



MOVIES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- 1 It might be hard to believe that a film can make the world a better place, but I believe that documentaries can, in small ways, help change the world. In fact, even **you** can make a film that raises awareness of something you care about.

Take the documentary, *Supersize Me*. It took a swipe at the lack of healthy fast food options available. Soon after the film was released the major players in fast food began offering fruit, yoghurt and other healthy menu options.

Supersize Me wasn't the only factor in this fast food mini-revolution; diners had been turning away from the major chains for some time with outlets closing down worldwide. But the movie tapped the *zeitgeist* and made public what many people were thinking in private.

- 2 Documentary films can also make an impact in the world of politics. *Antarctica* was an IMAX documentary that reflected and provoked a change in attitudes. In the early 1990s the

ban on drilling and mining in Antarctica was about to expire. The Australian and French governments were working hard to convince other countries to extend the ban and protect the ice continent when *Antarctica*, the film, was released. It went on to become the third highest grossing Australian film of all time, taking over \$100 million at the box office. And who said there was no money in saving the world?

- 3 George Bush Senior, US president at the time, attended the gala premiere of *Antarctica* in Washington DC and, soon after, signed the extension of the Antarctic treaty, protecting the continent from mining for another fifty years. John Weiley, *Antarctica*'s producer, stated that the film "made millions of people, including the many politicians who came to the screening, care enough about Antarctica to give it political value". For Weiley, the number one influence of documentary makers is their ability to raise consciousness about an issue.
- 4 On a larger scale, former US vice-president, Al Gore, appeared in a 2006 documentary called *An Inconvenient Truth*. This film raised global awareness about the potential threat of human-caused climate change, a controversial issue that has been ignored, denied and debated for many years. While the film was not the only voice discussing this issue, it reached a lot of people who had never thought about climate change. A lot of schools around the world now include *An Inconvenient Truth* as part of their science program.
- 5 Documentaries can also affect change by directly confronting the people at the heart of a particular issue. The world's most famous

activist filmmaker is Michael Moore, director of the Oscar-winning *Bowling for Columbine*. This powerful film about a Colorado school shooting brought enormous worldwide awareness to America's gun violence issues. In a memorable sequence, Moore escorted two Columbine survivors to an American Kmart store to demand that the chain ban the sale of ammunition. Kmart later held a press conference announcing their intention to do so. Moore continues to campaign for Wal-Mart, the world's largest corporation, to follow suit.

- 6 Documentary film-making is also more accessible these days. Cheap, good quality cameras and simple editing programs mean that anyone with an idea can make a film.

Cody DeWitt, an American teenager, made a film about his mum's struggle with lung cancer. His and his sister's goal was to stop teenagers from smoking by showing the devastating effects of the habit. Cody was honoured, alongside TV stars, sports people and charity workers on a list of twenty inspiring teenagers, an annual program run by *US Teen People* magazine. Cody sent his film to the American Cancer Society and now teachers throughout the United States screen it for their students.

- 7 The beauty of modern documentary making is that you don't even need to find a cinema to screen your film. Better computers and faster Internet connections have led to the creation of special websites, such as *YouTube*, that allow people to put their own films onto the Internet. This creates a new place to voice your opinions in interesting ways.

- 8 What do you really care about? What change do you want to see in the world? And what's stopping you from putting a team of friends together and making a short film about it? Maybe there's nothing to do in your town and you're desperate for a youth centre or a skate park? Maybe you want to make a comedy about bullies or a serious anti-war film.
- 9 Documentary films provide a creative way of addressing issues in our world. Whether they are big global threats or a lack of local resources, documentaries kick start people's minds and mouths. When enough people

are thinking and talking about an issue, it is possible for great changes to occur.

What will your first film be?



Questions

- What did the documentary *Supersize Me* achieve?
 - It made fast food restaurants provide healthy options.
 - It changed the public *zeitgeist*.
 - It swiped out at healthy food.
- John Weiley was
 - the US President in the early 1990s.
 - the director of *Antarctica*.
 - the producer of *Antarctica*.
- What have some schools done with *An Inconvenient Truth*?
 - They ignored it for years.
 - They made it a debating topic.
 - They included it as part of their science program.
- Documentaries can also affect change by
 - directly confronting the people at the heart of an issue.
 - containing a memorable sequence.
 - making a lot of money.
- Cody DeWitt made a documentary to
 - remember his mum.
 - encourage kids to stop smoking.
 - be honoured by *US Teen People* magazine.
- What don't documentaries need to be effective?
 - lots of money
 - the right audience
 - a big issue

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- A factual film or program (1)
- To finish or run out of time (2)
- A campaigner for social and political issues (5)
- Stimulating (6)
- The opposite of calm or composed (8)

Grammar

A **preposition** is a word situated before a noun to show when or where something happened. E.g. **on** the mat, **in** the bin, **over** the fence, **before** the party, **under** the tree. Find a **preposition** in these phrases.

- After the film was released.
- Provoked a change in attitudes.
- Diners had been turning away from the major chains.
- Teachers screen it for their students.

Back To The Text...

- In section 3 the word *screening* is used as
 - a noun.
 - a verb.
- Another good name for this text would be:
 - Enlightening Cinema
 - Magnificent Movies
- The purpose of this text is
 - to persuade.
 - to inform.

Think About This

- The word *escorted* in section 5 is best replaced with
 - dragged.
 - accompanied.
 - convinced.
 - cajoled.
- The main idea in section 3 is that documentaries
 - should be shown first in Washington.
 - can bring important issues to public attention.
 - are ideal for viewing in schools around the world.
- The main idea in section 7 is that
 - there are great improvements in technology.
 - the internet is the only way to go in the future.
 - there are many ways to get your message across.
- The word *zeitgeist* in section 1 means
 - the spirit of the time.
 - hunger pains.
 - dislike of big business.
- What is the writer encouraging you to do?
 - watch documentaries
 - make documentaries
 - ignore documentaries

Challenge Option

Vocabulary: How many words can you make from the word DOCUMENTARIES?

