

MESSAGE STICKS

FILM FESTIVAL



INDIGENOUS
FILMS
BY INDIGENOUS
FILMMAKERS.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE 

Teachers Notes
HOUSE: ED 08

SUITABILITY

Years 9 – 12

DATES

July 2 – 3

Message Sticks Teacher Kit

Introduction

This Teacher Kit has been designed to assist Year 9 – Year 12 teachers with preparation and extension work in relation to the Message Sticks Indigenous Film Festival 2008. The activities are designed for students from Years 9-12. The kit includes notes and activities that will help teachers to provide opportunities for students to explore the broad themes and styles of the films and to further enjoy their film experience back in the classroom.

NSW Board of Studies syllabus documents have been drawn upon in the development of this kit by ACMI Education Programmers Christine Evely and Fiona Jewell. Teachers may rephrase questions and activities to suit the needs, interests and relevant curriculum focus for their students. It is also recommended that teachers visit websites suggested in this kit to assess the suitability of the content for your particular students before setting activities.

Rationale—thinking beyond the screen

Activities in this kit are designed to assist students to develop understandings about the ways in which Indigenous film stories can help us make sense of issues which effect Indigenous people, Indigenous communities and the role of indigenous people in history.

Students can be encouraged to share their experiences of story and to extend and refine their understandings by comparing films, analysing narrative structure and exploring the making of meanings using drama and documentary. Discussions and learning activities encourage students to engage as they find out more about how and why different films are made; and become more aware of thinking behind the choices and decisions made by filmmakers.

As students discuss and respond to the Message Sticks films they will be considering real world issues and sharing personal responses. This can help students to express their own ideas, thoughts and feelings more clearly and effectively.

In this kit

- Part 1: Learning and teaching goals
- Part 2: Before your excursion to Message Sticks
- Part 3: After your excursion to Message Sticks
- Part 4: Exploring Message Sticks films
- Part 5: Exploring Message Sticks themes and issues
- Part 6: Filmmaking
- Part 7: Action: Your turn to create and communicate
- Part 8: Worksheets
- Part 9: *Thinking about films*, a resource for parents and teachers
- Part 10: Program follow-up questions and activities

PART 1: LEARNING AND TEACHING GOALS.....	4
Curriculum Links.....	4
Aims.....	4
Key concepts.....	4
Understandings.....	4
Skills and Processes.....	5
Values and attitudes.....	5
PART 2: BEFORE YOUR EXCURSION TO MESSAGE STICKS.....	5
What Message?.....	5
What do you think?.....	6
PART 3: AFTER YOUR EXCURSION TO MESSAGE STICKS.....	6
Now, what do you think and feel?.....	6
How do filmmakers inspire thoughts and feelings?.....	7
What did you learn?.....	7
Exploring narrative structure.....	8
Storyboards.....	8
Camera Shots, angles and movement.....	9
Storyboarding key events.....	10
What makes a film story memorable?.....	10
Writing a press release.....	11
PART 4: EXPLORING MESSAGE STICKS THEMES AND ISSUES.....	11
Key themes or issues and sub-themes explored in this kit.....	11
Theme A: Growing up around Australia.....	12
Theme B: Human similarities and differences.....	16
Theme C: Relationships.....	17
Theme D: Making a difference.....	18
PART 5: ACTION: YOUR TURN TO CREATE AND COMMUNICATE.....	21
Writing film reviews.....	21
Screen It! children’s filmmaking and games competition.....	21
Creating a film story.....	22
PART 6: FILMMAKING.....	22
Drama and Documentary.....	23
Thinking about documentary.....	23
PART 7: WORKSHEETS.....	24
PART 8: THINKING ABOUT FILMS, A RESOURCE FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS.....	35
Screen literacy: thinking beyond the screen.....	35
Pre-screening questions.....	35
Post-screening questions.....	35
Thinking more about the film.....	35
Part 9: MESSAGE STICKS FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES.....	37
Tears.....	37
Mimi.....	38
The Green Bush.....	39
Nana.....	40
Shifting Shelter 3.....	41
Wirriya: Small Boy.....	42
Bush Mechanics.....	43
My Brother Vinnie.....	44
Ngankari.....	45

PART 1: LEARNING AND TEACHING GOALS

Curriculum Links

English: Responding, Language Forms and Structures, Film

Photography Digital Media: Making, Conceptual Framework, Strength and Meaning, Representation

PDHPE Self and Relationships (changes and challenges, interpersonal communication)

Drama: Appreciating (dramatic techniques/theatrical conventions), Performance Styles (inter-cultural drama, small screen drama)

Music: Contexts (music for radio, film, television and multimedia)

Aboriginal Studies: Aboriginality and the Land, Heritage and Identity, Colonialism, Racism and Prejudice and Social Justice and Human Rights Issues.

Aims

The aims of this teacher kit are to assist teachers to:

- actively engage students in worthwhile viewing experiences
- connect viewing experiences with the broader context of Australian society.
- develop students' understanding of the structure of narrative
- extend student understanding about how filmmakers communicate with audiences
- encourage student appreciation for the art and craft involved in creating film
- introduce students to some features of screen texts
- broaden student understanding of Australia in which they live
- promote student discussion and reflection about important indigenous social issues
- develop higher order cognitive skills of reasoning, processing, inquiry and critical reflection.

Key concepts

Questions and activities can be used to develop a range of screen literacy concepts including narrative, setting, character, orientation, complication, resolution, audience, framing, shots, and camera angles.

Message Stick films and accompanying learning experiences can also inspire discussion of Indigenous cultures, language, cultural diversity, needs and wants, education, rights and responsibilities, family, caring, friendship, relationships, understanding, tolerance, love, generosity, honesty, conflict management, emotional intelligence, values and death, and social action.

Understandings

Participation in activities and discussion related to Message Sticks films offers opportunities to develop understandings that include:

- Filmmakers use a variety of techniques to represent ideas about society.
- Film stories have many common features or elements, but there are also important cultural differences.
- Similar character types occur in many different films.
- Films are constructed for particular purposes and to appeal to certain groups.
- Films are constructed to represent reality.
- Films have certain characteristics that help the viewer construct meaning.

Skills and Processes

Students reflect on and discuss strategies used to make meaning from films utilising skills and processes such as:

- Thinking and investigation – intellectual skills of reasoning, processing and inquiry, questioning, listening, reading, viewing, critical thinking, researching, seeking solutions, describing, analysing, considering cause and effect, seeking relationships, interpreting and evaluating data, constructing hypotheses, drawing conclusions, making informed judgments and decisions, critical reflection.
- Creativity and communication – seeking innovative alternatives and use of imagination to generate possibilities and make connections; use of various communication forms (eg spoken, written, graphical, statistical, visual, dramatic, electronic) involving both critical and creative thinking to gather, represent and present information for different purposes and audiences; undertaking a range of visual, audio and print media production activities to communicate ideas, feelings and experiences through making, creating, exploring, selecting, experimenting, presenting and performing; manipulation of ideas and organisation of media elements such as words, sounds and images, characters and sequences of events to create stories and present information.
- Participation – confidence, self-direction, autonomy, ability to work flexibly both individually and in teams to complete tasks for example:
- Brainstorming ideas
- Working with partners and in small groups to share ideas
- Collaborating in order to achieve an outcome.

Values and attitudes

Students will be encouraged to:

- Appreciate that films of other people may differ from their own, as may the meanings they construct
- Appreciate the value of tolerance, compassion and fairness (justice) between people
- Be sensitive to embedded religious and cultural beliefs within film stories and other narratives
- Respect the courage and determination required by some people as they overcome or face challenges or adversity.

PART 2: BEFORE YOUR EXCURSION TO MESSAGE STICKS

What Message?

Read publicity material about Message Sticks Indigenous Film Festival. Discuss why students think this festival has been planned. Stimulate discussion and thinking by asking:

- What do you expect from an Indigenous film festival?
- What might be the purpose of an Indigenous film festival?
- Why do you think people might want to organise an Indigenous film festival?
- What type of films would you expect organisers to screen at an Indigenous film festival?
- Discuss how students could find out more about Message Sticks E.g. newspapers and magazine articles, television news and current affairs segments and the Australian Screen website: <http://www.australianscreen.com.au/>
- Create a class graffiti board. Encourage students to add knowledge they gain about Message Sticks Indigenous Film Festival.

Allow pairs of students to access the Australian Screen website in order to respond to the following on worksheet 1:

- Why do you think the Indigenous Film Festival was called Message Sticks?
- Are there other cultural events being held in conjunction with Message Sticks?
- Is there a specific target audience for Message Sticks? If so who?
- Who are the festival sponsors?
- Write the titles of three films that will be screened at Message Sticks 2008.
- Write the titles of three films that have screened at previous Message Sticks.
- Where is Message Sticks touring later in 2008?
- Where do you anticipate the films were shot?
- What languages do you anticipate were spoken in the films?
- What issues do you anticipate have been addressed in the Message Sticks films?
- Which film would you like to view and why?

Allocate groups to investigate and report back to class on aspects of Indigenous culture. Discuss how students will access information. Topics may include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The breadth of languages, linguistic diversity amongst Indigenous people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The breadth of languages, cultural diversity amongst Indigenous people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional religious beliefs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generational divides in Indigenous communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population numbers, pre European colonisation and now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Famous Indigenous people, Indigenous leaders, activists, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'The Stolen Generation' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual arts, music, dance, theatre and other performing arts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotypes surrounding Indigenous cultures in the media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other well-known films produced in the country concerning Indigenous culture.

What do you think?

Festival organisers considered many Indigenous films before selecting films to include in Message Sticks. As a class discuss how organisers might decide which films to include in an Indigenous film festival program.

As a class help students to list ten criteria that would help them to select films for an Indigenous film festival. Use these criteria to develop a class rating scale that students can use to help them to review and critique Message Stick films.

Encourage further investigation of Indigenous film festival websites.

PART 3: AFTER YOUR EXCURSION TO MESSAGE STICKS

Now, what do you think and feel?

Discuss Message Sticks films students enjoyed most. Explore what made them enjoyable. Have students complete and discuss worksheet 2 then ask what the films made students think about. Had they thought about these sorts of things before? When? Did the films change their thinking? If so, how?

You might also discuss:

- Who are the main characters?
- What types of characters are in the films? Did you like them? Why or why not?
- Did you care what happened to them? Why or why not?
- Why do you think some films have characters in them that you don't like?
- Do the films remind you of anything from your own life?
- How do the Indigenous people or characters in the films solve their problems?
- Are there things about some Indigenous people and their lives in the films that surprised you?
- Are these films like the films you usually watch on TV or at the cinema?
- What issues specific to Indigenous culture were raised?
- Is it possible to enjoy films that make you think about important issues?
- What are some possible benefits of viewing these films?
- How did you respond emotionally to the characters and their situations?

How do filmmakers inspire thoughts and feelings?

Some Message Sticks films use live-action to tell stories, while others use documentary. As a class list the films you viewed under these two headings. Do some films fit more than one category? Explain your responses.

Select one or two Message Sticks films and discuss techniques used by the filmmakers to create and communicate meaning. Ask questions such as those that follow.

- Did you expect the film to be live action or documentary? In conveying a story, was the choice a good one? Why or why not?
- How did the soundtrack help to tell the story? What sounds were most effective in the films? Why were they effective? Were particular styles of music used? How were they used?
- What images were most effective in the films? Why were they effective?
- How is colour used to help tell the story?
- What camera shots, angles and movements do filmmakers use? How are their choices effective in helping to tell the story?
- Did the pacing or editing of the film contribute to the story? If so, how?
- How would you describe the film's atmosphere? How was this atmosphere created?
- Did the filmmakers try to evoke particular feelings in viewers? If so, how?
- What do you know about the filmmakers and their reasons for making the film? Have they made other films?
- If you could meet the filmmakers what would you want to find out?

What did you learn?

Many Message Sticks films referred to the socio-economic status, cultural beliefs and community values of Indigenous people in Australia. Some films referred to the history of Indigenous people pre-contact with Europeans and Indigenous political activism. Addressing each of these topics ask students if they gained any more insight into Indigenous affairs after viewing the Message Sticks films. Did the films give a fair and rounded representation of the issues surrounding Indigenous people in the twenty-first century? Encourage students to explain and to justify their opinions.

Key human values were also strongly reflected in the films, for example, perseverance, compassion, consideration, courage, generosity, co-operation, friendliness, determination, honesty, enthusiasm, tolerance, fairness, kindness, forgiveness.

As a class brainstorm and record words or phrases that sum up what students learned about Indigenous history, culture and recurrent social themes from the film/s.

Exploring narrative structure

Both documentaries and drama portray stories. Ask students to explain what they think is meant by the word 'story'. Are there common characteristics to stories? Record and display ideas. Ask students to contrast and compare techniques and effectiveness in telling stories through film and book. List similarities, differences, strengths and weaknesses.

During the next few days have pairs of students discuss one or two of the viewed films. Encourage them to complete worksheet 3 or 4 and to respond to the following questions:

- What is the title of the film?
- Where and when does the film take place?
- Who is the main character?
- What problem/s does the main character have? How does the main character solve the problem?
- What is the story about?
- What happens in the end? How was the problem resolved?
- What genre or type of film is it e.g. action-adventure, mystery, science fiction?
- Do you think it is a true story? Why? Why not?

As a class identify typical patterns in film narratives. Encourage students to make statements, for example,

- Most films start by telling us about the main character and where this character lived.
- The main character usually has a problem that needs to be solved.
- By the end of the film the main character has changed in some way.
- Many of the stories turn full circle using similar images and at the beginning and the end of the films.
- Stories are often based on traditional tales.
- In most films problems are resolved and there is a happy ending.

Ask students if the Message Sticks films adopted a typical film narrative style. In which ways are Message Sticks films similar and in which ways are they different?

Introduce students to simple story structure and related terminology. Select one or two films viewed by students and encourage them to identify the orientation, complication and resolution of each film story. Record and display this information. Worksheets 5 and 6 may assist with this activity.

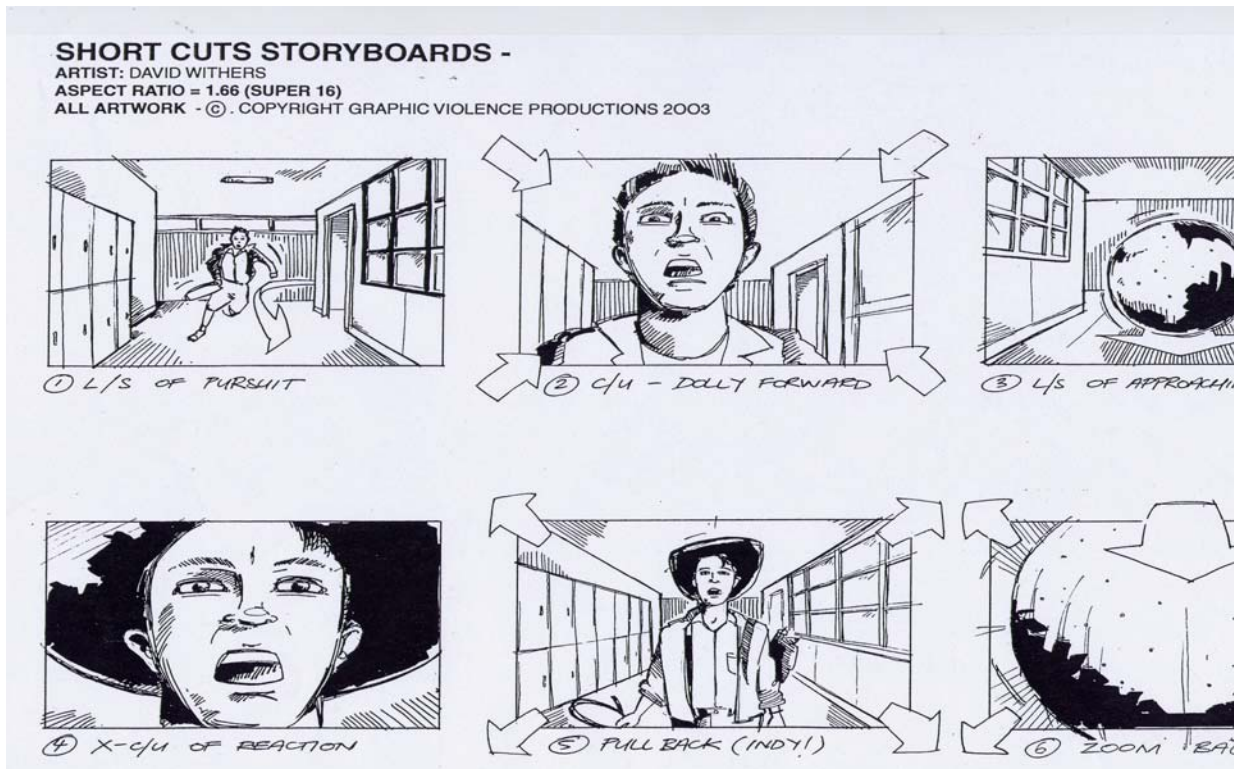
Discuss different ways that Message Sticks films ended. Select several films and consider how many had happy endings. In what ways are the endings of these films like real life?

Storyboards

Storyboards are important for planning the shots for each scene based on the script. They are used for both documentary and live action productions. A storyboard uses rough drawings like a comic book to show what you are planning to shoot in each shot. This is where you plan the composition and framing of the shots for your production. The storyboard also has the character's dialogue and any action is written beneath each shot. In a storyboard, each sketch must fill the frame in exactly the same way the shot will fill the frame on the screen. Each character and prop is drawn to show the size that it will be in the finished film.

To plan a storyboard you need to think about the following:

- What do you need to show? (What can the audience assume without needing to see?)
- What shots do you want to use? Where is a long shot/close-up etc required?
- What camera angles are appropriate?
- Where will the actors be? Which direction do they come on and off or move around in the shot?
- Where will the camera be placed?
- What sort of light do you want?



Camera Shots, angles and movement

Filmmakers use a variety of shots to tell their story visually. Below are the most common shot types and camera movement descriptions used in storyboards.

Common shot types include the following:

- WIDE SHOTS – show the whole person or the whole feature object as part of the landscape. This is often the opening shot since it establishes the location and often the time and mood of the action
- MID SHOTS – show the actors from the waist up
- CLOSE-UPS – show the actor's face or a significant object and allow the audience to judge the characters' reaction to the action
- EXTREME CLOSE-UP shots – used for dramatic emphasis
- A POINT OF VIEW (POV) shot – the camera shares a character's point of view, and appears to be looking through their eyes.

Common camera angles include the following:

- HIGH ANGLE – the camera is positioned on an angle above the action looking down
- LOW ANGLE – the camera is positioned on an angle from below the action looking up
- EYE LEVEL – the camera is at the same height as the action.

Common camera movements include the following:

- ZOOM – the shot zooms in to show a detail or it zooms out to show more of the scene
- PAN – the camera moves from one side of the action to another following the action or showing the audience more of the scene
- TILT – the camera tilts up or down.

Storyboarding key events

Plot key events from a Message Sticks film. Use a large storyboard to show key shots from the beginning of the film.

Ask students to think about what happened next and jointly construct the complication. Use the think aloud technique to introduce the terms close-up, medium shot and long shot. Encourage students to use these when giving you instructions about what to draw and write. Emphasise the clear representation of each shot type, (eg close-up, medium shot, long shot) through simple, rather than elaborate sketches.

Have pairs of students use a storyboard (worksheet 9 or 10) to create a new ending for one of the films. Share and display storyboards with the jointly constructed storyboard.

What makes a film story memorable?

List the film from Message Sticks that each student *remembers* best. Have each student explain why it was memorable. What is liked or disliked about each film? What scene is remembered best? How is it important to the film's message?

Have students complete worksheet 7 and share information about films they *enjoyed* best. Encourage questions such as:

- Why did you like this film?
- What was your favourite character?
- What part of the film did you enjoy the most?

Allow groups to share information gathered. Record information about favourite films, characters and events and encourage students to make statements such as:

- The film we liked most was . . .
- Our favourite characters were . . .
- We liked parts of the film that were scary, funny, sad . . .
- We enjoyed the way the music helped to create suspense . . .

Explain what the Academy Awards are and why, when and where they are presented. Use information gathered and discussed to present your own awards. Have students suggest categories such as:

• Most popular film	• Most realistic film
• Most heroic character	• Most engaging film
• Saddest story	• Funniest situation or character.
• Cleverest character	• Most important message.

Writing a press release

Have each student imagine he or she is a publicist responsible for writing a press release for a Message Sticks film. The press release might include:

- Who made this film? Why do you think they made this film?
- What is this film about?
- What is the message of the film?
- How do the filmmakers communicate the message?
- Who do you think is the intended audience of the film?
- What are some memorable moments in the film?
- What type of film is it? What genre? What style is it – live-action or documentary?
- What awards did class members give this film and why were they given?

Have students read their press releases to the class and explain why they chose to write about this film.

PART 4: EXPLORING MESSAGE STICKS THEMES AND ISSUES

Message Sticks films provide extensive opportunities for students to consider major conceptual themes related to growing up in Australia, human similarities and differences, community and identity, responsibilities, generational similarities and difference, relationships and feelings and making a difference. Activities and discussions for themes have been organised into sub-themes and issues. While there is some sequence to the discussion questions and activities provided, teachers can select those activities that best relate to themes and topics in their classroom.

Key themes or issues and sub-themes explored in this kit

Theme A: Growing up in Australia

- Fun and leisure
- Imagination, aspirations, dreams, illusions, fantasy and reality
- The place I live
- Needs and wants
- Rights of children
- Moving on: childhood to seniors
- Celebrations, traditions, tolerance and acceptance.

Theme B: Human similarities and differences

- Milestones, talents and interests
- Individuality and diversity
- Dealing with challenges
- Traditional beliefs

Theme C: Community, identity, relationships and feelings

- Families, communication, conflict and friendship
- Kinship, responsibilities
- Kindness, forgiveness and resolution
- Feelings: sadness, loss, grief, death and dying, memories

Theme D: Making a difference

- You are my hero!
- Making Australia a better place
- Rights of Indigenous People
- Getting activated
- Time to celebrate – NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week

Theme A: Growing up around Australia

Going to the movies can be great fun! It can also be an enjoyable way to learn about our world and the people who live in it with us. Message Sticks films encourage us to think about Indigenous people's lives around Australia – the similarities and differences, friendships and other relationships, their difficulties, hopes and dreams.

Fun and leisure

- Many of Message Sticks films show people enjoying their leisure and having fun. List the different ways that people have fun in the films? Do the students have fun in the same ways that the Indigenous people in the films have fun? Which activities are similar and which are different?
- Are Indigenous children in Message Sticks given more freedom to have fun than you were in your childhood? Is this a good thing or not? Discuss.
- Sport is referred to in several of the films. Ask students to list famous Indigenous sports people. Do prevailing stereotypes surround Indigenous people in sport?
- My Brother Vinnie addresses issues surrounding disability. Investigate sport and leisure activities available in your local or the wider community for intellectually or physically disabled people.

Useful websites

A website from an American school that mainly contains information about different countries. This section has interesting traditional games from around Australia. <http://www.topics-mag.com/edition11/games-section.htm>

National Geographic Interactive on-line games and samples for students to help them to design their own. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/kids/games/>

A website showing group activities, games and initiatives. Examples come from the section : Children's Folk Games.

<http://www.wilderdom.com/games/MulticulturalExperientialActivities.html>

Imagination, aspirations, dreams, illusions and reality

- As a class list clues that tell viewers whether a film is based on reality or imagination. Classify Message Sticks films using a Venn diagram according to those students think are based on reality; those that take the viewer on a journey of fantasy led by the filmmaker's imagination, and those that combine fantasy and reality.
- Discuss reasons why filmmakers might make films that are pure fantasy? Where might they get ideas? Consider ways that reality; dreams, goals, imagination and fantasy can be connected in films? Did any of the Message Sticks films do this? Why? What other films from the students' experience have done this successfully?
- Many of the Message Sticks films refer to people's aspirations. Were these people's aspirations fulfilled or likely to be fulfilled? How were some of the characters striving to fulfil their aspirations? How were some characters coming to terms with their life situations?
- Discuss whether any of the Message Sticks films remind students of their own aspirations. Ask students to retell some of their childhood dreams and current aspirations.
- List ways that filmmakers can emphasise and convey a character's reality.
- Ask each student to create some rough storyboard frames that combine documentary, fantasy and imagination to tell a short, funny story about a dream, or about questions he or she has about life in our world, or about his or her goals. Have students share storyboards in small groups and respond to one another's ideas.

The place I live

- Display an Australian map. Mark settings or production locations evident in Message Sticks films.
- Create a class collage that represents 'Australia'. Discuss items included in the collage and explore reasons for choices. How do students feel about living in Australia? Why do they have these feelings?
- Compare your perceptions about Australia with ideas about other places represented in Message Sticks. Are there places from the films students would like to visit? Ask students to give reasons for their responses.
- Discuss with the class how location is influential in determining our access to resources and the outcome of our lives.
- How important is location to the characters in the Message Sticks films?
- Many of us have places that we consider to be special. Have each student create a concept map to show things that best represent a special place for them.
- Assist each student to create a slideshow showcasing his or her 'Special Place'. Encourage students to collect artefacts, photos, other images or drawings that relate to their place. Have each student select 8 – 12 key words or phrases from their concept map to write onto strips. Then ask each student to create a sequence of words, phrases, objects and images that tell a personal story of 'My Special Place'. Assist each student to use the sequence to write and polish a short narrative script.
- Students can scan or import photos or other images, artefacts, words, phrases or sentences to support their scripts, record their scripts as voiceovers for the slideshow, add music or sound effects and share their digital stories with one another. (Students without access to software, could create a storyboard, using worksheet 9 or worksheet 10, with their narrative script written below each frame.)

Needs and wants

Message Sticks films provide a great deal of information about things that are important in Indigenous people's lives. Some are needs (such as sleep, food, shelter, education, play), while others are wants. In particular, many of the Message Sticks films highlight the lives of Indigenous children.

- In groups of three or four have students discuss and list the things all children need in order to grow up healthy and happy. Share ideas, record and display.

- Create a class 'needs and wants' list.
- Encourage students to further sort items in the needs category into things that are needed for:
 - Survival, such as air, water, food, sleep
 - Safety, for example, a safe home, rules, adults to care for them
 - Love and belonging, including families, friends, clubs.
- As a class discuss and record responses to the following questions:
- What is the difference between needs and wants?
- Are human needs and wants the same throughout our lives?
- Do people throughout Australia have the same needs and wants?
- Did any Message Sticks films focus on giving the audience messages about needs and wants? If so, what were they and are these important messages? Explain your response.
- Ask students for their opinions about the right to an education. List advantages and disadvantages of going to school?

Useful website

Rights, wants and needs activities from UNICEF

<http://www.unicef.ca/portal/Secure/Community/502/WCM/EDUCATION/assets/pdf/EngRightsKit02.pdf>

Rights of Children

- Provide students with the *UN Convention on Human Rights*. Look for the child friendly version in the language/s needed for your students at <http://www.unicef.org/magic/briefing/uncorc.html>
- Select some of the rights to read aloud and discuss. As a class consider consequences when children do not have their needs met. (Consider sensitivity to personal situations during discussions.)
- With a partner have students use a storyboard (worksheet 9 or worksheet 10) to plan a TV ad to promote community understanding of one of the rights. Alternatively, challenge students to create a storyboard for a short, entertaining claymation story that communicates one of these important rights.
- Read the charter together and discuss whether *Message Sticks* films met any of the goals. How do films screened at the cinema or on television compare? Why is it important for a range of film stories to be told?
- Refer students to right number 24 – the right to good food, housing and medical care. Discuss who is responsible for ensuring these are available for children? Where might the required money or resources come from to provide these things? What problems are there in providing basic rights when family members are ill or unemployed or live in poverty? How can governments help? Where do governments get funds to help provide these rights? What can individuals do to help ensure others understand the importance of these rights?

Useful website

Cartoons for Indigenous people's rights

<http://www.unicef.org/crcartoons/>

Moving on: childhood to seniors

- Brainstorm things that kids get into trouble for doing or not doing. Discuss why kids get into trouble and differences between consequences and punishments. List examples and talk about the value of learning from mistakes.

- Discuss how older Indigenous people featured in the Message Sticks films. Compare the depiction of older people in other films and TV dramas with those depictions in Message Sticks films.
- Growing older often means taking on responsibility. How has this process been depicted in the Message Sticks films.
- List films from Message Sticks that encourage viewers to think about becoming an older person or to view life from an older person's perspective. Discuss what can be learned about relationships between young people and old people from viewing the films listed. List some things that young and old people have in common.
- How do the Message Sticks films create sympathy for older people?
- Encourage students to project in the form of stories what they think their lives will be like when they become adults, or they could write several diary entries describing their hopes, dreams and goals for the future.

Celebrations, traditions, tolerance and acceptance

- Find out how many people celebrate birthdays and name days in your class and graph the results. Discuss traditions related to celebrations amongst the families of students in this class. Are parties held to celebrate? If so, how often are parties held? Some families have special celebrations when a person reaches the age of 18 or 21. Find out if there are other ages or other events of significance amongst students in the class? Who do they invite to these celebrations? Why are these people invited? Discuss reasons why people celebrate these events.
- List examples from Message Sticks films of family, religious or cultural celebrations from around Australia.
- Categorise celebrations to show those that are connected with religion or beliefs? What are other reasons for celebrating? Create a data chart recording ideas on the board, for example,

Celebration	Who celebrates?	How?	Why?	When and where?

- Discuss how celebrations can help families to maintain ways of life or important traditions. Why is this important?
- Discuss as a class: Why are some people unwilling to find out about and understand celebrations and ways of life that are different from their own? How does this lead to problems throughout Australia?
- Investigate signs and symbols relating to religious or cultural beliefs and those that relate to peace and reconciliation. Create a large display of signs with a short explanation of each symbol's significance or meaning.
- Create a large message board outside your classroom with words or phrases that mean 'reconciliation'.
- Have students work in small groups to design a symbol that might encourage people to be tolerant and accepting of one another. Include symbols and their explanations on the school newsletter each week. Encourage other students, teachers and parents to create their own symbols and explanations to add to the newsletter.
- Create your own lyrics or melody for a song that encourages peace, tolerance or acceptance.

Theme B: Human similarities and differences

Many Message Sticks films encourage viewers to think about ways in which people's lives throughout Australia are both similar and different. Teachers can draw upon the content of films to stimulate thinking and discussion about milestones, individuality, strengths and weaknesses, abilities and disabilities.

Milestones and talents

- Create a class timeline showing milestones that people can achieve from birth through to adulthood, for example, smiling, sitting up, walking, losing first tooth, riding a bike, learning to swim, gaining a driving licence, leaving home, buying a car or home. Note on the timeline how various milestones are achieved, for example, physical maturation, learning from parents, teachers, friends or others, emotional maturity, or having money.
- Consider which milestones require help or support from others and which ones can be achieved independently. Are all people able to achieve the same milestones? Why or why not?
- How are milestones celebrated in Australian society?
- How are individual talents recognised in families, institutions and society in Australia?
- Have students work in pairs to discuss each other's milestones, unique qualities, talents, leisure activities and other special qualities. Have these been recognised by family or society?
- What milestones were referred to in the Message Sticks films? Were there examples of individual talents being celebrated?

Individuality and diversity

- List the ways in which the lives of people in the Message Sticks films are similar to and different from your own. You might consider and compare where you live; clothing; food; family relationships; games; leisure activities; transport; and employment.
- Create definitions for the labels that apply to various categories of people. For instance, how we categorise people by age with terms like 'teenager', 'adult', 'senior citizen'. Discuss what terms are applied to people's social status such as 'blue collar worker', 'academic', 'high-flyer', etc... Discuss labels attached to racial groups such as 'Asians', 'Americans', etc...
- These labels are often associated with stereotypes. What stereotypes are associated with labels? Where have these stereotypes originated from? Who perpetuates them? What role does the media, books and film play in perpetuating or debunking these stereotypes? Ask the class to give examples of how these stereotypes are perpetuated or debunked.
- What stereotypes are associated with the term 'Indigenous'? Did the Message Sticks films perpetuate or debunk these stereotypes?
- Ask the students to discuss what stereotypes have been applied to them. How do they make the student feel? Have they been fair? What defence does an individual have to break free from stereotypes?
- What qualities are shared by all humans? Create a definition for the word 'human'.
- Discuss qualities that make each human unique. Have each student create a concept map to show how he or she is a unique person. Display concept maps and encourage appropriate and sensitive discussion.

Dealing with challenges

Many of the Message Sticks films explore problems or challenges faced by people. These may be personal challenges related to a sense of belonging, concern for others, lack of resources, the attitudes or perceptions

of other people, coping with disability, illness or death, achieving goals or dreams, or social challenges related to making our world a better place. Often people or characters in the films come up with innovative solutions.

- Identify problems or challenges faced by people or characters in Message Sticks films, for example, lack of family support, lack of resources, a disability, negative attitudes and conflict. Talk about how each one is solved, dealt with or overcome.
- Think of a problem or challenge you have faced. Did you overcome it? If so, how? If not, how might you have used the advice 'if at first you don't succeed, try, try again'?
- What other challenges do Indigenous people face today? How are they similar to or different from those seen in the films and the problems or challenges you have faced? How can Indigenous people deal with the challenges they face? Who can help them if the challenges get too complicated?
- Talk about some of the characters and people in Message Sticks films who reflect key values such as compassion, courage, generosity, friendliness, determination, ingenuity, honesty, enthusiasm, tolerance, consideration, fairness and kindness.
- Work in groups to plan and film interviews for a short documentary about students in your class coping with or overcoming a challenge. You will need to think about all the steps required to plan and shoot a film and the jobs each person will be required to do. Consider also how you will shoot your credits and who will be acknowledged.

Traditional Beliefs

- In some of the Message Sticks films traditional beliefs were discussed or referred to. List some of these beliefs. Have the class research these beliefs and prepare a report to share with the rest of the class.
- Ask students to share some traditional beliefs from their own ethnic background. Have these beliefs carried through to the Twenty First Century? Do students share these beliefs?
- Discuss if the students intend to pass these beliefs onto their own children. Why?

Theme C: Relationships

- Many of the films selected for Message Sticks explore relationships between people. Some show love and caring between families and friends; while some explore conflict and its effects. Message Sticks films provide a rich source of content to enable discussions about significant issues and concepts including racism, class discrimination, exclusion, trust and communication.

Families, communication, conflict and friendship

- Kinship is discussed in many of the Message Sticks films. As a class discuss what makes a group of people a family. Discuss the different ways people can form families. Be sure to validate family types within the class.
- List situations where family units are cohesive or fragmented in Message Sticks films.
- With sensitivity, and as appropriate, discuss conflict or disappointment that occurred between people or characters in some of the films. Consider reasons for the conflict or disappointment, how it was communicated or exhibited, effects upon others and alternative ways problems, feelings or emotions could be displayed, handled, or resolved.
- As a class brainstorm qualities that make someone a good friend, for example, friendliness, consideration, fairness, kindness, generosity. List some of the ways you can demonstrate friendship, for example, hug, kiss, help, share, listen, be tolerant, write cards or letters.
- As a class discuss the value of tolerance and acceptance in relating to other people. Ask students to give examples from Message Sticks films where these qualities were present or absent in relationships.

- Have students create an acrostic poem on a PowerPoint slide using the word friend or friendship. Encourage them to decorate the slide with symbols or images they think represent friendship.
- Print the slides and place each one in an envelope. Have each student select a friendship envelope and read the poem aloud to the class. Display poems in the classroom.
- Collate the PowerPoint slides into a presentation and play it for short periods during the next few days.
- Write a script for a soapie scene or episode that explores family relationships or friendships.

Forgiveness and resolution

- List examples from Message Sticks films where characters exhibit or demonstrate angry feelings. Beside each example record the character's response to the angry feelings. Did some characters respond to angry feelings by engaging in acts of vengeance? Consider whether responses were appropriate. Ask students: Did the response remove or solve the problem? Did it change or affect people's feelings? Did it have a positive outcome for all people involved? Why or why not?

Feelings: sadness, loss and grief, death and dying, memories

Feelings of sadness can be caused by many kinds of loss: the loss of loved ones, community, identity and dreams. Some Message Sticks films explore feelings of sadness, loss, grief and bewilderment related to changes in family circumstances, or to death and dying. Sometimes the cause of sadness or grief cannot be changed; but often ways can be found to help cope with such feelings or with a sad or troubling situation. Strategies may include sharing feelings, crying or taking some form of personal or social action.

- Some of the characters in the Message Sticks films experienced sadness in their lives. List the films which explored these themes. What situations caused the sadness and how did the characters deal with their ongoing emotions of loss and grief?
- Encourage students to talk about times when they have felt sad or unhappy. Ask how they found ways to cope with the situation? Discuss how different people in our lives can help us when things are not going so well. Encourage students to talk about their own coping strategies when they feel unhappy. Who can help them to solve the problem or to cope with difficult feelings?
- Discuss ways people cope with sadness and grief when someone dies, for example, having a funeral or service to celebrate the person's life, placing notices in newspapers, hugging one another, placing a headstone on a grave. Encourage sharing of traditions, rituals and coping strategies from various family or cultural backgrounds.
- As a class discuss the power of memories. Consider how memories can help us to cope when someone or something we love or care about may no longer be part of our everyday lives. List some of the different ways people can remember the life of someone they can no longer see through death or even if they have moved away.
- Discuss particular traditional sensitivities of indigenous people surrounding the loss of family and community.
- Watch *The Rabbit Proof Fence* with the class. While the 'Stolen Generation' was not discussed directly in the Message Sticks films, discuss the immediate and ongoing effects of grief surrounding the separation of family and culture for generations of indigenous people.

Theme D: Making a difference

Many Message Sticks films show that everyone can make a difference to the lives of people around them. Teachers may also choose to follow up activities from this section with activities from Part 5 of this kit.

Heroes

- Use a dictionary to establish the meaning of the word hero. Do you agree with the definition? Why or why not?
- Have students work in small groups to identify characters or people from Message Sticks films they consider to be heroes. Share and discuss as a class.
- Create a data chart like the one below to show characters or people from Message Sticks films who try to make a difference to:
 - Their own lives
 - The lives of other people
 - What do they do to make a difference to the community?
- Discuss: In each case what motivates them? Are they successful? Why or why not? What assists or blocks them as they attempt to make a difference? Would you have done the same things? Why or why not?

Message Sticks character or person	What do they do to make a difference in their own life?	What do they do to make a difference to their families?	What do they do to make a difference to the community?

- Discuss the concept of *Australian of the Year*. In small groups have students discuss whether people who attempt to make a difference in Australia can be considered heroes? Why or why not? Have the students use the data chart to help them consider examples of people or characters from the Message Sticks films. Share and discuss ideas as a class.
- As a class consider the idea of everyday heroes; people in our lives who care for us and who ensure our wellbeing. Encourage students to share how the everyday heroes in their lives make them feel.

Making Australia a better place

- Ask students to describe their own lives and to compare them with the lives of Indigenous people seen in Message Sticks films. Encourage them to consider the variation in lifestyles, life expectations and family/community ties.
- Investigate the work of government and charity organisations. What is the role of these groups? List other groups that help people with difficulties in their lives? How do these organisations provide help?
- Investigate why people volunteer. Invite volunteers from local organisations, such as an opportunity shop, life saving club, Rotary or Lions. Have the guest explain their work and why they choose to do it. Encourage students to plan questions before the guests arrive.
- Find out if your school is involved in social service activities. Identify things you can do to support existing projects to make a difference to the lives of other people.
- Discuss how we can all make a difference in Australia through our actions at home, at school, or in our local or wider community? As a class list as many ideas as possible, whether crazy or practical, to help make Australia a better place.
- Discuss the slogan, *Think globally, act locally*. Ask five or six people what they think it means. What do you think?

- Assist individual students to write an article for the school newsletter, or write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or to an Australian or world leader, explaining an idea he or she thinks will help to make Australia a better place.
- Work with a friend to storyboard a 30 second TV advertisement encouraging people to “Think globally, act locally”.

Rights of Indigenous people

- Provide students with the United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. www.cwis.org/drft9329.html Select some of the rights to read aloud and discuss. As a class consider consequences when Indigenous people do not have their needs met.
- Read the charter together and discuss whether Message Sticks films met any of the goals. How do some other films screened at the cinema or on television compare? Why is it important for a range of film stories to be told?

Getting Activated

In 1997, 26th May Federal Parliament tabled The Bringing Them Home report. The report detailed the abuse that was perpetrated on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities of the removal of children from the families.

The report also recommended that a “Sorry Day” be held each year to recognise the pain that Indigenous people have experienced in this nation. In 1998 over a half a million people responded by signing Sorry Books and taking part in ceremonies on Sorry Day.

- What events have taken place since this time?
- What is the date of Sorry Day?

Time to Celebrate - NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week

- Find out what the letters NAIDOC stand for?
- When is NAIDOC Week this year?
- What cultural events are included in the celebrations for the week?
- When is National Reconciliation Week this year?
- What organisation is responsible for organising the week?
- What cultural events are included in the celebrations for the week?
- Plan school celebrations to celebrate these events for 2008 and 2009.

Useful Websites

National Reconciliation Week

www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/reconciliation/
www.reconciliation.org.au/
www.abc.net.au/message/blackarts/culture/s853725.htm

NAIDOC Week

www.naidoc.org.au
www.sustainableliving.com.au/events/naidoc
www.ozspirit.info

PART 5: ACTION: YOUR TURN TO CREATE AND COMMUNICATE

Writing film reviews

Everyone has an opinion on a film.

Read some excellent examples of film reviews in the newspaper.

- Select one of the films from Message Sticks and write a film review.

What's your pitch?

Ask students to come up with their own film idea

- Your task is to come up with a corker of an idea for a film and to present the idea verbally to your class. Convince your class this is the best idea they have heard for a new film in ages.
- What is your aim or goal? What is your film trying to say?
- Will your film have a message? Try to sum this up in a couple of sentences.
- What makes your idea so special or good?
- Think carefully about your audience.
- How long will your film be?
- What type of film will it be?
- Where will it screen – in classrooms, cinemas, homes?
- Who will be the main characters? What are the key events in the film?
- What is its working title?
- Use the storyboard worksheet (**worksheet 9** or **worksheet 10**) to plan your own film with an important message. Encourage students to create a film about one of the important values they listed earlier.
- Ask students to think hard about how the visual images and soundtrack can convey ideas, without needing dialogue, a narrator or subtitles.

Screen It! children's filmmaking and games competition

Australia's moving image competition for primary school students and secondary school students.

In 2008 students are asked to create a live action film, documentary or computer game that responds to the theme of Australian identity.

Creating simple documentaries, live action productions and games are a fun, engaging, and highly educational learning projects to undertake with students. Moving image making projects allow students to develop many and varied skills and understandings and may involve students in:

- Developing an original idea and researching information
- Writing a storyline and a script
- Creating a basic storyboard
- Planning a production
- Designing and creating documentary characters and sets
- Casting actors, selecting locations and dressing sets
- Learning practical production skills including camera, sound recording, acting and directing
- Developing team work, time management and planning skills
- Learning post-production skills including editing, sound effects, music, titles and credits.
- Testing compiled games and analysing the responses of different people

Screen It! is a fun way of engaging students with the moving image whilst they learn about the creative and technical processes that lie behind their favourite forms of entertainment – cartoons, films and computer games.

A panel of industry experts judge each work according to criteria such as creative merit, technical difficulty, ability to address the theme and stylistic elements.

- Find out what the Screen It! competition is all about.
- Who were the winners from 2004 - 2008?
- What types of films did they make and how did they make them?

Visit the ACMI website to watch the winning films and documentaries, and play the winning games
http://www.acmi.net.au/screen_it_2007_winners_gallery.htm

Creating a film story

Once students have decided on the type of moving image piece and the genre, it is time to start working on the story.

Have the students work in groups to write a brief one-paragraph overview of a story they would like to make into a film.

Is it a narrative?

Does the film follow the traditional formula of orientation, complication and resolution?

- Who are the main characters? Who?
- What is the setting? Where, when?
- What is the problem/ situation/event?
- Is the problem solved? How is it solved?

Or is it a Documentary/TV News Report?

Use the following questions as a guide:

- Orientation: what is the topic? Who is it about? Why?
- What are the events? What happens? What information are we presenting? What is interesting about this? What is the “news”?

Have each group present their plan to the class for constructive feedback. Remind students to keep the story simple and short. Support any teams having difficulty in achieving this.

Note: Extensive support is provided for teachers in the ACMI Screen It! Teacher Kit

PART 6: FILMMAKING

Filmmaking is the process of making a film. It is all about telling a story or creating meaning. There are many ways to tell a story using film. Films are made all over Australia across a variety of live-action and animated genres using different technologies. They are produced for all sorts of reasons by all sorts of people, from large profit-oriented studios to primary age kids. The nature of the film determines the size and type of crew required during filmmaking.

Drama and Documentary

This involves actors and real people playing roles and is shot live on set or location.

- What do you think may have been some of the challenges in making the live-action Message Sticks films?
- Find out the meaning of the word cinematography. Encourage students to explain how carefully planned cinematography in one of the Message Sticks films helps to create and communicate strong messages.
- Discuss the careful composition of shots in one of the scenes from Message Sticks. How does the film make clever use of the camera through selection of shot types, camera angles or camera movement to effectively tell its story?
- Have students work in small groups to select one of the Message Sticks films and consider how the use of colour helps to create and communicate messages? What feelings do you experience as you watch the film? Give examples from the film to show what you mean. Consider:
 - What colours do you remember from the film?
 - Did the filmmakers emphasise some colours more than others? Why might they have done this?
 - Do the colours change at different times during the film? If so, why do you think they changed?
 - How do different colours evoke particular feelings or emotions as viewers watch the film?
 - Think also about what the film tells you about the place or setting in the story. Consider the light, other aspects of weather or climate, the landscape, the vegetation and the colours.
- As a class discuss what else, apart from the cinematography and the use of colour, contributes to the creation of mood and atmosphere in Message Sticks films? Encourage students to give examples to explain their ideas.

Thinking about documentary

- As a class select a documentary from the Message Sticks program. Compare it with another documentary. In what ways is it similar or different?
- Watch documentaries and work out the techniques that filmmakers use in documentaries.
- Why do you think some filmmakers decide to tell their stories using documentary rather than drama? How does documentary enable a story to be told in ways that could not have been achieved using live action?
- Documentaries have been a common way to raise awareness of social and environmental issues. Ask students to list documentaries that have been effective in this way.
- While the characters and situations are real in a documentary, the filmmaker is still very important in 'telling' the story. How might a filmmaker distort reality to forward their own agenda? Does the class know of any documentaries that have been criticised for misrepresenting reality?
- Some films have been created combining the styles of drama and documentary. List films of this nature.

PART 7: WORKSHEETS

WORKSHEET 1 Name: Date:

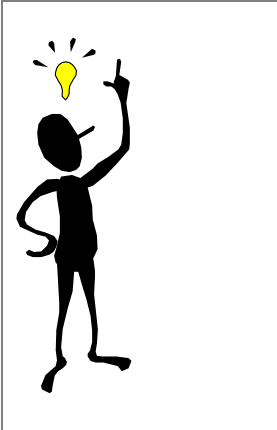
Why do you think the Indigenous Film Festival was called 'Message Sticks'?		
Are there any other cultural events being held in conjunction with Message Sticks?		
Is there a specific target audience for Message Sticks? If so who?		
Who are the festival sponsors?		
Write the titles of three films that will be screened at Message Sticks 2008.	Write the titles of three films that have screened at previous Message Sticks.	Where is Message Sticks touring later in 2008?
Where do you anticipate the films were shot?	What languages do you anticipate were spoken in the films?	
What issues do you anticipate have been addressed in the Message Sticks films?		
Which film would you like to view and why?		

WORKSHEET 2

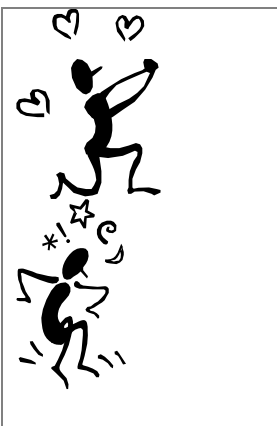
Name:

Date:

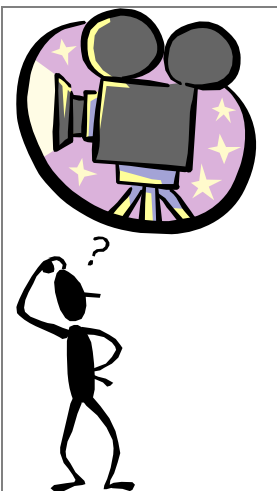
Select one of the Message Sticks films and write its title: _____



What did the film make you think about?



How did the film make you feel?



How did the filmmakers make you feel this way?

WORKSHEET 3

Name:

Date:

Title of the film	
Where and when does the film take place?	
Describe the main character/s	
What social issue does the film address?	
What specific issue/s does the main character/s deal with?	
Is there a resolution or a change to a characters outlook? In what way?	
What happens in the end?	

WORKSHEET 4

Name:

Date:

Orientation

What happened at the start of the film?

Complication

What is one of the problems the main character had in the film?

Resolution

How did the film end?

Describe your favourite part of the film. What techniques were employed to make it so effective?

WORKSHEET 5

Name:

Date:.....

Narrative Structure

Many stories, whether print or film, are a complete unit with a beginning (orientation), middle (complication) and an end (resolution).

A narrative usually begins by telling the reader or audience when and where things are taking place, and creates an expectation about something that has or will take place. This beginning is called the orientation.

The story then moves through a series of events, one of which causes some change or disruption to the characters. Usually this disruption involves a problem, a conflict or an issue to be resolved. This change is known as the complication.

The remainder of the story usually sets about resolving the problem. A good story only includes details relevant to the expectations set up in the beginning of the story. The story ends when the events are restored to some sort of order.

It is the quality of the story, which maintains our interest when reading or viewing a film story. Stories may be presented in many ways but they generally have a structure similar to the following:

Orientation (beginning)

Introduces when and where the story takes place and often introduces the main character or characters.

Complication (middle)

Something happens, usually a problem that has to be solved in some way.

The story continues as the hero or heroine tries to resolve the problem.

There can be more than one complication in a story.

Resolution (end)

The problem is solved and the story ends. (A moral, message or lesson may be evident.)

Read the information above to help you to identify elements of narrative structure from one of the Message Sticks films. Complete worksheet 6 to record your responses

WORKSHEET 6

Name:

Date:

Main character	Other characters	Setting
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Explain a problem the main character/s experience.

Explain how the problem is resolved.

WORKSHEET 7 *My Favourite Film* Name: Date:
Write or draw

The film I liked best	The best part of the film
The film made me think about...	A new ending could be

WORKSHEET 8 Name: Date:

Five tips to a top notch film review

Marcella Bidinost

1. Lights, action, camera ... and a long line of credits

Plenty of people and decisions influence the film you eventually see on screen. Script, sound, storyline, directors, actors, lighting, sets, editing – all the people in that long line of credits at the end of a film play a role. Pick out some of the elements of the film you respond to most and explain why they do or don't work.

2. Don't give away the plot

This is a key rule of reviewing. Feel free to explain a little about the plot but don't reveal any of the surprises or major twists. Even if Sam does fall in love with Mary at the end.

3. Hook us in!

Starting your review with "This film is about ..." doesn't exactly scream "Read me!" Make your reader sit up and pay attention to what you're about to say. Write creatively and sharply and ask yourself, is this good enough for the rest of Australia to read? Can you imagine your review published on *The Age* website? Hook us in and keep us there!

4. How good were the stars?

Think about the performances of the lead actors. Did they do a good job? Were they believable? Did they "get under the skin" of their role or did you feel like you were always watching "the actor"? Did you like the characters and did you care about what happened to them in the film? Tell us!


5. How did the film make you feel?

Filmmakers want audiences to respond to their film. Pay attention to how you're feeling while you're watching a film. Are you happy, sad, bored, excited, inspired? Maybe your responses change at different points of the film. What's making you feel that way? And what's your overall feeling by the time it's all over?

WORKSHEET 9 SIMPLE STORYBOARD Name: Date:


WORKSHEET 10 STORYBOARD

Name:Date:

	
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PART 8: THINKING ABOUT FILMS, A RESOURCE FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Screen literacy: thinking beyond the screen

Going to the movies can be great fun! It can also be an enjoyable way to learn about our world and the people who live in it. Whether you are viewing a film for entertainment or as a learning experience, thinking and talking about it with others can help everyone to understand more about the story and its messages and find out more about how films are made. Focused discussions can help us to become more aware of thinking behind the choices and decisions made by filmmakers. In turn this can help us to express our own ideas, thoughts and feelings more clearly and effectively.

Pre-screening questions

- What do you like about going to the cinema? How is it different from viewing television?
- What do you already know about the film or films you are about to view?
- How did you find out the film or films?
- Why do you think this film, or these films, may have been made?
- What can you find out about a film and about filmmaking by reading film credits?
- Questions to think about while viewing films
- What did the film make you think about?
- How did the film make you feel?
- How did the filmmaker make you feel this way? You might think about how the filmmaker used the camera, lighting, types of actors used (live or animated), costumes, props, sound or other interesting aspects of creating a story for you to view on screen.

Post-screening questions

- Did you enjoy the film? Why or why not?
- Did the film remind you of any other films? In what ways?
- What types of characters were in the film?
- Did you like the characters? Why or why not?
- Did you care what happened to the characters? Why or why not?
- Why do you think some films include characters that many people will not like?
- Did the film remind you of anything from your own life?
- How do the Indigenous people or characters in the film solve their problems?
- What can Indigenous people or adults do in real life if they have problems that are difficult to solve?
- Are there things about some of the film characters and their lives that surprised you?
- Did the film end in the way you expected? Were you satisfied with the ending? In what other ways could it have concluded?
- Was this film, or these films, like shows or films you usually watch on TV or at the cinema? What are some similarities and differences?

Thinking more about the film

Do you think the filmmakers selected appropriate setting/s for the film/s? Why do you think these choices were made?

Were particular colours featured in set design, costuming or props? How can this help to create mood or atmosphere? How does the 'look' of the film contribute to the story or to the message of the film?

How was the camera used to tell the story? Were particular shots, camera angles or camera movements used to create memorable scenes? Why do these scenes stay in your mind?

How does the editing of the film contribute to the story or message of the film? Have shots been sequenced Effectively? Do transitions between shots enhance the story?

How does the soundtrack (music, sound effects, silence) contribute to the film's story or message?

How did the filmmaker make you feel this way? Think about how the filmmaker used the camera, lighting, types of actors used (live or animated), costumes, props, sound or other interesting aspects of creating a story for you to view on screen.

If you were the filmmaker:

What scene would you definitely keep in the film? Why?

What scene would you change? Why?

Would you have made changes to the casting or to the look of animated characters? Why?

What other changes would you consider? Why?

PART 9: MESSAGE STICKS FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Tears

Title: Tears

Style: Drama

Directed by: Ivan Sven

Produced by: Teresa-Jayne Hanion and Graeme Isaac

Background

Tears is a prelude to Beneath Clouds (AFI winner 2002).

Synopsis

Vaughn (Luke Carroll) and Lena (Jamilla Frail) are leaving the mission. They walk along a long, straight road in a desolate landscape. Their destination is somewhere on the coast. They discuss who they will miss from the mission. Vaughn's cousin drives towards them. He and a male friend (Allan Campbell), a young mother (Anita Fernando) and a crying baby (Theresa Shields) accompany him. The car pulls up and the cousin talks with Vaughn. Lena stands apart and momentarily exchanges a look with the young woman and crying baby. Vaughn declines an offer of a lift back to the mission and he and Lena continue their journey.

Key Concepts

- Identity
- Coming of Age
- Crime
- Teenage Pregnancy

Focus Questions

- What is the significance of the long, straight road with a watch held in the foreground in the opening scene?
- Why is a character portrayed with a physical injury?
- What mood does the music establish/
- What drives the characters to embark on the journey?
- What forces potentially lure them home?
- Throughout the film there is an emphasis on framing faces. Why?
- Why are the females portrayed as silent and solitary?
- What activities are referred to and seem to bond Vaughn and his cousin?
- What potential future for all the characters is implied if they return to the mission?

Mimi

Title: Mimi

Style: Comedy

Directed by: Warwick Thornton

Produced by: Rachel Perkins, Darren Dale

Synopsis

Catherine (Sophie Lee) buys two pieces of Indigenous art, a painting of a barramundi and a statue of a Mimi for investment purposes. She has no knowledge of the cultural significance of these pieces. When she brings them home to her pristine apartment mysterious things happen. The 'pretty fish' disappears and the Mimi statue comes to life. Jonathan (Aaron Pederson), a 'real Aborigine', is called in to rid the apartment of the Mimi presence.

Key Concepts

- Stereotypes of Indigenous identity
- Commodification of Indigenous art

Focus Questions

- What is a Mimi?
- "Do you know any real Aborigines?" What stereotype of Indigenous people is Catherine referring too?
- Does the character of Jonathan support this stereotype?
- How diverse are Indigenous communities throughout Australia?
- Catherine describes the barramundi as a 'pretty fish' and the Mimi as a 'little man'. Discuss the commodification of Indigenous art.
- Why has the filmmaker chosen the genres of comedy, magical realism and horror to convey his message?
- What role does alcohol play in Catherine's social life? Contrast this to the stereotypes surrounding consumption of alcohol by Indigenous people.
- Why has the filmmaker included details such as the American Express card, Vogue and the American emergency number of 911?
- How does the soundtrack help to describe the characters of Catherine and Jonathan?

The Green Bush

Title: Green Bush

Style: Short Film Drama 30 min.

Directed by: Warwick Thornton

Produced by: Kath Shelper

Synopsis

Kenny (David Page) works hard to keep the community together. He is the DJ doing night shift at a local Indigenous radio station in a remote area. He does more than provide music and information, he provides comfort for some of his nightly visitors and advice for others.

Key Concepts

- Landrights
- Community
- Responsibilities to family
- Fragmentation of Community

Focus Questions

- *Green Bush* refers to several Indigenous communities. Describe three of the communities referred to in the film.
- Several problematic issues for Indigenous communities are raised in *Green Bush*. List at least three of these issues.
- What role does an Indigenous radio program play in remote communities? What role does the music play?
- The film addresses fragmentation and displacement of Indigenous communities. Describe the fragmentation. In what ways does the character of Kenny attempt to unite these communities?
- The character Steve got 'Man of the Match' in football. He says, "I'm not a boy. I'm a man." Kenny tells him, "Real men don't hurt their families." Define the concepts of 'boy' and 'man' and what qualities are required to make the transition.
- *Green Bush* is also a film about resilience and choices. How are these themes of resilience and choice conveyed in the film?
- Who is Gary Foley? Draw a timeline of Gary Foley's career and activism. Research three other Indigenous activists.
- 'Think Global Act Local' is a commonly heard slogan. How does the filmmaker reinforce this sentiment?

Resources

Clips and Teachers notes available at <http://australianscreen.com.au/titles/green-bush/>

Nana

Title: Nana

Style: Short Film Drama 5 min.

Synopsis

Nana is an elderly Indigenous woman who is raising a young child. She is a proactive member of her community. She looks after other elderly people. She teaches the child to hunt. She paints for white people and takes matters into her own hands when it comes to protecting her community from profiteers.

Key Concepts

- Role models
- Indigenous art
- The continuity of traditions
- Alcohol
- Community

Focus Questions

- What social problems are Nana striving to solve by her actions?
- What traditions is Nana passing on to the little girl?
- What were Nana's attitudes towards Indigenous art and white people?
- How are white people portrayed in *Nana*?
- What makes a 'good' childhood? Do you think the little girl has a 'good' childhood?
- Have you had an influential, older role model in your life? What qualities have they passed on to you?

Shifting Shelter 3

Title: Shifting Shelter 3

Style: Documentary, 52 min.

Directed by: Ivan Sen

Produced by: Ivan Sen

Synopsis

This documentary is similar to the British documentary series *7 Up*. It tracks the lives of four Indigenous youths from their adolescence to adulthood in five-year instalments from 1995 to 2005. Willy Lamb, Cindy Peterson, Danielle Waters and Ben Ballangarry speak frankly of their aspirations and disappointments as they enter adulthood.

Key Concepts

- Adolescence
- Children
- Importance of families
- Alcohol/drugs
- Aspirations

Focus Questions

- Describe how the aspirations of the four people have changed over time.
- What has happened in their lives to change their aspirations?
- Where are their priorities now?
- What regrets do the four people have?
- What evidence of resilience do the individuals display?
- Which person did you most relate to? Why?
- Do you believe that their community and family have supported them in their transition from adolescence to adulthood?
- Write your aspirations for the future.
- What circumstances could prevent you from achieving these aspirations?

Resources

Clips available at <http://australianscreen.com.au/titles/shifting-shelter-3/>

Wirriya: Small Boy

Title: Wirriya: Small Boy

Style: Documentary 30 min.

Directed by: Beck Cole

Produced by: Beck Cole

Synopsis

Wirriya documents the daily life of an eight year-old boy, Ricco Japaljarra Martin, who lives in Hidden Valley near Alice Springs. He lives with his foster mother and sisters. The filmmaker interviews him and his foster mother and follows daily routines at school and play.

Key Concepts

- Family
- Community support
- Cultural identity
- Childhood

Focus Questions

- Who are the role models in Ricco's life?
- How is Ricco's childhood similar to yours? How is it different?
- What community support is provided for Ricco?
- Ricco has a 'skin name' and he learns the Pitjantjatjara language at school. Discuss the connection of language and cultural identity.
- What other languages do you speak? Are there concepts in those languages that cannot be conveyed in English?
- Ricco's 'Nana' provides shelter and food for Ricco. What else does she provide? What constitutes a home and a family?
- How is Ricco's home similar or different to yours?
- At this stage what are Ricco's aspirations in life?

Resources

Clips and teachers notes available at [http://australianscreen.com.au/titles/wirriya /](http://australianscreen.com.au/titles/wirriya/)

Bush Mechanics

Title: Bush Mechanics

Style: Documentary 30 mins.

Produced by: Warlpiri Media Association

Synopsis

A group of young musicians navigate their way through the desert and solve a myriad of mechanical problems along the way. The film provides insights into Indigenous ingenuity and humour. It is the ultimate boys-own road-movie that combines magical realism, drama, comedy and documentary styles to demonstrate the resilience and resourcefulness of Indigenous people.

Key Concepts

- Resourcefulness
- Community
- Technology
- Inter-cultural interaction

Focus Questions

- The filmmaker combines documentary, re-enactments, comedy and realism to convey a message. What message does the filmmaker convey?
- Is the contrast and blend of styles effective? In which ways?
- Why has the filmmaker chosen to depict scenarios of first contact between Europeans and Indigenous people?
- List the ways in which the group have shown resourcefulness.
- In what ways does technology make life easier in the outback?
- What problem solving technique most surprised you? Have you ever come up with an invention or solution that saved the day?
- In the series Bush Mechanics a phantom-like mechanic appears whenever the young men need help. How does this figure refer to specific Indigenous beliefs?

My Brother Vinnie

Title: My Brother Vinnie

Style: Documentary 30 mins.

Directed by: Steve McGregor

Produced by: Sarah Bond

Synopsis

Vinnie is the brother of well known actor Aaron Pederson. He has cerebral palsy and mild retardation. Aaron made the documentary to explore the remarkable influence that the two brothers have had on each other. He describes the joy, loyalty, responsibility, pain and resentment that they have both felt growing up with each other under difficult circumstances. The documentary interviews Aaron, Vinnie and Mum Frances. It contrasts Aarons life as a successful actor and Vinnie's daily routines with community services and at home. It also follows their journey to commemorate their grandmother's death.

Key Concepts

- Family/kinship
- Responsibility
- Identity
- Community support
- Dependency
- Grief

Focus Questions

- The documentary deals with family expectations on yourself and others. What expectations does Aaron have of his mother? Are these reasonable?
- My Brother Vinnie raises the issue of responsibility to family members. How has taking responsibility taken helped Aaron through his life?
- Responsibility can be a burden and a blessing. How does Aaron describe both aspects of responsibility?
- Describe Vinnie and Aaron's childhood.
- "If it wasn't for Vinnie I wouldn't have been as responsible in my life." What does Aaron mean by this?
- "I can see the gift that he (Vinnie) is in my life." How has Vinnie been a gift to Aaron?
- How does society and community support Vinnie?
- How did Vinnie and Aaron deal with the grief of their grandmothers death?

Resources

Clips and teachers notes available at <http://australianscreen.com.au/titles/my-brother-vinnie/>

Ngankari

Title: Ngankari

Style: Documentary 26 mins.

Directed by: Erica Glynn

Synopsis

Ngankari are traditional Indigenous healers. The documentary follows the work of Andy Tjilari and Rupert Peters as they heed the call of sick people at home and in hospital. They explain and demonstrate some of their techniques and introduce us to their young protégés. They explain what kind of illnesses they can treat and what is beyond their capacities. They also discuss their compatibility with Western medicine.

Key Concepts

- Traditional beliefs
- Continuity of traditional beliefs
- Traditional healing
- Compatibility of Indigenous and Western healing techniques

Focus Questions

- The Ngankari have only recently received money for their services. Previously how were they paid?
- Do you think that belief itself can help a patient in their recovery? Discuss.
- What alternative medicines or techniques to Western medicines have you heard of or experienced? Have they worked?
- The Ngankari are passing their techniques on to young students. Write a list of traditional beliefs or techniques (in any field) that have been passed on to you from older members of family or community.
- What is the importance of passing on this knowledge?
- Erica Glynn the filmmaker has been given a rare privilege. It would have been unheard of for an Indigenous woman to be privy to this knowledge in some other tribal groups. In your own culture are there subtle or distinct codes of silence between genders on certain topics? Discuss.