

Into the Sea

A Film Guide

Into the Sea is a short documentary about a refugee family hoping to resettle in Greece after fleeing Afghanistan. It documents the precarious uncertainty of their present situation as well as their hopes for the future.

The lesson plans for this film aim to give students the tools to draw **personal parallels** and generate **empathy** for the characters and sensitivity to their situations, while expanding their **knowledge of the issues** in a four-stage process (PERA).

- **Prepare:** Gather **background information** and **connect to the issues** on a personal level prior to viewing the film.
- **Engage:** Analyze the art of documentary filmmaking as a means of persuasion and awareness-raising. Explore the **key concepts**, looking for **gaps** in the conversation, filling them in with **informed questions** and **active listening** to broaden the discussion.
- **Reflect:** Apply **social emotional skills** to reflect on the subject matter. Identify questions the film raises and draw parallels between the subject and relatable issues in students' daily lives.
- **Act:** Take concrete action through **writing, community service or art projects** related to the issues discussed.

PREPARE

Discuss: Prior to viewing the film, discuss these questions: What does "home" mean to you? Think about all the elements, both tangible and intangible, that you would include in your description. What would you miss most if you had to leave your home and your city?

Journal: If a refugee or migrant family moved in next door to you, think about what their needs might be. Would you offer to help in some way? How?

Read and discuss: Discuss these [infographics](#) on global refugees. What information stands out for you that you did not know?

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Introduce the film:

You will be viewing the short documentary, *Into the Sea* about a refugee family who have fled Afghanistan and arrived in Greece. As you watch the film, think about the images that stay with you and the deeper stories underlying what you see in the film. Use the [SIFT Worksheet](#) to keep track of your reactions while viewing.

ENGAGE

Discuss as a class: After viewing the film, discuss the [SIFT Worksheet](#) and **compile a list of the snapshot images** from the film that first come to mind. Beyond what we see in the different scenes, what are the deeper stories told in the film, either subtly or overtly? Use the snapshot images to summarize **the story we see** in just a few sentences. Then identify and summarize the **backstories** that are told or evoked but not shown. Which is more powerful, what you see or what you imagine? Why do you think that is?

Discuss in small groups: Using a [Jigsaw](#) format, discuss the following questions. Any of these questions can also be used as writing prompts.

1. Were you surprised by the boy's description of what he expected his new home to have? Why or why not? How does it compare to your own description of home?
2. Discuss the significance of the film's title. Do you think it is a good one? Why or why not? How do the filmmakers use the sea to frame the story visually and metaphorically?
3. What is the film trying to appeal to in viewers? Decide which mode or combination of [modes of documentary filmmaking](#) apply here. Be specific in supporting your assertion with evidence from the film.
4. Discuss the issue of filmmaker bias in documentary-making. Do you feel you've been given an accurate, objective portrait of this family's reality in the film? What makes you believe in the filmmakers' objectivity or not in the documentary? How might your own bias as a viewer affect your answer to this question?

REFLECT

Journal: How does the message conveyed in the film compare to the [infographics](#) you saw before viewing it? Is either a more effective tool for your awareness or sensitivity about refugees? Explain. What are the broader implications of your answer?

Read and discuss: Read or listen to [On Lesbos, a Courageous Doctor Struggles to Save Syrian Refugees and Help Locals](#). On which themes does it overlap with the film? How does the information make this family's story even more complex?

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ACT

Apply your learning: Choose one of these three ways to make a personal or social change:

- **Writing action:** Write a short reflection on how viewing this film has impacted your empathy for refugees or migrants in your own community. Based on your earlier discussions, address the filmmakers' effective use of visual/non-visual storytelling devices to persuade you as a viewer.
- **Service action:** Find a refugee or immigrant organization in your community and seek opportunities to find out what newcomers are missing and how you might make them feel more at home.
- **Art action:** Make a short film or advertisement on a subject of your choice, using the same approach as this film, where what we don't see is as or more powerful than what we do.



SIFT Worksheet

Make note of the different sensations, images, feelings and thoughts evoked as you view the film. If you want to identify a particular scene, do so in the first column.

Scene	Sensations (physical)	Images	Feelings	Thoughts



Six Principal Modes of Documentary Filmmaking

Expository mode

The primary purpose of the Expository mode is to make an argument. This is the model that is most often associated with documentary in general. The structure is grounded in a series of assertions backed up by evidence. The assertions are presented through verbal commentary from an invisible voice-over narrator, while images provide the evidence.

Observational mode

This mode uses the observations of an unobtrusive camera to create direct engagement with the everyday life of subjects.

Participatory mode

This mode emphasizes the interaction between filmmaker and subjects. These films usually take the form of a series of interviews or other forms of even more direct involvement from conversations to provocations. Archival footage to examine historical issues is also included.

Poetic mode

This abstract approach to documentary filmmaking emphasizes visual associations, tonal or rhythmic qualities, description, and form. These films often bear a close resemblance to experimental and avant-garde film.

Reflexive mode

This mode, which includes the mockumentary format, calls attention to the assumptions and conventions that govern documentary filmmaking to increase our awareness of how films construct representations of reality.

Performative mode

This final mode highlights the subjective or expressive aspect of the filmmaker's own involvement with a subject to heighten the audience's responsiveness to the subject and to this involvement. These films reject objectivity and favor emotion.