discussion and questioning  focused analysis  recorded in:  journal/workshop checklist  production meeting notes  social comment video criteria sheet and production log.	When designing and creating do students: Level 5  apply their knowledge and skills of media languages, using documentation such as scripts and production logs?  create and modify ideas/shots/editing for social comment productions?  apply technology concepts and processes when making design and production decisions?  Level 6  engage in comprehensive planning and design processes before producing their texts?  follow the creative process for a short video from conception to post-production?  meet the responsibilities attached to a production role — for example, sound person?  accommodate the constraints of particular institutional contexts in their planning and production — for example, budget, resources, weather and timelines?  implement planning devices — for example, production meetings, scripts, location surveys and budget proposals?  rework and refine texts to achieve a particular effect and adopt stylistic features and characteristics appropriate to a social comment documentary?  demonstrate increased complexity and independence in their skills, techniques, processes, conventions and handling of equipment?  make appropriate decisions about which are the most effective forms and technologies for delivering the social comment message to the audience?  select the languages that will communicate the messages most effectively in the forms decided upon?  manipulate the languages and use the potential of the technologies?

Outcomes	Gathering evidence	Making judgments	
ME 5.2 Students emulate industry practices to promote, deliver and exhibit media texts in a range of contexts.  ME 6.2 Students apply industry strategies to promote a specific media text to various audiences.	Students may:  simulate commercial promotional campaign practices including audience research and publicity strategies to promote their social comment videos to diverse groups of people  promote and present their social comment videos in the classroom, at home, in a local community/school showcase and/or in a film festival/competition and outline their production process in program notes.  The teacher may use:  observation  peer- and self-assessment  focused analysis  recorded in:  folio  student feedback sheets  written report checklist.	When promoting, do students: Level 5  apply their knowledge of industry practices to select the most appropriate practices for the context?  apply their knowledge of industry practices in their own design and production processes?  adopt industry roles when collaborating?  Level 6  use a variety of industry strategies to promote the showcase to a range of audiences — for example, using cross-media promotion?  organise the exhibition of their texts to promote their social comment to students, parents and the community?  make appropriate decisions about which forms and technologies for delivering the texts to the chosen audience are the most effective?  design publicity material that will appeal to the target audience and entice them to attend the exhibition?  use industry strategies such as synopsis, treatment, trailer and poster to promote their film in a festival?	
ME 5.3a Students research and analyse various media representations within their cultural and historical contexts.  ME 6.3a Students evaluate how contextual influences can contribute to personal interpretations of media.	Students may:  identify media forms and technologies that shape the production, distribution and consumption of social comment media texts  evaluate how social, political, historical, technical and cultural influences contribute to personal interpretations of social comment media texts.  The teacher may use:  consultation, including discussion and questioning  observation  recorded in:  student journal  checklist.	<ul> <li>When evaluating, do students: Level 5</li> <li>deconstruct the social comment within the context of the time in history it was developed, the culture within which it was developed or received and the economic/political culture of the society?</li> <li>deconstruct the use of media languages in the representation, such as symbolic codes, intertextuality, editing and soundtrack?</li> <li>Level 6</li> <li>take into account the above contexts surrounding the creation of social comment media texts?</li> <li>consider the factors affecting each individual's interpretation of media messages, such as political or cultural experiences and background?</li> <li>evaluate how contextual influences diversely affect the interpretation of social comment media texts?</li> <li>evaluate the different levels of meaning constructed for particular media products that reach varied audiences?</li> </ul>	

#### **Outcomes Gathering evidence** Making judgments ME 5.3b Students may: When evaluating, do students: Students research · view and discuss a range of social Level 5 and examine the comment media texts and analyse · investigate the role of various media media institutions the contextual factors that impact on institutions in delivering social comment? that are involved in their production and reception identify the media forms and techniques that the production, evaluate the impact of these are used to produce, distribute and exhibit distribution and social comment media? influences on: exhibition of the Level 6 - the public media such as ABC/SBS media they documentary production and • investigate the social, cultural, political and consume as broadcasting economic influences operating on the audiences. the commercial TV production/ production of social comment media? broadcasting of social comment compare and contrast commercial and non-ME 6.3b media texts commercial perspectives on social issues? Students evaluate independent social comment • investigate the external influences that impact social, political and documentary filmmaking and on the production of social documentary film? economic exhibition. influences operating evaluate the extent of the influence the factors on the production of have on decision making during production? The teacher may use: public, commercial · analyse the benefits, consequences and observation and independent constraints of operating in the public, · focused analysis media. commercial or independent production area? recorded in: · observation notes • student's poster.

# **Background information**

Students receive much of their knowledge about social issues through the media, therefore it is important for them to develop a critical understanding of the decision making that filmmakers are faced with when producing social comment media texts. This module provides students with a framework to investigate the construction of texts and contexts that influence these constructions. Students will develop a practical understanding of the construction of representations presented in social comment texts whose purpose it is to inform, persuade and/or indoctrinate. They have the opportunity to express opinions about issues through the language of film. In commercial and non-commercial contexts, the distinction between objective and subjective reporting is investigated in terms of documentary filmmaking styles that include journalistic reporting (recording real-life situations and events) and poetic reporting (recording real-life experience more personally or artistically). Students learn about creating for the festival or competition.

# **Terminology**

Students have opportunities to become familiar with and use the following terminology in this module:

alternative viewpoints ideology regulation bias objectivity social change

censorship pitch social comment documentary

concept outline production log social protest/criticism

cultural sensitivities promotional campaign subjectivity discourse propaganda treatment docudrama proposal vox pop

ethics

# School authority policies

Be aware of and observe school authority policies that may be relevant to this module. Education Queensland policies on health and safety considerations for Media can be found at <a href="https://www.education.gld.gov.au/corporate/doem/sindex/m-ind.htm">www.education.gld.gov.au/corporate/doem/sindex/m-ind.htm</a>.

For policies and guidelines for the Catholic sector, refer to the Queensland Catholic Education Commission website at <a href="https://www.gcec.gld.catholic.edu.au/www/index.cfm">www.gcec.gld.catholic.edu.au/www/index.cfm</a>.

# Equity considerations

This module provides opportunities for students to increase their understanding and appreciation of equity and diversity within a supportive environment. It includes activities that encourage students to:

- be involved within a supportive environment
- · work individually or in groups
- · value diversity of ability, opinion and experience
- value diversity of language and cultural beliefs
- support one another's efforts
- become empowered to take on roles
- · negotiate and accept change
- · become empowered to communicate freely.

It is important that these equity considerations inform decision making about teaching strategies, classroom organisation and assessment.

# Support materials and references

The following resources may be helpful additions to your professional library. Review material before using it with students. Resources referred to in this module are identified with an asterisk (\*).

Information relating to copyright issues can be found at the Australian Copyright Council's *Online Information Centre* at <a href="www.copyright.org.au/index.htm">www.copyright.org.au/index.htm</a>. Please note the licence conditions that apply to downloading and printing information sheets from this site.

## **Print**

\*Branston, G. & Stafford, R. 1996, 'Case study: Bob Marley Superstar', in *The Media Student's Book*, chapter 14, Routledge, New York.

Chong, D. 1999, *The Girl in the Picture*, Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, London.

Coynick, D. 1976, Film: Real to Reel, McDougall, Littell & Company, Evanston, Illinois.

Delofski, M. & Mills, J. (eds) 1996, 'The documentary: strangely compelling', in *Media International Australia*, AFTRS, Sydney, NSW.

Jeffrey, Tom. (ed.) 1998, Film Business: A Handbook for Producers, AFTRS, Sydney.

Lansell, R. & Beilby, P. (eds) 1982, *The Documentary Film in Australia*, Cinema Papers, North Melbourne.

\*McMahon, B. & Quin, R. 1984, Exploring Images: Picture Analysis and Activities for Students, Bookland. East Perth.

Mollison, M. 1998, Producing Videos: A Complete Guide, AFTRS, Sydney, NSW.

Pacific Film and Television Commission 2001, *Queensland Production Directory 2001*, Pacific Film and Television Commission, Brisbane.

Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies 1999, Support Materials for Film and Television (1996 Syllabus), QBSSSS, Brisbane.

Rabiger, M. 1987, Directing the Documentary, Focal Press, Boston.

Stewart, C. & Kowaltzke, A. 1997, Media: New Ways and Meanings, John Wiley, Brisbane.

Studies Directorate 1993, *Using Visual Texts in Primary and Secondary English Classrooms*, Education Queensland, Brisbane.

\*Valasek, T. 1992, Frameworks: An Introduction to Film Studies, Wm. C. Brown Publishers, Dubuque, Iowa.

Wolverton, M. 1983, Reality on Reels: How to Make Documentaries for Video/Radio/Film, Gulf Publishing Company, Houston.

## **Electronic**

#### **Websites**

(All websites listed were accessed in February 2002)

# **Documentary filmmaking**

GeoCities, John Safran: www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Studio/8442/index.html

Murdoch University, *Documentary in the Reading Room*: http://wwwmcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/doco/doco.htm

Popped, Do Look Back: The Story of Cinema Verite: www.popped.com/articles98/cinemaverite/index.html

## Key industry organisations

(See Student resource 3 for a more extensive list of industry organisations)

AFC, Australian Documentaries since 1995: www.afc.gov.au/resources/searchd/checklists/docfind.html

AFI, Australian Film Institute (Library Catalogue): www.afi.org.au/

AFTRS, Australian Film Television Radio School: www.aftrs.edu.au/

Australian Centre for the Moving Image, *Screen Education: What we do for educators:* www.acmi.net.au/acmi.php?sect=screened&menu=foredu

Documentary Films, Documentary Film Resources for Filmmakers, Festivals, Documentary Films: <a href="https://www.documentaryfilms.net/site.htm">www.documentaryfilms.net/site.htm</a>

European Documentary Network, DOX Documentary Film Magazine: www.edn.dk/

Pacific Film and Television Commission, PFTC Online — Funding Guidelines: <a href="https://www.pftc.com.au/funding/funding.htm">www.pftc.com.au/funding/funding.htm</a>

QPIX, About QPIX: www.qpix.org.au/about.html

Queensland Documentary Association, QDOX Development Programs and Seminars: <a href="https://www.qdox.org.au/Develop.html">www.qdox.org.au/Develop.html</a>

# Film festivals/exhibition opportunities

ABC, National Indigenous Documentary Fund 2000: <a href="https://www.abc.net.au/message/archive/nidf3/">www.abc.net.au/message/archive/nidf3/</a>

ABC, Famous Australians: www.abc.net.au/btn/austs.htm

ABC TV Online, Short and Sweet: A festival of international short films: www.abc.net.au/shortandsweet/

Australian International Documentary Conference, *Australian DocuMart*: www.aidc.on.net/services/documartquide.htm

Flickerfest, Flickerfest 2002: www.flickerfest.com.au/

St Kilda Film Festival, St Kilda Film Festival 2002: www.stkildafilmfest.com.au/

Tropfest, Tropfest 2002: www.tropfest.com/

# **Activities**

# Phase 1 — Opening eyes

#### Students:

- · develop greater awareness of who makes social comment, how and why
- identify social comment media texts and their purposes
- analyse and evaluate how social comment media texts are produced, distributed and consumed in both commercial and non-commercial contexts.

## **Outcomes**

# **Activities**

# **Gathering evidence**

#### ME 6.3a

Students evaluate how contextual influences can contribute to personal interpretations of media

#### Students:

- discuss the concept of social comment and through discussion develop a shared understanding of what constitutes social comment; they explore questions such as:
  - who comments on society or critiques aspects of human behaviour?
  - who advocates social change or change in cultural values, beliefs, attitudes and actions?
  - what do they comment on most often?
  - wow do they make their comments?
- listen/view/read teacher-collected examples of social comment, such as talkback radio, current affairs programs, editorials and discuss:
  - are they examples of social comment?
  - what makes a text a social comment? (consider language use, intonation and context)
  - why is the media often used for social comment?
- collect examples of social comment from the media, over one week, and investigate:
  - what forms or mediums are used to make social comments?
  - how do the media use social comment to reflect and reinforce the norm or to question dominant values, beliefs, attitudes and actions?
- examine and identify media forms and technologies from the past that have been used as tools to construct, promote, display and exhibit social comment, such as comments about the a war through posters, films and advertisements (Teacher resource 2 and Student resource 1).
- identify and categorise examples by constructing a class chart/display — for example:
   Film:
  - dramas, such as Oliver Stone's JFK
  - docudramas, such as Alan Parker's Mississippi Burning
- documentaries, such as Tom Zubryki's Friends and Enemies
- propaganda, such as Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will.

# TV:

- comedies/satires, such as Frontline
- current affairs, such as Foreign Correspondent
- documentary mini-series, such as the ABC's Famous Faces, December 2001
- promotional/community service campaigns, such as Transport Department's 'Drink Driving' campaign or the Salvation Army Appeal
- music video, such as Midnight Oil's Beds are Burning.

#### ME 6.3a

Assessment technique:

• student-teacher consultation

## Do students:

- use a critical analysis model to deconstruct a case study image?
- take into account the contexts surrounding the interpretation of a text?
- compare past and present interpretations of a text?
- explain the changes of interpretation over time by relating to changes in social or political contexts?

## **Outcomes**

#### **Activities**

## **Gathering evidence**

- view and respond in a journal to a range of still and moving images that convey a critical social message for example, Dorothea Lange's social comment on rural poverty in America during the Depression in the photographs titled *Migrant Mother, Pea Pickers, Nipomo, California*; Pink Floyd's video clip *The Wall, 1984*; Fritz Lang's silent film *Metropolis*; docudramas that tell the story of a courageous person who 'makes a difference', like Steven Soderbergh's *Erin Brockovich*, and experimental/poetic texts with powerful persuasive imagery like Ron Fricke's *Koyaanisqatsi* and *Baraka*.
- discuss the texts and contexts surrounding the texts through questions, such as:
  - what are the commonalities/ differences in theme, approach and technique?
  - what do you think their producers' intentions were?
  - what makes text a powerful deliverer of a social message?
- view and analyse an example of a media image, such as 'The Burning Girl', which makes a powerful comment about the evil of war, and especially about unnecessary civilian casualties in the Vietnam War.
- discuss the class's interpretations of the images and the messages they think it is delivering today.
- research the cultural, political and ethical factors that surrounded the controversial worldwide publication of 'The Burning Girl' to write a short statement about how contextual influences contributed to personal interpretations of 'The Burning Girl' in 1978.
- compare the reaction in 1978 with the reaction now.
- revise their shared understanding of social comment.

#### **Focus questions**

- What is social comment and its function? Who constructs it and how?
- How do the media construct and use social comment? To what extent are the media, watchdogs of society?
- · What media forms and technologies are used as tools to promote, display and exhibit social comment?
- How does the context influence the message received by audiences at the time of production and reception?

#### Teaching considerations

In this phase the aim is to raise awareness about the nature of social comment media texts and to explore both textual and contextual factors that impact on their production and reception. Hence the phase can be implemented with an Australian or world focus that highlights a range of media forms and technologies across past and present eras or it can examine a particular form/technology within a past and/or present period of time. The selection of texts to study should clearly establish the focus to be taken and guide students to a clear understanding of how social comment is presented in and by the media.

All texts should be previewed before screening to students. Be sensitive to the emotional responses students may bring to some of the media texts. Tell parents and the relevant personnel in the school about the material to be explored.

# Phase 2 — Appraising viewpoints

#### Students:

- Identify and assess a variety of viewpoints mainstream, alternative, lobby group, youth, minority, fringe, disenfranchised — and the range of vehicles for presenting these viewpoints
- evaluate the range of social, political and economic influences operating on social comment documentaries produced by the public, commercial and independent media.

#### **Outcomes**

#### **Activities**

## Gathering evidence

#### ME 6.3b

Students evaluate social, political and economic influences operating on the production of public, commercial and independent media.

#### Students:

- identify from a collection of social comment media texts the viewpoint that is being promoted. (See Teaching considerations.)
- write up a role card for a person who may promote particular viewpoints on a particular issue, such as a conservative and radical perspective on youth unemployment or environmental damage. (See Teaching considerations.)
- participate in a forum/hypothetical/improvisation that allows them to role play the perspective identified on a given role card — for example, a teacher-led hypothetical scene where everyone in a railway carriage is detained while an electrical fault on the line is fixed, then a person claims that the government does not care about ordinary everyday workers and their problems, especially those of contemporary youth.
- participate in a debriefing session and discuss what they learnt about how different perspectives are heard/interpreted/ ignored. They then write an OHT summary with headings such as 'Whose viewpoint matters?' or 'Whose viewpoint is silenced?'
- compile a table that lists examples of social comment media texts, the use of the chosen medium, the viewpoint taken and the intended audience — for example, *The Simpsons* (i.e. TV medium, animation form, satire genre, antiestablishment social comment about the effect of violence in the media for a prime-time audience).
- discuss what would be the most effective medium, form, genre, social comment/issue to target various groups of youth and why.
- debate the statement that youth are 'rebels without a cause' referring to researched/collected images of youth in twentieth and twenty-first century popular culture (for example, James Dean compared with Eminem, The Brady Bunch compared with Dawson's Creek, Westside Story compared with Cruel Intentions) and determine what has changed in society's view of youth. Are youth criticised more or less or the same in contemporary society? Why?
- discuss 'accuracy' of these representations for some groups of youth.

## **Outcomes**

#### **Activities**

- read and discuss a document study that explores Bob Marley's reggae music as social protest (see Branston & Stafford 1996, pp. 151–154).
- view a range of images/excerpts that show a variety of mainstream and non-mainstream representations of youth, including the stereotypical and selfrepresentations (for example, from advertisements, fan magazines, posters, music video clips, films, videos and TV programs).
- identify and discuss the messages that they believe are being presented in the above. Do the representations tend to be positive or negative and to what degree are they 'truthful or fair to life experience'? What message is predominantly conveyed? Is it a criticism or an affirmation of youth? Which, in your opinion, are distorted/exaggerated/ridiculed? Which are not presented? Who might have created these representations, why and how? What constraints would have impacted on their final form? How would they be different if created by you? What is the impact of contextual influences such as prior knowledge and education, interests, fan cultures, lifestyle, values and beliefs on these readings? (See Teaching considerations.)
- compare and contrast texts from commercial and non-commercial media on familiar social issues and discuss how audiences access and interpret these texts differently.
- commercial advertisement, music video, current affair story, commercial network commissioned documentary
- non-commercial community service announcement, experimental/short film, independent documentary, personal web page and home video.
- investigate case studies of texts that have received widespread publicity for the social comment that was delivered and consider whether it was a catalyst to any change in opinion or action by groups, individuals or organizations, such as a government inquiry, police investigation or personal or group protest.
- in collaboration with others, research key documentary filmmakers and investigate their attempts to express an idea or opinion about society or an issue or to raise awareness by incorporating social comment into their work for example, John Grierson, Dziga Vertov, Frederick Wiseman, Pare Lorentz, Emile de Antonio, Essie Coffey, David Bradbury, Jeni Thornley and Megan McMurchy, Chris Noonan, Dennis O'Rourke, John Pilger and John Safran (an interesting recent case study of social protest and censorship by the ABC). (See Teaching considerations.)
- view examples of documentary filmmakers' work and read critical articles about their films and technique. What factors influenced their process? Were they most successful operating in a public, commercial and/or independent medium? Why? What were the constraints/benefits/consequences? (See Student resource 3.)

## **Gathering evidence**

#### ME 6.3b

Assessment technique:

focused analysis

#### Do students:

- identify the external influences that impact on the production of social documentary film?
- evaluate the influence these factors have on decision making during the production process?
- analyse the benefits/ consequences/constraints of operating in the public, commercial or independent production area?

Outcomes	Activities	Gathering evidence	
	<ul> <li>imagine societies of the future and discuss the role of social comment documentary in these possible and preferred societies:</li> </ul>		
	<ul> <li>what might the issues and dilemmas be for these future societies?</li> <li>what role might advances in digital communication play in the exhibition of social comment documentaries and their power to instigate social change?</li> <li>who might be advantaged/disadvantaged in these futures?</li> </ul>		

#### **Focus questions**

- What or whose viewpoints have been expressed in film? Which viewpoints and vehicles for social comment have been highly visible/marginalised/ignored/never presented? Why?
- What influences impact on the production and reception of social comment documentaries in commercial and noncommercial media contexts?

#### **Teaching considerations**

Provide students with enough background material to enable them to have a clear understanding of the viewpoint they are communicating in role or select an issue that they already have an understanding of. Avoid the use of stereotyping or individuals or groups when assigning roles. Explain that the viewpoints they will be asked to represent while in role are not always clearly defined and consistent, but may overlap with a variety of other viewpoints. Preview documentary material before screening with students and be sensitive to the backgrounds and experiences of students when discussing issues.

Encourage debate and expression of personal interpretations of texts. Take opportunities to explore the factors in students' lives that have influenced the variety of personal interpretations in the class, such as cultural background, life experiences, study, travel and relationships. Some students may not wish to disclose or document their own lives for a variety of reasons. Respect their desire for privacy and encourage them to document those aspects they feel comfortable about revealing.

Recognise that explicit teaching must occur to develop students' understanding of values that underpin national icons and symbols.

Be aware that some students may not have access to media texts due to cultural, socioeconomic circumstances or religious beliefs. It may be necessary to either make media texts available to individual students and familiarise them with the relevant media forms or consider alternative ways in which individual students can explore the media concepts and demonstrate the learning outcomes.

Consider a range of sectors that produce media texts containing social comment — for example, government agencies, corporate institutions, lobby groups, youth, minority/fringe groups, political activist groups, individuals/whistle blowers', as well as forms of mediums for presentation, including print, broadcast, electronic, digital and film.

# Phase 3 — Constructing an eye opener

#### Students:

- develop and apply an understanding of the features of social comment documentary including the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity in journalistic and poetic approaches to reporting
- apply an understanding of media languages and technologies to design and create a social comment documentary in a short video format within a non-commercial production and reception context.

#### **Outcomes**

#### **Activities**

#### Gathering evidence

#### ME 6.1

Students apply an understanding of media languages and technologies to design and create media texts in a range of production contexts.

#### Students:

- research, observe and discuss examples of social comment documentaries that have been produced and/or exhibited by the public, commercial and independent media:
  - how do they differ according to modes of production and opportunities for exhibition?
  - what are the guidelines for different producers of TV and cinema media? For example, the guidelines for making documentaries for the ABC and SBS as opposed to the approach taken by Channels 7, 9 and 10, or the freelancing/ government-grant-funded independent model.
  - how do the guidelines relate to the charters, target audiences and aims of the different media organisations?
  - what social, political and economic influences operate on the public, commercial and independent media when making social comment?
  - which sectors of society are represented and how? which are not represented and why?
- explore the social comment documentary's incorporation of different stylistic approaches to reportage (see Valasek, 1992, Unit 4), e.g.:
  - journalistic objective, such as cinéma vérité or observational, exposé/expository narration, compilation of interviews and archival footage
  - poetic highly subjective and imaginative/ abstract/ associative, such as a ciné-poem, a personal/autobiographical visualization.
- view examples, keep a journal and workshop filmmaking techniques, experimenting with both documentary approaches' use of:
  - film language (intertextuality, montage, symbolic codes, multilayered sound and subtitles)
  - camera, sound and editing technologies (considering continuity, adopting production roles and market)
  - presentation techniques, industry processes and practices.
- identify social comment in terms of specific social, political and economic issues, by recording a vox pop of opinions and ideas about how best these issues and viewpoints could be presented.
- consult with others in groups to prioritise what young people wish to change in contemporary society.
- decide what are the important issues for a variety of young people, and what range of youth perspectives exists.
- form small groups and choose one of the above issues/viewpoints to develop into a concept outline to pitch to the class. Each group will have a different viewpoint based on a role card given to them by the teacher — for example, a mainstream, high-status point of view, and a marginalised, powerless, low-status point of view.

#### ME 6.1

Assessment technique:

teacher observation

### Do students:

- manipulate the languages and use the potential of the technologies?
- refine and re-edit their work to produce the intended message in the chosen style?
- operate effectively individually or in collaborative production contexts?

This table is continued on the next page...

## **Outcomes**

#### Media activities

## **Gathering evidence**

- participate in a class discussion to determine which viewpoint could succeed in effecting some change of attitude or action and why.
- collect three texts that present the chosen issue from websites, films, video, TV, music clips, newspapers, magazines, radio and CD-ROMs and personal interviews/anecdotes.
- interview a variety of audiences, and collate their responses to the collected media texts and their comments about the chosen issue.
- critically evaluate the responses and present to the class a personal opinion regarding the producers and their use of social comment.
- pitch a proposal for a social comment documentary (in a short video format) that presents an alternative viewpoint to those of the collected texts.
- select production crews, adopt production roles, choose and modify a concept outline (from previous activity).
- plan, design and produce a social comment documentary in a short video format suitable for screening at a specialty event such as a local community/school showcase (for example, titled 'Our Say') and for entry into a film festival/ competition such as the Queensland New Filmmaker Awards.
- identify the purpose, conditions and audience of the competition or festival.
- collaboratively decide what language, technology, audience, institution and representation aspects must be considered and how these concepts will be incorporated into the planning, design and production stages of film making.
- present their planning and production process in group or individual logs that incorporate documentation of design and pre-production aspects such as location scouting notes and sketches, interview questions, release forms and consideration of workplace health and safety factors, a treatment, script, call sheets, filming and editing schedules and so on (see QBSSSS 1999 samples of pre-production and production documentation).

#### ME 6.1

Assessment techniques:

- student-teacher consultation
- · focused analysis

#### Do students:

- make appropriate decisions about which are the most effective forms and technologies for delivering the texts to the competition conditions and audience?
- manipulate the languages and use the potential of the technologies?
- engage in a planning and design process before producing their texts?
- refine and re-edit their work to produce the intended message in the chosen style?
- operate effectively individually or in collaborative production contexts?

# Focus questions

- What are the features of a social comment documentary?
- To what extent is objectivity possible when representing social comment?
- What stylistic approaches and techniques can be used to make a social comment documentary?
- How are media languages and technologies used to design and create a social comment documentary in a short video format within a non-commercial production and reception context?

# Teaching considerations

Although this phase focuses on students making a social comment documentary, students may choose to use another media form — for example, a web page, a music video clip, a current affairs story. The activities required for delivering social comment in other media forms will need to be adaptations of the ones suggested in this phase. The scope and depth of preparation will depend upon the choice made about form and content. However, students will need to be given enough time to practise and experiment with design and production techniques and processes.

# Phase 4 — Opening others' eyes

#### Students:

- simulate industry practice to promote their social comment documentaries
- organise and run a video showcase to exhibit their social comment documentaries to a public audience
- monitor audience responses to their social comment documentaries to guide the selection of texts for entry into a film festival/competition
- write an evaluation report that assesses the effectiveness of the event and its outcomes.

#### **Outcomes**

#### **Activities**

## Gathering evidence

#### ME 6.2

Students apply industry strategies to promote a specific media text to various audiences.

#### Students:

- investigate industry websites and agencies to gather information about a range of promotional campaigns for specialty events such as a film festival or competition — for example, Brisbane International Film Festival, Flicker Fest or government bodies that help filmmakers exhibit their pieces at events such as the Cannes Film Festival.
- analyse the use of media languages and technologies and the promotional materials for an effective social or political campaign — according to media reports — to identify aspects that appear to be effective and worth emulating.
- simulate industry strategies to plan and organise a publicity campaign to promote a special event exhibition of their films — for example, a video showcase/awards night.
- · design and create publicity materials including:
  - posters, pamphlets/brochures
  - advertisements/announcements/press releases or press electronic kit
  - staged gimmicks/attractions/events/famous guests
  - lead-up feature articles (websites, newspapers, magazines)
  - event tickets, programs
  - media coverage/documenting of the event.
- evaluate their social comment documentaries in terms of conceptual themes or technical effectiveness to organise a screening program.
- choose a theme, venue and decorations and make arrangements to cater for the event and rnall aspects including ticketing, seating, programming, hosting and screening.
- present their process and intentions in an opening speech/screen presentation such as PowerPoint, video, or 'in-program notes'.
- exhibit their documentaries to an audience and monitor responses to the documentaries' messages throughout the screening, and afterward through interviews/feedback forms or voting processes.
- share their observations about audience response in a class discussion and assess the texts' effectiveness in achieving the purpose of making a social comment:
  - did the audience link with the film as expected? Why or why not?
  - what changes could be made to the film to make it more convincing?
- participate in selecting texts (based on the previous activity) to enter into the Queensland New Filmmaker Awards competition.

#### ME 6.2

Assessment techniques:

- · teacher observation
- peer- and self-assessment

#### Do students:

- use a variety of industry strategies to promote the showcase to a range of audiences, such as crossmedia promotion?
- present their texts in a range of contexts to reach various audiences?
- make appropriate decisions on which are the most effective forms and technologies for delivering the texts to the audience?
- design publicity material that will appeal to the target audience?

Outcomes	Media activities	Gathering evidence	
	<ul> <li>promote their film to festival judges using treatments, synopsis, title sequences and accompanying publicity material such as:</li> </ul>		
	<ul> <li>stills from the film</li> <li>film posters and playbills</li> <li>press reviews</li> <li>background material on director</li> <li>a preview trailer or excerpts from the film.</li> <li>discuss the effectiveness of the event and its outcomes and write a formal evaluation report that includes individual responses to nominated criteria.</li> </ul>		

#### **Focus questions**

- · How is a social comment documentary most effectively marketed and exhibited?
- · What does a promotional campaign entail?
- How is a specialty screening event organised and run?
- Why is it important to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of both the social comment documentary texts and their viewing contexts?

# **Teaching considerations**

The class and teacher need to negotiate what can be achieved in the given timeframe and school/community context. The focus is for students to see their work being viewed by an audience and to experience affirmation of their vision and achievement. Hence the special event could be as simple as showing the texts to one another in a simulated class event, or it could be as complex as a gala evening that allows students the opportunity to simulate a number of industry practices.

# Investigating media texts that promote a social comment

**Teacher resource 1** 

Throughout history media have been used as a tool for social comment. Here are some examples of media forms and technologies to guide classroom delivery.

Technologies and forms	Examples of social comment media vehicles		
Print novels, letters, poetry/lyrics, newspapers, nursery rhymes, magazines, photographs, comics, cartoons, posters, billboards, product packaging	<ul> <li>biographies, letters to the editor, cards, protest songs</li> <li>editorials, feature articles, exposés</li> <li>collages, postcards, reviews</li> <li>photojournalism — war atrocities, protests and strikes</li> <li>photographic/art exhibition</li> <li>political cartoons</li> <li>propaganda</li> <li>advertising campaigns</li> <li>spin-off products</li> </ul>		
Film/video narrative	<ul> <li>drama</li> <li>short film</li> <li>animation</li> <li>documentary</li> <li>docudrama</li> <li>propaganda</li> <li>experimental art film</li> <li>ciné poem</li> <li>newsreel</li> </ul>		
Broadcast TV radio Internet	<ul> <li>news and current affairs</li> <li>political comedy/satire</li> <li>music clips</li> <li>documentary mini-series/series</li> <li>debate, speeches, protests</li> <li>talkback, interviews, music</li> <li>webcasting/video streaming</li> </ul>		
Digital interactive experiences, websites, multimedia	<ul> <li>email, chat rooms/lists</li> <li>bulletin boards, home pages</li> <li>performances, installation, CD-ROM</li> <li>online magazines</li> </ul>		
Specific campaigns delivered through the media	AIDS advertising campaign — print and broadcast QUIT smoking campaigns — print and broadcast Fatal Four — Queensland Transport Road Safety (refer to Module 'Media and Road Safety'), print and broadcast Anti Racism — Education Queensland Anti Bullying — Education Queensland		

# What is social comment, what is its function and how and why does it involve the media?

**Teacher resource 2** 

# **Defining 'social comment'**

To make a social comment is to:

- express a point of view that critiques or affirms an aspect or aspects of society
- change points of view on issues through discourse/debate/confrontation
- change the course of history
- inform, educate and/or indoctrinate audiences
- question the reasons for injustice and atrocities
- speak on behalf of the innocent
- document events, people and places from an ideological perspective.

## The function of social comment

Social comment enables society to:

- operate as an open and progressive dialogue amongst its sectors
- deal with issues of intolerance and difference
- engage with social change and progress
- pursue democratic rights such as freedom of speech.

#### Media and social comment

Social comment involves the media because it:

- needs a form and a technology that can reach a mass audience (even better if it can cross forms and technologies to reach audiences in multimodal ways)
- needs a form and technology that can be immediate
- must have a vehicle of expression/language with the power to be emotive, that is understood by the general public
- requires a range of media institutions, processes and practices to construct it
- will have greater success if it employs multipurpose appeals such as informing, educating, persuading, entertaining and expressing techniques/strategies.

# Investigating media forms and technologies that promote a social comment

Student resource 1

Your task is to locate, collect, investigate, explore and list as many examples of media texts that have been produced as a vehicle to produce, promote, display or exhibit 'social comment'. Use the general headings below to help you.

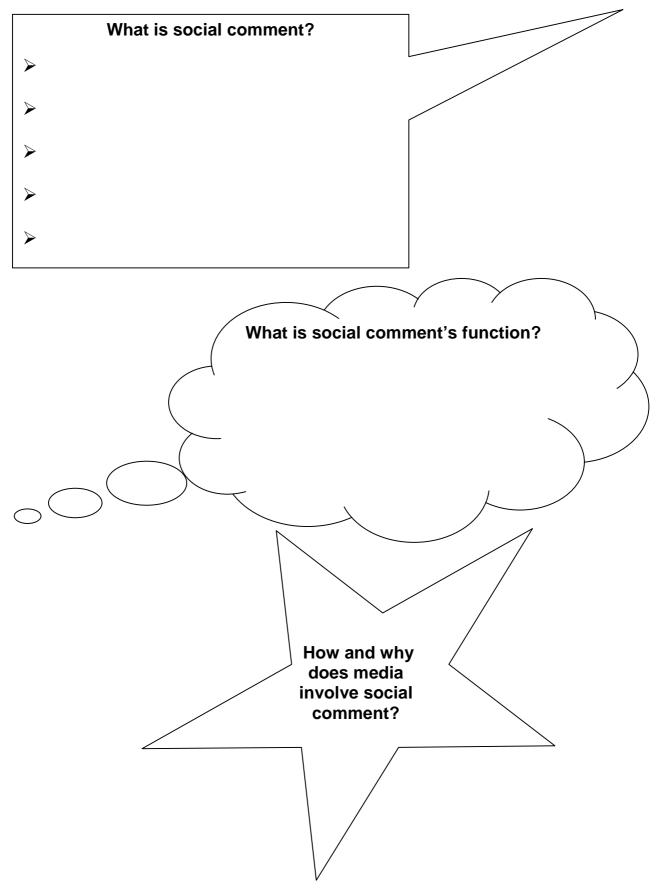
# Supply a brief description of the social comment media text

Technology and form	Title	Producer	Era	Comment
Print novels, letters, poetry/lyrics, newspapers, magazines, photographs, comics, cartoons, posters, billboards, product packaging				
Film/video narrative				
non-narrative				
Broadcast TV				
radio				
Internet				
Digital interactive experiences, websites, multimedia, online magazines				
Specific social comment campaigns				

# Defining social comment, its function and how and why it involves the media

# **Student resource 2**

Use the following shapes to summarise your understanding of social comment and the media.



# Social, political and economic influences operating on the social comment documentary

# **Student resource 3**

The influences have been allocated into one category for clarity, but in reality they may sit in more than one category.

# Social influences at the times of production and distribution

- public standards (conformity, tolerance)
- lobby groups and religious institutions (bias, minority/alternative viewpoints)
- cultural sensitivities, values and beliefs (dominant ideology and political correctness)
- issues and debates in society (current affairs, news stories, public debates)
- critical acclaim (film reviews/awards, director's reputation)
- prior knowledge of audience (role as fiction/non-fiction, relationship to real people and real issues).

# Political influences at the time of production and distribution

- code of ethics, copyright, privacy laws, workplace health and safety (legislation)
- media ownership and control (power and authority)
- censorship and classification system (regulation)
- Australian content (protection and promotion/propaganda)
- political agendas and issues.

# Economic influences at the time of production and distribution

- generation of profits and or sales (marketing, publicity, promotions, distribution, sales)
- media circulation and ratings (target audience and demographics)
- production methods and practices (commercial and non-commercial)
- technology (access and equity)
- budget (funding, sponsorship, listed on the stock market)
- government incentives payroll tax rebates, location assistance, cast and crew subsidy, marketing assistance, script development.

# Useful organisations for information about the film and TV industry

# **Student resource 4**

Arts Law Centre of Australia 43 Cowper Wharf Road Woolloomooloo, NSW 2011 http://www.artslaw.com.au

Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society Limited (AMCOS) 6–12 Atchison Street St Leonards, NSW 2065 http://www.apra.com.au

Australasian Performing Right Association (APRA) 6–12 Atchison Street St Leonards, NSW 2065 http://www.apra.com.au

Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) Level 15, 201 Sussex Street Sydney, NSW 2000 http://www.aba.gov.au

Australian Copyright Council Level 3, 245 Chalmers Street Redfern, NSW 2016 http://www.copyright.org.au

Australian Film Commission Level 4, 150 William Street Woolloomooloo, NSW 2011 http://www.afc.gov.au

Australian Film Finance Corporation Pty Ltd Level 12, 130 Elizabeth Street Sydney, NSW 2000 http://www.ffc.gov.au Australian Film Institute 49 Eastern Road South Melbourne, VIC 3205 http://www.afi.org.au

Australian Screen Directors' Association Limited (ASDA)
PO Box 211
Rozelle, NSW 2039
http://www.asdafilm.org.au

Department of Communications and The Arts 38 Sydney Avenue Forrest, ACT 2603 <a href="http://www.dcita.gov.au">http://www.dcita.gov.au</a>

Film Australia Pty Ltd 101 Eton Road Lindfield, NSW 2070 http://www.filmaust.com.au

Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC)
Levels 5 & 6, 23–33 Mary Street
Surry Hills, NSW 2010
http://www.oflc.gov.au

Pacific Film and Television Commission Level 15, 111 George Street Brisbane, QLD 4000 http://www.pftc.com.au

Screen Producers' Association of Australia (SPAA)
Level 7, 235 Pyrmont Street
Pyrmont NSW 2009
<a href="http://www.spaa.org.au">http://www.spaa.org.au</a>

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