

Film Guide: *La Vocera*

About this Guide

This guide was produced in Spring 2022 by Whitney Wagner, Jasmine Morse, and Emmy Tither on behalf of the Latin American and Iberian Institute (LAI) at The University of New Mexico as part of a curriculum series that addresses Indigenous activism and resilience in the climate justice movement. The purpose of this particular guide is to serve as a foundation for this work and to deepen students' understanding of the soundscapes of Latin America and Iberia. Students will build upon their critical thinking skills and analyze the world around them.

Using Film in the Classroom

Film can be used like diverse literature, transporting students to a different place or time. To show a good film is to give students the opportunity to experience a piece of life through someone else's eyes. If we use films written, directed, produced or acted by those from other countries, we're also providing exposure to another's point of view, one that often is vastly different from our own.

Our students are from a visually and technologically savvy generation. Amid Promethea boards, other smart boards technologies, iPads, and iMovie apps, watching a movie in class isn't necessarily the "treat" it used to be—some of our students are used to creating their own movies. Too often movies in class have become synonymous with nap time or busy work—a.k.a the teacher has work they have to get done, and they don't have time to teach. So, the idea of a movie itself might not catch a class's attention... but a story that transports them to a country they've never seen, an ecosystem they've only read about, languages or music they've never heard, or art they've never seen—that can grab their attention.

Discussions of films like these are a great exercise in critical thinking skills. In spring of 2012, the UNM LAI hosted a workshop on "Teaching About the Border Through the Lens of Film." Dr. Liz Hutchinson, UNM Professor of History, brought up a number of important points to consider when using film in the classroom—many that could lead to fruitful classroom discussions.

The following is a section from a hand-out she provided. It's full of great questions, both for teachers to consider when choosing films, and to be used in class discussions about films. She specifies Latin America - as that is our focus - but these are applicable to any film.

Film as a Source for Teaching Latin America

Origins: Why, when, and how was this film produced? Who paid for production and dissemination? Who was supposed to see it?

Motives: What was the filmmaker trying to accomplish by writing/directing/producing this film? What were the film-maker's immediate goals (to persuade its audience to document events, to effect political or other changes, etc.)?

Perspective: What can you tell about the filmmaker's values and assumptions by watching the film itself? What can you learn about his/her biography, historical context, or career from other sources? How does this affect the credibility or reliability of the film with respect to the events it portrays?

Film: What major themes and topics emerge in the film itself? If the film claims to be "true," what evidence or techniques does the filmmaker use to convey the story or message of the film, and are these assertions believable?

Information: what does the film say about the events, people, or time period under discussion?

Resources for using films in the classroom - We realize films like these can be hard to come by, but below we've provided information about programs that provide many Latin American films for free to teachers nationwide.

[The Roger Thayer Stone Center for Latin American Studies](#) at Tulane University has an incredible [Lending Library](#). It is "the most comprehensive lending collection of education materials about Latin America topics available for classroom use. The library holds over 3,000 videos, slide packets, culture kits, curriculum units, games, and miscellaneous print items." Films comprise a large

part of their resources and they will ship the films to teachers nationwide free of charge.

[The Institute for the Study of the Americas](#) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has extensive [Film Resources](#) that they, too, freely lend to educators nationally. They also have a section devoted to films for K-12 classrooms with accompanying curricular materials for most of the films.

Guidelines for Implementing film in the classroom – Below are some guidelines for implementing the film in your classroom. These were adapted from Regina Higgins' article "Teaching Latin America through Film".

Introduce the theme before you introduce the film - To make the most of viewing a film, introduce students to the themes in instruction, so you can explain and provide context before you view the film together. Connect with the themes not just in your planning, but in your teaching. Let students know explicitly and in detail just what you want them to watch and listen for. Tell them how their viewing will link to their learning. If there are terms and concepts that may be new to students, give them a thorough grounding in their meaning.

Film, especially documentary film, is powerful and immediate. We see people affected (and sometimes afflicted) by forces we may have known only in the abstract. Suddenly, the consequences of these forces are brought to life for us, made present through individuals we can see and hear. Preparation and context help students to process these images as part of their learning. In fact, many conventional reading strategies work well, with some adaptations, for pre-viewing a film.

K-W-L works for viewing as well as reading – For most films, the standard K-W-L ("what I know, what I want to know, what I learned") graphic organizer for reading makes a good framing device. This gives students a chance to put into words what they bring to the film, what they expect from the experience of viewing, and then, afterwards, what new information or insights they gained. If students are already completing K-W-L organizers for reading, they'll be familiar with the process. It will also give you the message that viewing the film will be just as important part of their learning as assigned reading.

The "what I learned" section provides a solid post-viewing assessment. And, to keep the learning going forward, students can re-visit and update their "what I

know” notes and add to their “what I want to know” questions. The final discussion can focus on just how students can learn more about the themes presented in the film.

Making Predictions – Even very young students can prepare for a film by predicting what they will see and learn about. When they make their predictions in informal writing or in drawings, students form some basic anticipatory ideas, which give them a context for viewing. Make notes without comment. Now you’ve set up an opportunity to test their assumptions. Will their predictions come true, or will they see and learn things they hadn’t even thought of?

After viewing, students can discuss what they saw that surprised them, and why they were surprised. Post viewing is an opportunity for assessment, as well as a springboard for more exploration.

Asking Essential Questions – Every film documentary or feature brings up and addresses essential questions about life and the world. A good post-viewing activity is to challenge students to answer specifically and in writing the essential questions from the various points of view offered in the film. And, after thoughtful study and viewing, students can add their own answers to the essential questions.

Building on Learning – When the film is over and you turn the lights back on, be sure to continue the learning through discussion and writing, as well as other projects. First, especially if the film is emotionally engaging, students will need to respond informally, sharing their surprise or outrage. Let them express their reactions and be ready to turn their energy and engagement to further learning.

While interest is high and memory is fresh, students should note not only what they’ve learned from the film, but what questions remain for them. A class list of further questions to explore can give form and immediacy to a return to the “regular” instruction through reading. Those questions can light students’ way back into the textbook chapter and give them a reason for digging through data. Some films inspire students to take action as well as pursue further study.

Film Guide Lesson Plans

Summary:

The film guide includes two pre-screening activities, the documentary viewing accompanied with discussion questions and reflection, and a post-screening activity. This film guide in its entirety is around 5 hours and 45 minutes of class time, and thus can be considered as a mini-unit. However, educators are encouraged to adapt or leave out activities as they see fit.

Grade Levels:

Middle School (6-8)

The lesson can be taught across grade and age levels by modifying the prompts and materials provided.

La Vocera Unit Essential Question:

How are Indigenous communities in Latin America responding, and resisting, climate change?

La Vocera Unit Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe political indigenous movements in Mexico.
- Students will be able to critique documentaries as a strategy of creative and analytical communication.
- Students will be able to critically analyze the political purposes and nature of maps.
- Students will be able to draw conclusions on climate justice and Indigenous sovereignty in Mexico.

Core Standards:

Standards covered will vary depending on the grade level but will focus on the ELA – Speaking and Listening standards. Below are examples from applicable 6th grade standards; the standards most strongly addressed are highlighted:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.4: Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2.A: Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2.D: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.5: Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8: Distinguish fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9: Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.10: By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.5: Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

Film Background:

“For the first time in the history of Mexico, Indigenous peoples organized to have a candidate running for president in 2018. This movie is an intimate approach to the life of María de Jesús Patricio (Marichuy), proposed by the Indigenous Government Council to represent them in this process. The documentary portrays the challenges that she and the Indigenous Government Council face to get the necessary signatures and get to the ballots elections in the context of a country plagued by violence and racism towards women and Indigenous groups alike. Along her journey, Marichuy collects and links the existing struggles in various territories (Yaqui, Maya and Wixárika) leaving evidence of the importance of the resistance and organization of Indigenous peoples to preserve life and dignity. At the end of the road, the questions that prevail are: Progress and development for whom and at whose expense?”

- Director Luciana Kaplan from the [La Vocera Website](#)

Pre-Screening Activity #1 – Comparing Maps: 45 minutes - 1 hour

Lesson Context:

For this pre-screening activity you will project two maps onto the screen, either in split screen, or by showing one map at a time. Students will interact with the maps by describing what they see and making sense of the maps through comparison of the two as context for the documentary “La Vocera”, which features multiple Indigenous communities throughout the state of Mexico. You can find the map of recognized Indigenous land: [here](#). This is in contrast with this map [here](#).

Essential Questions:

What do maps represent and communicate to us?

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to locate the Indigenous nations of the Nahua, Yaqui, Maya and Wixárika.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast maps of the same geographical area.
- Students will be able to explain that maps can represent different lives, features, and perspectives.
- Students will be able to identify the political geography of Mexico and of Indigenous nations.

Vocabulary Terms:

Nahua

Yaqui

Maya

Wixárika

territorial boundaries

Learning Activities

Direct Instruction (10-15 min):

Project the atlas of the [Indigenous Pueblos of Mexico](#). Have students find where Nahua, Maya, Yaqui, and Wixárika people are identified on this map. Ask students to describe what they see and how the map is marked (It is marked by the provinces of Mexico). How are territorial boundaries shown?

Group Work (10-15 min):

Ask students to answer the following questions through the format of class discussion. What are the maps representing? Who is publishing/producing the maps? Why do you think this map was made?

Differentiation: For students who feel less comfortable speaking in class, provide an option for them to write down their answers and submit after class.

Direct Instruction (10-15 min):

Next project the <https://native-land.ca/> map and input the Indigenous nations that student found on the previous map (Yaqui, Nahua, Wixárika, Maya). You will most likely need to zoom out to contextualize the map. Ask students to describe what they see on the map. Ask students to share what they notice. How is the map marked? (It is marked by Indigenous communities/Indigenous claim to the land, not by the state of Mexico's provinces).

Group Work (10-15 min):

Now ask students the same set of questions as before. Who is publishing/producing the maps? Why do you think this map was made?

Independent Assessment (15 minutes):

Have students break into small groups and discuss these final questions. To then share as a group with the rest of the class. What differences do they notice between the maps? What similarities do you notice between the maps? What's missing from each of the maps? How does comparing the maps provide richer context/deeper understanding?

Assessment:

Teacher will determine student mastery by assessing their responses to the assessment assignment above.

Materials Needed:

Projector and access to maps: [here](#) and [here](#)

Pre-Screening Activity #2 - Persuasive strategies of documentary films: 45 minutes - 1 hour

Lesson Context:

Develop students understanding persuasive strategies used by documentarians to convey their messages. Have students watch the trailer then identify the type of persuasive strategies used in the trailer. Next have students make informed hypotheses about what the documentary will be about.

Essential Question:

What are documentaries and what strategies do they use to convey their messages?

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to describe persuasive documentary strategies.
- Students will be able to critique documentaries as a medium of communication.
- Students will be able to demonstrate deductive reasoning and critical thinking skills.

Vocabulary Terms:

documentary

persuasion

Learning Activities

Direct Instruction - 10-15 minutes:

Ask students if they know what a documentary is, take several answers before providing the Webster definition of a documentary for the class to write down on their worksheet. If time allows come up with a class definition of a documentary.

[Webster Dictionary definition:](#) *(noun) presentation (such as a film or novel) expressing or dealing with factual events.*

[Handout the Persuasive Strategies Worksheet](#)

Group Work - 20-25 min:

Next ask students if they can guess at what each persuasive film strategy accomplishes, take one answer for each persuasive strategy in the interest of time. Alternatively, you could provide the definitions and have students take turns reading them out loud to the class. Below are the provided definitions and what they accomplish.

1) Powerful Images

Powerful images include a variety of factors such as resolution (the intensity and detail) of the film, and the ability to capture different types of light including shadows. Improved quality of images is more likely to evoke a sense of emotion in the viewer.

2) Expression of People's Faces

"The close up a of persons face personifies drama" and "helps the viewer to understand the actual consequences of a devastating occurrence". In short, the expression of people's faces humanizes a situation through the shared condition of our humanity, and likely having experienced an emotion akin to the person on the screen.

3) Color vs Black and White Film

Color, or the absence of it, can be used to express a time period. Black and white scenes can be used to communicate a flashback. Color film could present a more dynamic and captivating scene. Creating a documentary in color or black and white is the artistic/creative choice of the filmmaker.

4) Use of Celebrities

"Celebrity endorsement helps people to remember the documentary" Celebrities therefore aid in the recall of information about the documentary and may persuade viewers to watch based on the likeability of the celebrity.

5) Use of Non-celebrity People

The use of everyday people contributes to a sense of honesty and truth in the documentary. Non-celebrity people are more likely to represent the experiences of everyday life, and thus there is a greater likelihood of relatability between the people in the documentary and the viewer.

6) A Clear Call to Action

A clear call to action presents the honesty of the documentary's purpose and prompts the viewer to take action typically in line with the topic of the documentary, connecting a global to local approach or vice-versa.

These Persuasive Strategies have been adapted from the Newbie Film School Article [here](#).

*Learning Environment Differentiation: This lesson can be provided in an in-person, virtual, or hybrid format using drawing software such as Jamboard or **MS Paint**.*

Direct Instruction - 5-10 minutes:

Once students have filled out the definitions on their handouts, explain that they will now watch the documentary [trailer](#) and will be tasked with identifying some of the persuasive film strategies used in the trailer after they've watched it.

Show students "La Vocera" [trailer](#) on the projector.

Independent Assessment - 5 minutes:

Students will now make predictions about what will occur in "La Vocera" and write it down on their handout. Students will then share some of their findings with the class after conversing in small groups or as individuals immediately after the trailer.

Assessment

Teacher will determine student mastery by assessing their responses to the assessment assignment above.

Lesson Materials:

[Persuasive Strategies of Documentary Films Handout](#), a projector and the [La Vocera Trailer](#).

La Vocera Documentary – Screening and Activity: 1hr 45 minutes

Lesson Context:

In this lesson, students will watch the "La Vocera" documentary and will analyze and reflect through written discussion questions and a writing prompt.

Essential Question:

What stories are presented in the “La Vocera” documentary?

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to critique a documentary through discussion questions.

Students will apply prior knowledge of persuasive film strategies to the documentary.

Vocabulary Terms:

No new vocabulary terms.

Learning Activities**La Vocera Documentary: 1hr and 22 minutes**

Pass out the [“La Vocera” Discussion Questions Handout](#). Have students fill out the discussion questions during the screening.

Reflection: 20-25 minutes

At the end of the documentary pass out the [Written Reflection Handout](#). Communicate to students that they have the option to either write or draw in their answers.

Assessment

Teacher will determine student mastery by assessing their responses to the assessment assignment above.

Materials Needed:

Projector, a Netflix account to watch “La Vocera”, and [“La Vocera” Discussion Questions Handout](#) and [Written Reflection Handout](#).

Post-Screening Activity – Creating an Infographic: 2 hours (or 1 hour of class time)**Lesson Context:**

Ask students to read one of 3 articles (whichever is of greater interest to them, the educator is more than welcome to find their own articles as well) about Indigenous climate change resistance/resilience then have those students create an informative infographic to relay the message of the article to the class. They can create an Instagram post, a Google slide, Canva image, or poster to communicate what they learned. They will then share/present their infographic to the class.

This activity is adapted from the [“This Land” documentary curriculum guide](#).

Essential Question:

What is an infographic and how does it communicate information?

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain the format and purpose of infographics.
- Students will be able to read and synthesize an article of their choosing.
- Students will be able to exercise creativity in creating an infographic that communicates the thesis of the article succinctly and coherently.
- Students will be able to successfully present and communicate the purpose of their work to their peers.

Key Vocabulary Terms:

infographic
Climate Justice

Learning Activities

Opening - 15 minutes

Students will review these three Instagram accounts: @intersectionalenvironmentalist, @climateincolour, @greendreamerkamea. While doing so, students pay attention to the design of the posts and their message (tips include noticing how much text to include, what does the post convey, what about the infographic caught your eye, color scheme, the amount of writing etc.). Alternatively, to keep students on track you can present these Instagram accounts through the projector. This will likely require an Instagram login.

Direct Instruction (I Do) - 15 minutes

Next ask the class these discussion questions: What is climate justice? What is an infographic? (Make sure to provide the definition of an infographic after students share their knowledge of the term) Why are or aren't infographics an effective way of communicating information?

Independent Activity (You Do) - 25 minutes

Students will select to read one of the articles below in class. This list of sources is optional, you may select a list of articles for students based on your own discretion. Provide printed copies for students to annotate, and to keep students on task.

The resources below span a wide range of reading levels. Resources at a higher reading level (such as the article from The Atlantic) can be used for your own background or adapted for students' needs. Some tools for adapting and differentiating written material are listed in this article by [Assistive Technology Tools and Resources](#).

1. The article, "[The Land Battle Behind the Fires in the Amazon](#)" by Shannon Sims for The Atlantic (August 27, 2019)

3. The article, "[As Students Clamor for More on Climate Change, Portland heeds the Call](#)" by Mike Seely for the New York Times (June 9th, 2019)

4. The article, "[Want to know how to save nature? Ask Indigenous scientists](#)" by Sarah Sax For Vox (January 9th, 2022).

5. The article, "[Meet the young activists of color who are leading the charge against climate disaster](#)" by Nylah Burton for Vox (October 11, 2019)

Differentiation: Students are encouraged to look for articles that may be of greater interest to them personally, as long as it is on the theme of Climate Justice, Indigenous Resilience to Climate Justice, and/or Youth Activism for Climate Justice.

Group Work (We Do) - 15-20 minutes

Break students out into small groups based on the articles they selected and have them discuss the messages of the article. Additionally, have students discuss something new they learned from reading that they would want someone else to know.

Independent Assessment - (45-1hr)

Students will re-review the accounts and specifically the posts they liked from class earlier. They will then create a visually appealing infographic to relay a message of the article to the class based on some of the groupthink and synthesis they did earlier. Students could create a poster(s), a Google slide, act out their Instagram post, or use Canva (there are more options to create an infographic than the ones listed here, feel free to use your discretion). The goal is to expose students to nuanced topics, while practicing critical reading and thinking strategies to increase comprehension. (Students should spend no more than 45-1hr on the infographic for homework or as a lesson)

Product Differentiation: students may provide their assessment work in a format that best suits them (PowerPoint, podcast, poster, writing, etc.).

Assessment

Teacher will determine student mastery by assessing their responses to the assessment assignment above.

Lesson Materials:

Access to a projector, access to an Instagram account and printed copies of the assigned articles above. Alternatively, all students would need access to a device that allows them to read the articles listed above.

At the start of the following class students will share their creative infographic.

Differentiation and Modification Options for the Unit [How can this unit be modified to reach all students?]:

In addition to the below, see differentiation options included in the above unit lesson plans.

Content: see resources below for different forms of content regarding the same subject matter.

Process: students can work individually or with a trusted partner on assignments if they prefer.

Product: students may provide their assessment work in a format that best suits them (PowerPoint, podcast, poster, writing, etc.).

Learning Environment: lesson can be provided in an in-person, virtual, or hybrid format using drawing software such as Jamboard or [MS Paint](#).

Extension resources: students may explore the resources provided below for extra content and evidence for their assessment work.

English Language Learners (ELLs): Vocab words defined in detail during direct instruction; can use notes in assessments; extended time.

IEPs and 504s; lesson can be modified in content, process, and product to reflect learning accommodations.

Additional Resources:

Short Documentary Films

[“Kuna Conversations with Mother Earth”](#) - “Created during a Participatory Video during which the Kuna Indians of Panama documented their struggle to conserve the forests, their main source of food and traditional medicine.”

[‘Los Derechos de la Pachamama’](#) - “an emotional and inspiring video that was created as a joint project between five indigenous communities in Peru with the message: ‘We wish from our hearts that these rights we are proposing will be added to and that people across the world recover their harmony with our Mother Earth.’”

Short Documentary Film Projects

[Sacred Land Film Project](#) - “Around the world, indigenous people stand up for their traditional sacred lands in defense of cultural survival, human rights and the environment. Watch them stand against industrial mega-projects, consumer culture, resource extraction, competing religions, tourists and climate change.”

[If Not Us Then Who?](#) - “Supports a global awareness campaign highlighting the role indigenous and local peoples play in protecting our planet. We work in partnership with communities to make films, take photographs, curate content, commission local artists and host events. Our work aims to build lasting networks, target unjust policies, and advocate for greater rights for indigenous and local peoples to bring about positive social change.”

Full Length Documentaries

[The Last Ice](#) - “THE LAST ICE tells the story of the Inuit communities fighting to protect the disappearing Arctic that has been their home for centuries. From National Geographic Pristine Seas, THE LAST ICE, premieres on National Geographic Channel.”

[This Land Documentary](#) - “Runner and advocate Faith E. Briggs used to run through the streets of Brooklyn every morning. Now, she’s running 150 miles through three U.S. National Monuments that lay in the thick of the controversy around public lands. Accompanied by running companions who represent

diverse perspectives on what it means to be a public landowner, she assesses what is at stake if previously protected lands are reduced and if the public is largely unaware. THIS LAND is a story about land access told through a journey of inclusion and empowerment.”

[The Year 2040 Documentary](#) - Award-winning director Damon Gameau (That Sugar Film) embarks on a journey to explore what the future could look like by the year 2040 if we simply embraced the best solutions already available to us to improve our planet and shifted them rapidly into the mainstream. Structured as a visual letter to his 4-year-old daughter, Damon blends traditional documentary with dramatized sequences and high-end visual effects to create a vision board of how these solutions could regenerate the world for future generations.

[Blowout](#) - “Reporters, scientists, and citizens trace the fallout of a new American fossil fuel boom. From the oil fields of West Texas to tanker traffic busting the Panama Canal at its seams to an energy revolution in Asia, “Blowout” takes a deep dive into American energy’s global impacts on profits, public health, and climate change. Coming to Newsy and Amazon Prime August 20.”

Curricular Options

National Geographic - [Climate Change](#)

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - [Teaching Climate](#)

Climate Literacy and Education Awareness Network (CLEAN) - [Climate and Energy](#)

Stanford EARTH - [Climate Change curriculum for Middle School](#)

New York Times - [“Lesson of the Day: Bad Future, Better Future”](#)

Acknowledgements

This film guide unit would not have been possible without the La Vocera documentary directed by Luciana Kaplan.

This guide incorporates an adapted lesson plan from the [“This Land” documentary](#) and [Curriculum Guide](#).