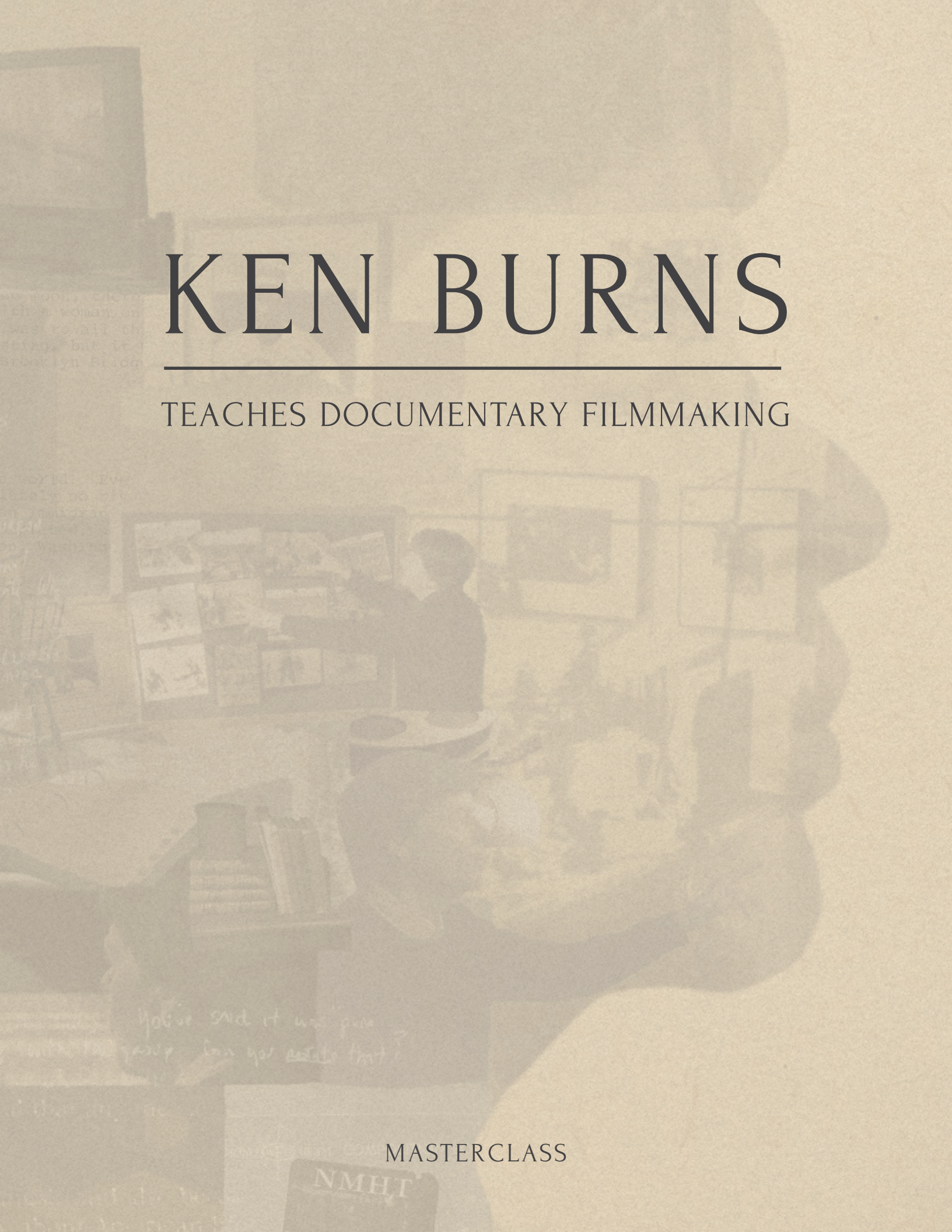


KEN BURNS

TEACHES DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

MASTERCLASS

INTRODUCTION

MEET YOUR NEW INSTRUCTOR: KEN BURNS

Ken Burns has been making documentary films for more than forty years. Since the Academy Award-nominated *Brooklyn Bridge* in 1981, Ken has gone on to direct and produce some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made, including *The Civil War, Baseball, Jazz, The Statue of Liberty, Huey Long; Lewis & Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mark Twain, Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson, The War, The National Parks: America's Best Idea, The Roosevelts: An Intimate History, Jackie Robinson, Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War,* and, most recently, *The Vietnam War*.

A December 2002 poll conducted by *Realscreen* magazine listed *The Civil War* as second only to Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* as the "most influential documentary of all time," and named Ken Burns and Robert Flaherty as the "most influential documentary makers" of all time. In March 2009, David Zurawik of *The Baltimore Sun* said, "... Burns is not only the greatest documentarian of the day, but also the most influential filmmaker period. That includes feature filmmakers like George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. I say that because Burns not only turned millions of persons onto history with his films, he showed us a new way of looking at our collective past and ourselves." The late historian Stephen Ambrose said of his films, "More Americans get their history from Ken Burns than any other source." And jazz musician Wynton Marsalis has called Ken "a master of timing, and of knowing the sweet spot of a story, of how to ask questions to get to the basic human feeling and to draw out the true spirit of a given subject."

Future projects include films on the history of Country Music, Ernest Hemingway, Muhammad Ali, The Holocaust & the United States, Benjamin Franklin, Lyndon B. Johnson, The American Buffalo, Leonardo da Vinci, the American Revolution, the history of Crime and Punishment in America, the history of Reconstruction, and Winston Churchill, among others.

Ken's films have been honored with dozens of major awards, including fifteen Emmy Awards, two Grammy Awards, and two Oscar nominations; and in September of 2008, at the News & Documentary Emmy Awards, Ken was honored by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

KEN'S FILMOGRAPHY

Brooklyn Bridge (1981)
The Shakers: Hands to Work, Hearts to God (1984)
The Statue of Liberty (1985)
Huey Long (1985)
Thomas Hart Benton (1988)
The Congress (1988)
The Civil War (1990)
Empire of the Air: The Men Who Made Radio (1991)
Baseball (1994)
The West (1996)
Thomas Jefferson (1997)
Lewis & Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery (1997)
Frank Lloyd Wright (1998)
Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony (1999)
Jazz (2001)
Mark Twain (2002)
Horatio's Drive: America's First Road Trip (2003)
Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson (2005)
The War (2007)
The National Parks: America's Best Idea (2009)
The Tenth Inning (2010)
Prohibition (2011)
The Dust Bowl (2012)
The Central Park Five (2012)
The Address (2014)
The Roosevelts: An Intimate History (2014)
Jackie Robinson (2016)
Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War (2016)
The Vietnam War (2017)
The Mayo Clinic: Faith–Hope–Science (2018)

In-context clips from these films, and certain other archival materials, have been provided courtesy of Florentine Films.

CHAPTER 02

What It Takes

WHAT IT TAKES

SUBCHAPTERS

Be a Part of the Documentary Renaissance

Your First Film Is Your Greatest Teacher

Know Your Creative Goals

Expect Problems and Transcend Them

Be a Jack of All Trades

Your Life Will Feed Your Art

You Can't Do It Alone

Get in the Deep End

CHAPTER REVIEW

Sometimes the truth is stranger than fiction—and often more interesting. Many filmmakers are realizing this, choosing to delve into nonfiction narratives and bringing them to both the big and small screen. In fact, we are in the midst of a renaissance in documentary storytelling that has been going strong for more than three decades. Among those shaping this movement are the likes of Frederick Wiseman, Werner Herzog, Errol Morris, Michael Moore, and your instructor, Ken Burns.

The first film that Ken directed was *Brooklyn Bridge*, which he made through "sheer force of stubborn will." Throughout the project, he felt alone and anxious, and was barely able to scrape out a living. Yet Ken felt driven to persevere—and in doing so, he broke new ground in storytelling as a pioneer of long-form historical documentary.

Getting a film made isn't easy. When planning your own first film, the idea should be so compelling to you that you are willing to sacrifice comfort and stability in order to get it made. For Ken—the choice to be an artist—to have creative control over his product meant that he had to drastically reduce his own cost of living. He moved from New York City to New Hampshire, knowing that otherwise he would have to take on full-time employment which would greatly delay his progress toward finishing *Brooklyn Bridge*. Any glamour there may be in filmmaking is tempered by incredibly hard work, involving an ongoing series of difficult decisions that seem almost designed to create high anxiety. Expect mistakes, and plan for them. Turn problems into learning opportunities.

There are many specialized trades in filmmaking, such as writing, editing, cinematography, sound design, and fundraising. To be a director you need to wear all of these hats, and more. Educate yourself broadly in the skills of filmmaking, but don't let any one thing dominate. At the same time, understand that you cannot accomplish everything alone. Filmmaking is by nature collaborative, and you should seek out a talented and dedicated team of specialists to help achieve your vision.

LEARN MORE

The term cinéma vérité ("truthful cinema") refers to a movement in documentary filmmaking that began during the 1960s in—you guessed it—France. The film *Chronicle of a Summer* (Chronique d'un Été, 1961) was an experiment in using the camera and the presence of the filmmaker to provoke action: in this case, to stop people on the streets of Paris and ask them, "Are you happy?" This simple intervention

"You're just gonna have to beg, borrow, and steal, and make it happen."

was actually quite a shift from the 'fly on the wall' approach of direct cinema, in which the filmmaker's role is limited to that of an observer, waiting for action to unfold naturally before the camera lens. Today, the terms cinéma vérité and direct cinema are often used interchangeably to describe a style of filmmaking that feels 'real' and that follows impromptu rather than scripted action.

Ken's filmmaking grows out of a different tradition: documentary as historic chronicle. Rather than capturing raw footage of unfolding drama and present-day events, Ken draws his material from archives, both public and private. When no historical footage exists, he brings still photographs to life by adding subtle, motivated movement in combination with music, sound effects, and the spoken word. Sometimes a narrator will interpret the photo, or an actor will read from diaries, letters, memoirs, speeches, newspapers, and more. Where no footage or photos can be found, Ken finds a poetic image that resonates with the material in unexpected ways.

Ken immediately made a splash with his film *Brooklyn Bridge*, which was nominated for an Academy Award in 1982. Since then, Ken has continued to win accolades and awards for his work, which now spans over three-and-a-half decades and has reached millions of viewers. Inevitably, though, such attention and visibility will also come with criticism. For a nuanced and somewhat skeptical take on Ken's film-making legacy, read this recent profile in the New Yorker.

Want to nerd out and learn all about the history of documentary film-making? Check out Erik Barnouw's classic book on the subject, called *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

ASSIGNMENTS

Getting a film made takes perseverance and hard work. It also takes a great team. As you embark on your next project, take a moment to think about the collaborators who you want to work with.

Writing, producing, fundraising, cinematography, sound, or editing: which 'hats' are you most comfortable wearing, and which ones do you prefer to delegate? Identify your areas of weakness, and then seek out talented individuals who can fill those gaps and complement your strengths.

If your immediate network isn't sufficient, then identify the colleagues, friends, or acquaintances who are great 'connectors.' Recruit their

networking help. Film careers are built by word-of-mouth, so ask around and find out who is proven, trusted, and respected in their trade.

When you approach potential collaborators, try to suss out if their interest in the subject matter matches your own passion. Do they seem as enthusiastic about your project as you are? Do they understand and share your vision for the final product? If your energy or confidence flags at any point in the process, will they ditch the project, or will they challenge you to achieve what you set out to do?

A strong team will keep you going through hard times. Make sure early on that you have put the time and effort into forming a solid cohort of filmmaking allies.

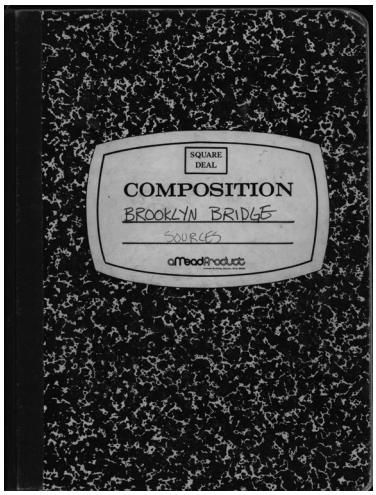
FROM THE ARCHIVE

Brooklyn Bridge was nominated for an Oscar in 1982. Yet that achievement hides Ken's humble beginnings as a recent college graduate striving to make his first feature film. Ken saw in the Brooklyn Bridge a symbol of perseverance. As you begin your first film, take heart from the story of Ken's scrappy perseverance early in his career.

Here are glimpses of Ken's modest resources at the start of his career.

1.

2.



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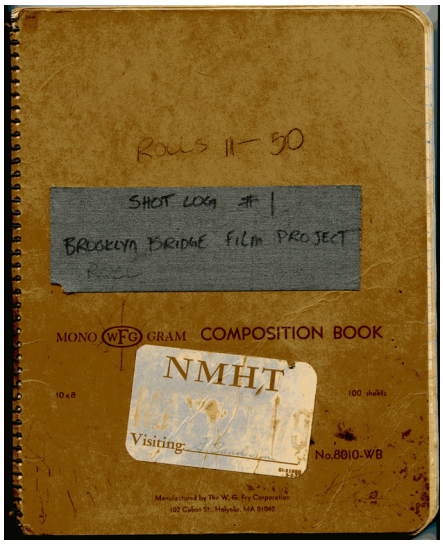

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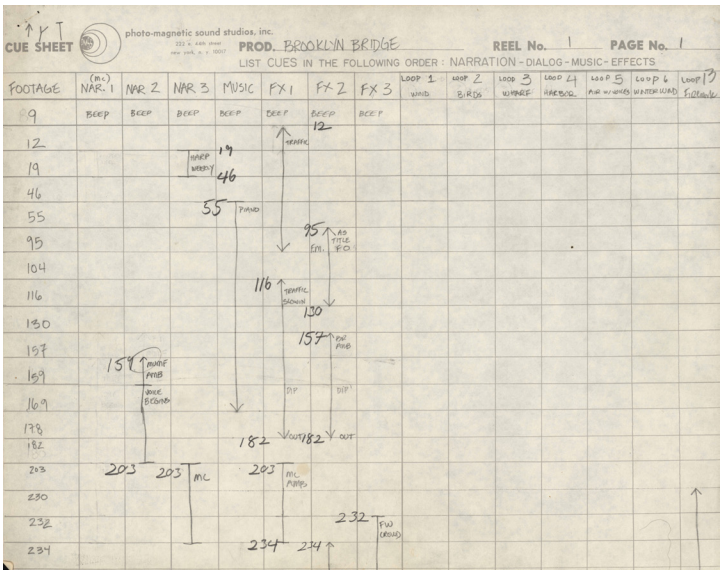


1.(L-R) Ken Burns, Buddy Squires, Roger Sherman, during shooting of *Brooklyn Bridge*.

2.Cover of composition book in which Ken took research notes.

3.Cover of spiral bound notebook containing Ken's shot logs for the film (note the duct tape!).

4.Handwritten music cue sheet.

CHAPTER 03

Choosing Your Story

CHOOSING YOUR STORY

SUBCHAPTERS

A Great Story Will Hold a Mirror Up to You

Choose Your Films Like You Choose Your Friends

Become an Idea Collector

Look for the World in a Grain of Sand

Tell Stories Beyond the Boundaries of Yourself

CHAPTER REVIEW

"Who am I?" This is the question that every artist must grapple with before they can figure out what story they want to tell. Ken's own answer is intimately tied to an additional question: "Who are we as Americans?" The questions that you investigate must engage and attract your core interests, and to that extent you must first examine and hold a mirror up to yourself before figuring out your project.

You may have scores of ideas bouncing around in your head. Perhaps some have found their way into a written list or a scribbled note, or even into a file folder of research. But how do you choose which of those ideas to focus one hundred percent of your energy on?

For Ken, the first sign that you have found the right story is that the idea drops down from your head and into your heart. In human relationships, we enter into friendships with people we want to know for the rest of our life. That same, wholehearted commitment is necessary when choosing a film project that may take anywhere from a year to a decade or more to complete.

For Ken, the stories that capture his heart are those that reveal something central to American identity, even when the subject is a single individual—a baseball player like Jackie Robinson, for instance, who was an early and pivotal force in the Civil Rights Movement. When exploring your own film ideas, look for the universal in the particular, and the particular in the universal. If your film delves into broad social movements, what are the granular and personal details that connect directly with human experience? If your film is about one day in one person's life, what are the aspects of that story that cross borders and language barriers, and that connect your subject at an emotional level with a broader audience?

LEARN MORE

In her book *Trailer Mechanics: How to Make Your Documentary Fundraising Demo* (magafilms, 2012), story consultant Fernanda Rossi devotes her second chapter to helping you identify and develop an idea that could work as a documentary film. Her questions and tips will help you figure out what you are passionate about, and ensure that the topic you choose for your next project is one that will sustain your interest and motivation for years to come.

ASSIGNMENT

We're sure you have a list of ideas somewhere, either written down or tucked away in your head, percolating. Gather those ideas into one place, and examine them one-by-one. Which ideas seem to tug at your

"What you're looking for is a story which is firing on all cylinders."

heart most? Which ones have the potential to speak to universal themes, and to resonate beyond the particular? As Ken admonishes, don't worry about whether an idea will 'sell'—worry only about whether you think you can spend years with the topic, grappling with its questions, and bringing its story to life.

Now, create a folder with the winning idea, and start filling it with content. Is there an article in the newspaper that relates to your project? Cut it out and file it. Have you written a draft of narration or dialogue? Print it out and file it. Thought of some great questions to ask your first interview subject? Jot them down on a scrap of paper and file that too. As you continue through this workbook, you will also gather research for your project, brainstorm a potential story structure, generate a draft fundraising proposal, sketch out a shooting script, compile an electronic press kit, and more. Keep the folder handy throughout the lifespan of your project.

CHAPTER 04

Finding Your Story Within the Subject

FINDING YOUR STORY WITHIN THE SUBJECT

SUBCHAPTERS

Your Story Is Not the Same as Your Subject

Start With Research, and Research Everywhere

Find Sources That Deepen Your Story

Anchor Your Story in Facts

Good Research Should Change Your Mind

Seek Out Different Perspectives

Escape the Black Hole of Conventional Wisdom

CHAPTER REVIEW

Fascinating subject matter doesn't guarantee a good story. Various facts, details, and aspects of the subject must still be shaped and manipulated into story form. The trick is to create a compelling narrative without over-simplifying, ignoring, or undermining important aspects of the subject. To achieve this, thorough and continuous research is vital. Read widely on the topic, and talk to as many experts and witnesses as possible, asking them to share their own artifacts. As you interview, shoot, write, and edit your film, never stop researching. Allow each new discovery to feed into your process and continually inform your story.

As you investigate your subject, don't worry about whether there's a photo to illustrate a given detail. Write your script, and figure out the visuals later. On the flip side of the coin, you may uncover such a rich collection of images that you write a whole new scene in order to use them. During the making of *The Vietnam War*, for instance, Ken learned of an incredible series of recordings kept by a family in Missouri, whose son/brother had sent periodic audio diary updates home during his service in Vietnam. The family would record their own tapes in return. What Ken created from this serendipitous discovery was a riveting, intimate portrait of an American family and how the war affected them.

Allow your stories to be complex. Even if there are opposite points of view about the same event, including both perspectives helps to more precisely define what that event meant to different people. Complicated stories may be harder to tell, but they challenge your audience to go beyond a superficial understanding of the subject, and to grapple with new facts and ideas.

Challenge yourself to rethink your own understanding of the topic, and be open to discovering things you didn't know. If you go into the research process looking only for details that reinforce your existing conceptions, then the only stories you will be able to tell are those that conventional wisdom declares to be true. Conventional wisdom, however, is not infallible. Far more compelling are the stories you've never heard before, or those that contradict what you thought you knew. Allow your story to surprise even yourself.

"You have to escape the specific gravity, the dark matter, the black hole of conventional wisdom."

LEARN MORE

While the Internet may seem to have made research easier, in many ways the task has only become more daunting and overwhelming, especially in light of a new era of 'fake news.' Discover how academics recommend their students navigate the shifting information landscape today, by reading William Badke's helpful guide *Research Strategies: Finding Your Way Through the Information Fog* (iUniverse, 2014).

ASSIGNMENT

Set aside a healthy chunk of time to dive into research for your next project idea. Scour the Internet and visit your local library to identify books, news articles, media, and experts on your subject matter. As you explore and encounter interesting information, think about the following:

- What details surprise you, or contradict something you thought you knew?
- Are you noting any differing or opposing points of view about the issue? What are they, and what implications do these divergent opinions have for your story?
- Are there any experts or witnesses who you should reach out to and interview for your film?
- What additional resources should you investigate? Try to dig down to the original source or archive for the information you come across.

CHAPTER 05

Telling a True Story

TELLING A TRUE STORY

SUBCHAPTERS

Respect the Drama of Truth

Marry Fact and Faith

Honor the Collective, Not the Objective Truth

Be Prepared to Take Poetic License to Portray a Larger Truth

Tolerate Contradiction

Be Manipulative

CHAPTER REVIEW

Documentary filmmakers may harness the same tools as any cinematic storyteller, but there's an additional nuance to their task: they must balance their art with the truth.

"There's no such thing as objectivity in any filmmaking."

Historical documentarians piece together a combination of known facts (such as the date and time that something occurred) with subjective accounts by various witnesses of what happened. Yet descriptions of the same event can vary widely, and sometimes even contradict each other. There are always multiple truths (plural) at play in any given situation. For this reason, Ken maintains that true objectivity in documentary filmmaking does not actually exist. Rather, he sees truth telling as a process akin to emotional archaeology, trying to unearth the experiences of individuals that have been buried by history. Objective truth may be impossible, but there is a greater truth of human emotion that Ken strives to enliven for audiences.

There are times, for instance, when the needs of your story can outweigh a strict adherence to literal facts. The tipping point for when such 'poetic license' comes into play is an intuitive one, and it is different for every filmmaker. Ken shares an example from his film *Huey Long*, in which the eponymous character is described as being surrounded with bodyguards. In the photographs, however, they looked like regular men in business suits. To serve the larger truth that Huey, at this time, was becoming 'increasingly dictatorial and autocratic,' Ken sought a visually equivalent image, and settled upon a photo of Huey surrounded by National Guardsmen. While not factually accurate (the Guardsmen were not Huey's bodyguards), the photo was more emotionally resonant with Huey's changing state of mind.

Every filmmaker must find their own moral compass in this balancing act between facts and authenticity. Your task as a non-fiction filmmaker is to 'trust but verify': to authentically represent the different emotional experiences of the human subjects in your film, while also staying loyal to factual records. For example, you can cross-check a veteran's personal account with military records, to ensure that nothing in the subjective memory of the speaker conflicts fundamentally with recorded fact.

When balancing factual with emotional truth in your film, try not to oversimplify. Stay true to the complicated and contradictory nature of history, and don't hide the flaws of your heroes or the human side of your villains. If the facts are in doubt, err on the conservative side with your truth claims. At the same time, embrace the manipulation that is necessary and inherent to the process of storytelling. In the end,

filmmaking requires an act of faith that a larger truth has been represented, even if every last detail can't be verified.

LEARN MORE

Watch *Rashomon* (1950), the classic film by Akira Kurasawa. This fascinating cinematic exercise explores the idea that no single individual's version of 'what happened' can be trusted, and hints that 'truth' may ultimately be unknowable. Read more about the film in this engaging article from *Topic* magazine.

There's a little bit of *Rashomon* in all of our lives. Talk to your family or friends about one of the first childhood experiences that you can vividly recall. Ask them to describe their own memories of that same event. Does everyone agree on what happened? Are there details that are different in each telling? How different, and in what ways? Who do you think is telling the truth?

ASSIGNMENTS

Explore your own moral compass in storytelling, especially as it relates to your work. In your notebook, write thoughts about the following questions.

- How much 'poetic license' do you feel comfortable using? Was Ken right to replace the photo of Huey Long's bodyguards with a more visually striking photo of National Guardsmen? Was this going too far? Why or why not? Are you currently faced with a similar judgment call in your own film?

- If your film has a clear villain, how do you plan to handle that character's portrayal? Are you comfortable with conveying a nuanced portrait that includes a 'human' side? Or does it seem somehow wrong not to condemn that character outright? If it helps, think about the topic of slavery. How do you think slaveholders should be portrayed? Would your film demonize them? Hold them accountable? Or would your film remain morally neutral about their slaveholding practices?

- What responsibility do you, as a filmmaker, have to the truth? If someone you interview for your film says something blatantly false, how would you handle this?

If it helps you to brainstorm, check out this code of ethics, proposed by the Society of Professional Journalists. Which of these journalistic standards do you think should also apply to documentary filmmakers? Chew on the question further by reading this insightful essay from the International Documentary Association.

CHAPTER 06

Treatments, Pitching, and Funding

TREATMENTS, PITCHING, AND FUNDING

SUBCHAPTERS

Treatments: Formalize and Communicate Your Passion

Before Writing a Treatment, Gather the Whole Orchard

Fundraising: Avenues, Options, and Creative Control

Pursue and Prep for the Pitch

Pitch to Sources Who Care About Your Subject

Budget Enough for Yourself

Push Through

CHAPTER REVIEW

There's simply no getting around it: making films requires money. Even if you don't pay yourself (and you *should* pay yourself), you still need to budget for equipment, licensing, and salaries for your crew. Assuming you are not independently wealthy, and are reluctant to get mired in credit card debt, then how, and where, do you find this money?

Your most important fundraising tool is the treatment—an in-depth narrative description of a proposed film, written almost like a short story. Although you may find it frustrating to write a story *about* your film rather than simply writing the film itself, Ken finds it to be an essential part of the process. The research for both treatment and film involves gathering the same facts, talking to the same individuals, and shaping the same story. By figuring out how to communicate your passion, knowledge, and vision on the page, you reach a deeper understanding of how your story needs to be told on the screen. Ken calls this a 'double bang,' because treatments can help you find your film's story, while simultaneously helping to raise money.

Along with a treatment, you also need to develop a realistic budget for your film. This doesn't need to be an overwhelming task: start by simply jotting down the big picture elements on a single page. Ask yourself what the essential line items will be, such as the number of days you will need to shoot, the cost of renting camera and sound equipment, and paying crew for that duration; as well as how many weeks of post production will be required and the rates of your editor, sound mixer, and composer. Also, remember to budget for your own time as producer!

Once you have a treatment and budget in hand, there are generally four categories of documentary funders, or underwriters, that you can approach: the government, corporations, foundations, and individuals. Governments and foundations typically offer competitive grant opportunities to which filmmakers can apply. These grants, often administered by public television networks or humanities endowments, can require anywhere from 20 to 200 or more pages of written content. This can take a tremendous amount of time and effort, but the money from grants comes with very few strings attached. Corporations such as cable networks and streaming outlets may only require a two-to-three page pitch with a budget attached, and they often pay for the entire budget. But corporate investors will likely require greater involvement in your project, determining things like the runtime of your film and where commercial breaks will fall. Each option comes with pros and cons, and you will need to weigh the amount of creative control you want for your project with the type of proposals you have time to do.

"I learned as much about writing working on proposals and treatments as I have writing the films themselves."

Whoever you are seeking money from, you will have to convince them of the worthiness of your project. Make them curious and eager to learn more, and convince them that you have the knowledge, skill, and dedication to transform their money into an artful and meaningful product. Be prepared for plenty of rejections—they are part of the process, and every filmmaker learns to deal with them. Despite being a household name, Ken still spends a significant portion of his time pitching, writing treatments, and getting rejections. He estimates that he has been told 'no' one hundred times for every 'yes.'

When you eventually do get financial backing, know that one funder will likely not be enough. Be prepared to patch together your budget with a variety of sources. Think locally and get creative about who you approach by identifying organizations and individuals who understand your topic, deal with it day-to-day, or know its importance. Ken, for instance, found dozens of local New York investors who felt invested in the subject matter of his first film *Brooklyn Bridge*, including department stores and businesses, a bank, a railway, the local chapter of the Democratic Party, and the State Council for Humanities.

Fundraising requires perseverance more than anything else. Stay confident in your project, and just keep doing what you have to do. Ultimately, the hard work of convincing others to fund your film will help you refine your passion and zero in on how your story needs to be told.

LEARN MORE

Acquaint yourself with the documentary funding landscape. This exhaustive list of over 250 active grants and fellowship opportunities was compiled and made public by the International Documentary Association. Choose one opportunity to pursue that meets your criteria. Unsure how to best navigate this resource? For tutorials, check out this directory.

What exactly is the difference between a proposal, a treatment, and an abstract? All three are ways of describing your project to interested parties and potential funders, at different levels of detail.

- A proposal is the most complete of the three, containing a thorough description of all aspects of your proposed film, including the project's history, the intended audience, the style and approach of your storytelling, biographies of your chief collaborators, and a plan and budget for completing the work.

- Proposals also contain a section called the treatment, which is a short

story narrative of what you envision will happen on screen during your film. Treatments can be several pages long, and should contain colorful descriptions and give specific details about characters, story beats, and actions that will feature in your final film.

- An 'abstract' is a one-page summary that can be detached and shared separately from the full proposal. Think of it as a CliffsNotes version of the proposal, so that busy people can easily assess your project. The abstract is the very first page of your proposal, and so it forms a reader's first impression of your project. Make sure, therefore, that it is clearly written, engaging, and concise.

In the assignment that follows, you'll have the opportunity to develop all three written products for your own project.

ASSIGNMENT

Get a head start on fundraising by writing a first draft of the content that will make up your proposal. No two grant applications will request the same information, so what you should do is create a 'menu' of component parts that can be called upon as needed, and adapted for each particular use.

Let's look at each component, and flesh out the foundational elements for your written proposal.

- Project History. Your project may be just a glimmer of an idea at this point, but start tracking the germination and growth of that idea. What interested you in the topic? Do you feel a personal connection to the subject matter or to the characters? How long have you wanted to make this film, and what steps have you taken so far to get it made? What past projects or activities have you been involved in that are relevant to this new idea?

- Treatment. How will an audience experience the story you want to tell? What will they see and hear on screen? Who are the characters in your story, and where does it take place? Show, don't tell, by writing the story as you imagine it will play out in the final film. Aim for a vivid but realistic description that is between two and five pages long.

- Audience and Story Context. Who will be interested to watch your film? What other films have been made about your topic, and what is new or fresh about your take on the subject? What is your purpose for making the film? Write a half page describing to whom your film will appeal and why.

- Style and Approach. What will be the visual style of the cinematography? Will your film use re-enactments, or will it rely heavily on photographs and found footage? Will the editing consist of rapid pacing and surprising juxtapositions, or will it savor moments of beauty and calm? Describe in one page or less the key stylistic elements that will make your approach unique.

- Principal Participants and Advisors. Who are you collaborating with to make this film? Who will you interview as experts or witnesses? Who will you consult with as advisors? Include brief bios with basic information about each of these participants. Try to limit this section to two pages.

- Plan of Work. What will be the different phases of your project, and how long will they last? How do you plan to reach the finish line? Outline what you will accomplish during preproduction, research, script writing, hiring, shooting, editing, music composition, and sound mixing. The resulting timeline for completion should be one-to-two pages.

- Budget Summary and Breakdown. How much will each stage of your project cost? In a spreadsheet, itemize each and every line item that will be needed. No clue where to start? Consult this thorough budget sample from the International Documentary Association.

- Does this sample look overwhelming? Don't worry—your own budget will likely not include every single line item. Think of this as a menu of items that you can select from.

Recall that in Chapter 3: Choosing Your Story, you created a manila file folder for you film idea. Start filling that folder with these seven written documents.

One final note: A small but growing list of funders is agreeing to a standardized set of application requirements, called the Documentary Core Application. Make sure to review their thorough 'Core Proposal Checklist,' which outlines the elements that should be completed in order for your proposal to qualify under this exciting and timesaving initiative.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

What do an abstract, a proposal, and a treatment actually look like? On the pages that follow is an example of all three from *The Civil War*, Ken's epic television series. Although the scale is likely greater than you are ready to tackle, it is still a wonderful model for how to create a short story version of a film that hasn't been made yet, in order to convince funders to underwrite your project.

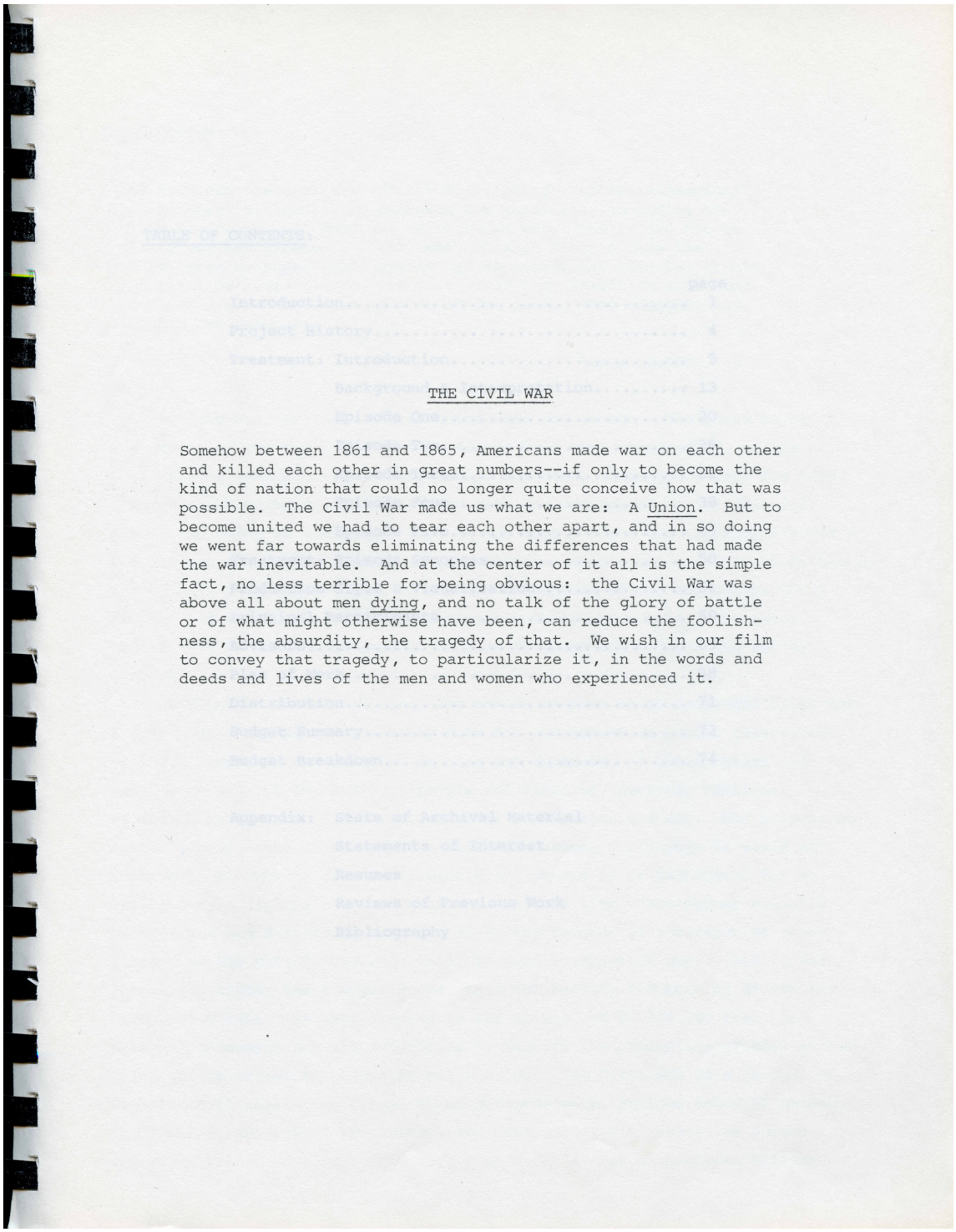
The first page of this proposal is an abstract, distilling the essence of the proposed television series into just one paragraph. Think about ways that you can concisely yet vividly summarize your own vision. If you had just five sentences to encapsulate the entirety of your idea, what would you say?

The second page is a table of contents, giving a big picture overview and delineating each component included in the 74-page proposal. These sections correspond roughly to the seven writing prompts in the assignment for this chapter.

The remaining three pages of this excerpt contain the introduction to the proposal. While not the actual treatment itself (that section is 41 pages long and cannot be duplicated in this workbook), this introduction still provides a helpful model to refer to when writing your own treatment and proposal.

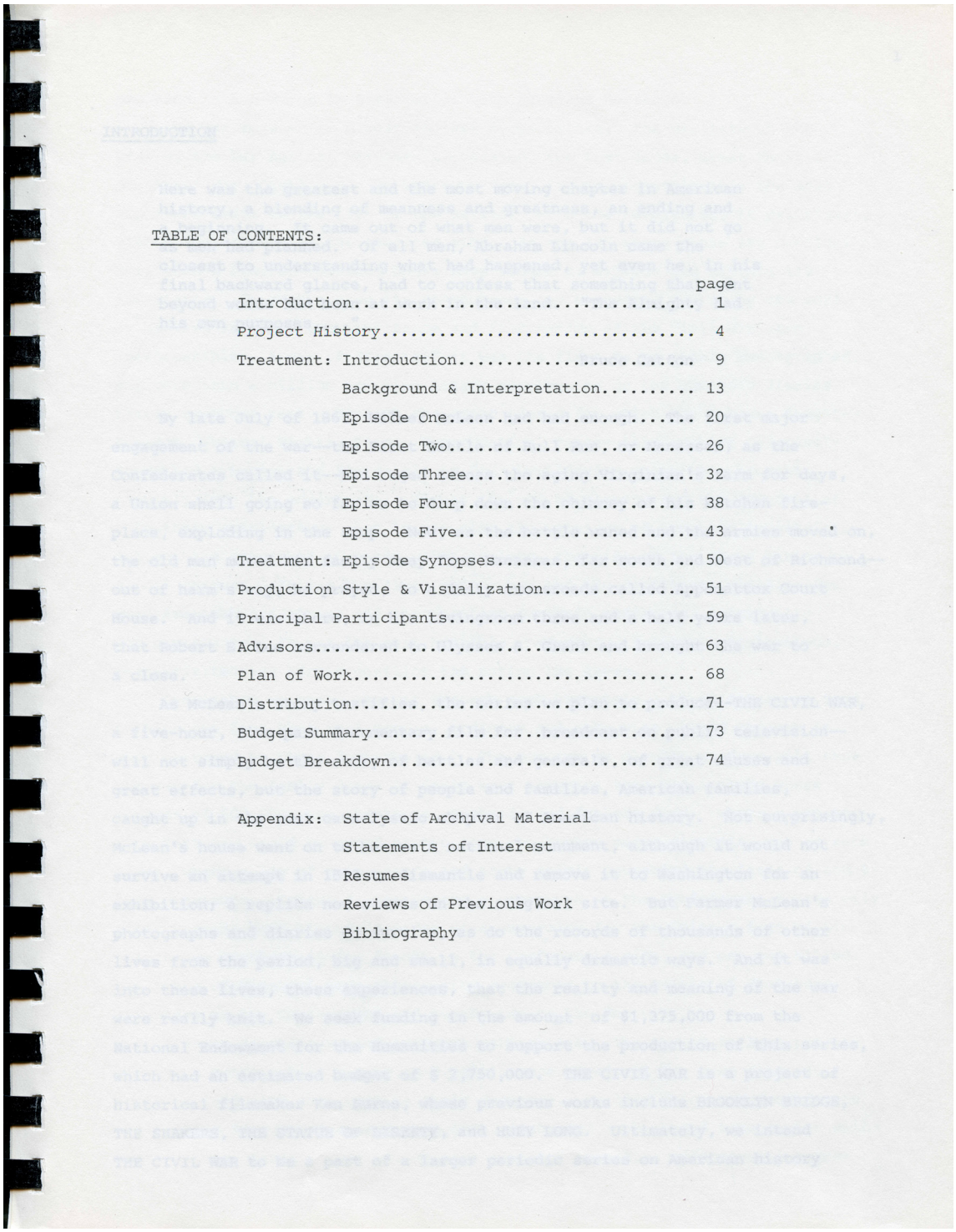
As you read these pages, jot down your observations and thoughts on the following questions in your notebook:

- The introduction starts with a quote by historian Bruce Catton. What kind of tone do his words set for the rest of the treatment?
- Why do you think Ken chose Wilmer McLean as the first character to introduce? What does McLean's story reveal about Ken's unique approach to telling the larger story of the Civil War?
- In the final paragraph, what case does Ken make for why this series needs to be made, and what it will do differently than other films on the Civil War?



THE CIVIL WAR

Somehow between 1861 and 1865, Americans made war on each other and killed each other in great numbers--if only to become the kind of nation that could no longer quite conceive how that was possible. The Civil War made us what we are: A Union. But to become united we had to tear each other apart, and in so doing we went far towards eliminating the differences that had made the war inevitable. And at the center of it all is the simple fact, no less terrible for being obvious: the Civil War was above all about men dying, and no talk of the glory of battle or of what might otherwise have been, can reduce the foolishness, the absurdity, the tragedy of that. We wish in our film to convey that tragedy, to particularize it, in the words and deeds and lives of the men and women who experienced it.



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INTRODUCTION

> Here was the greatest and the most moving chapter in American history, a blending of meanness and greatness, an ending and a beginning. It came out of what men were, but it did not go as men had planned. Of all men, Abraham Lincoln came the closest to understanding what had happened, yet even he, in his final backward glance, had to confess that something that went beyond words had been at work in the land. "The Almighty had his own purposes...."
>
> Bruce Catton

By late July of 1861, Wilmer McLean had had enough. The first major engagement of the war--the First Battle of Bull Run, or Manassas, as the Confederates called it--had raged across the aging Virginian's farm for days, a Union shell going so far as to drop down the chimney of his kitchen fireplace, exploding in the soup. Now, as the battle waned and the armies moved on, the old man moved his family away from Manassas, far south and west of Richmond--out of harm's way, he prayed, to a dusty crossroads called Appomattox Court House. And it was there, in his livingroom three and a half years later, that Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant and brought the war to a close.

As McLean's story testifies, the series we plan to produce--THE CIVIL WAR, a five-hour, five-part documentary film for broadcast on public television--will not simply be the story of battles and generals, of great causes and great effects, but the story of people and families, American families, caught up in the most cataclysmic chapter of American history. Not surprisingly, McLean's house went on to become a national monument, although it would not survive an attempt in 1893 to dismantle and remove it to Washington for an exhibition; a replica now stands on the original site. But Farmer McLean's photographs and diaries do survive, as do the records of thousands of other lives from the period, big and small, in equally dramatic ways. And it was into these lives, these experiences, that the reality and meaning of the war were really knit. We seek funding in the amount of [redacted] from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support the production of this series, which had an estimated budget of [redacted]. THE CIVIL WAR is a project of historical filmmaker Ken Burns, whose previous works include BROOKLYN BRIDGE, THE SHAKERS, THE STATUE OF LIBERTY, and HUEY LONG. Ultimately, we intend THE CIVIL WAR to be a part of a larger periodic series on American history

produced by Ken Burns in association with American Heritage.

The War spawned an almost endless nomenclature: the War Between the States, the War Against Northern Aggression, the Lost Cause, Great Rebellion, Brothers' War, Civil War. By whatever name, it was unquestionably the most important event in the life of the nation; with the Revolution, it practically stands for history in the American mind. In the 120 years since its conclusion, more than a hundred thousand books have sought to express and explain its importance. So much are we its consequence, so connected are we by the world it ushered in, that the importance and fascination of the Civil War seem inexhaustible. A war of "firsts," it was the first to be widely photographed, and more than a million haunting images survive, as do the numerous diaries nearly everyone kept. Beneath the great ideals for which the War was fought--Freedom, States' Rights, Union, Emancipation, Peace--this archive poignantly shows how a nation and its people in four bewildering years were brought abruptly into the modern age. It was the end of slavery and the downfall of a Southern aristocracy; but it was also the catalyst of American industrialization, the watershed of a new urban society, the rise of the young nation to global stature. It was the first modern war and the costliest, yielding the most American casualties and the greatest domestic suffering, spiritually and physically. It was the most horrible, necessary, intimate, acrimonious, mean-spirited and heroic conflict the nation has known.

Inevitably we grasp the war through such hyperbole. In so doing, we tend to blur the fact that real people, ordinary and otherwise, lived through it, were harrowed by these "hyperboles." The program we plan to produce will show the war for the family drama it daily was: America then was a place where upwards of 600,000 sons, brothers, husbands and fathers died; where a senator from Kentucky could be proud of two sons who became major generals, one on each side; where a law of coincidence and irony grimly connected the lives of countless Americans. Robert E. Lee became a commander in the Confederate forces only after turning down Lincoln's offer of a generalcy for the Union; four of Lincoln's own brothers-in-law fought on the Confederate side, and one was killed. The State of Missouri sent thirty-nine regiments to the Battle of Vicksburg: seventeen to the Confederacy and twenty-two to the Union.

Always, it was a war of poignant particulars. The pay of an Army private was $11 a month, while slaves in Virginia were hired out for more than $30 a month in 1863 (the cash went to their masters). By 1864 Union and Confederate skirmishers frequently shared campsites, exchanged much-needed tobacco for much-needed shoes, finally even warned each other of impending offensives. A Con-

federate cornet player, a Georgia Sharpshooter at the Battle of Atlanta, played so beautifully that both sides would temporarily stop shooting to hear his music and then, after much applause, resume fighting. And of course there was Wilmer McLean, who could rightfully say that "The War began in my front yard and ended in my front parlor."

The Civil War has never been thoroughly, let alone expressively, covered for film and television. Most programs have been lukewarm historical dramas or didactic audio visual presentations, while the best work, notably NBC's Project Twenty effort, is now almost thirty years old and dated in many respects. Our series will be a compelling, emotional, and dramatic combination of archival material, photographs, paintings, songs and anthems, and broadsides, brought to life by a strong narration and a chorus of voices personifying the characters of the period in their own words, drawn from diaries, journals, newspaper accounts, love letters and military documents. This material will be intercut with evocative live cinematography of the now quiet battle sites, and we will frequently introduce dramatic readings and commentary from poets, descendants, and students of the Civil War. By the end of the program we will know the major battles, the great generals and principle players, to be sure; but we will also have come to know dozens of minor characters, events and dramas that give the War its real charcter, and meaning.

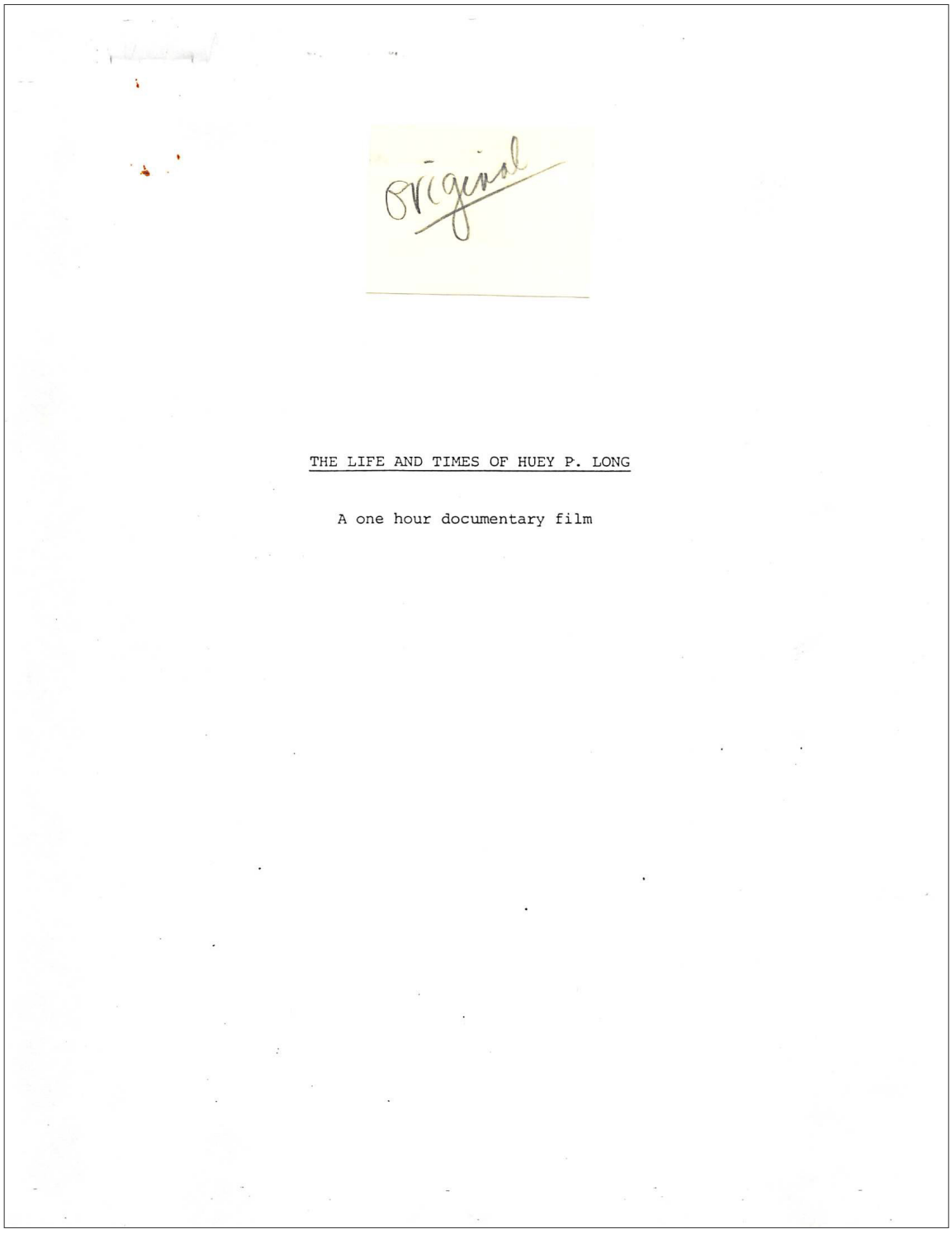
As an interesting comparison showing the range of Ken's written proposals, read and enjoy this masterfully concise pitch for a four-hour film about Benjamin Franklin on which production recently began.

Benjamin Franklin

Scientist, inventor, writer of enduring epigrams of homespun wisdom, creator of America's first subscription library and one of its most prestigious universities, Benjamin Franklin was (with the possible exception of Thomas Jefferson) the nation's most complex and compelling Founding Father—and certainly its wittiest. During his 84 years, he rose from being a lowly printer's apprentice to become a central figure in the American story; a man who could guide his fellow colonists in declaring their independence and crafting their Constitution, charm all of Paris as one of our first diplomats, and yet stay true to his guiding principle—a "dislike of everything that tended to debase the spirit of the common people."

We will follow his colorful and extremely consequential life, peering into the man behind the bifocals he invented and to a great extent using his own words to get to know him and his times. "If you would not be forgotten, as soon as you are dead and rotten," he said, "Either write things worth reading, or do things worth the writing." Benjamin Franklin did both. (4 hours)

Ken's proposal for a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for what became his 1985 hour long *Huey Long* is reproduced below, in its entirety, for your reference.



original

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HUEY P. LONG

A one hour documentary film

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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HUEY P. LONG

Huey Long was a man where many roads met. In him, the contradictions of an age are superimposed upon the struggles of one man's career. Long's life invites diverse inquiry: into politics, to be sure, but also into the culture, myth, literature and psychology of the age he helped to shape. We plan to produce an hour-long 16mm color film for national broadcast on the life and times of Huey P. Long. The film will be a compelling combination of rare archival material, modern live cinematography, and interviews with those who knew Long and those who have studied him. Scenes from the film, All the King's Men and the commentary of Robert Penn Warren who wrote the novel of the same name will serve as a dramatic counterpoint to the body of our film. The film is a project of RKB Productions. It will be directed by historical filmmaker Ken Burns and produced by Richard Kilberg whose recent historical film, Brooklyn Bridge, was nominated for an Academy Award. David Culbert of Louisiana State University will serve as chief historical researcher. Arthur Schlesinger, Alan Brinkley, William Leuchtenberg, Waldo Braden and Robert Snyder form the panel of humanities advisors.

RKB Productions
P.O. Box 613
Walpole, New Hampshire 03608

PROJECT HISTORY

In 1982 David Culbert, professor of American History at Louisiana State University, became the chairman of the Organization of American Historians' new Erik Barnouw Prize Committee. The award, to be given annually for an outstanding documentary film about American History, was unanimously bestowed upon Ken Burns' Brooklyn Bridge. Impressed with the historical and aesthetic accomplishment of the film, Culbert asked Burns to collaborate with him on a film treating the life and times of Louisiana's Huey P. Long. A meeting was arranged in Atlanta in March, 1983 where it was agreed that Burns, with his partner, Richard Kilberg, would work with Culbert to submit a proposal to the N.E.H. for a film treating Long's life.

Culbert's interest in Long began in 1971 when he was appointed to the faculty of Louisiana State University. The institution itself is a creation of Huey Long in many respects, and Baton Rouge the scene of Long's assassination. L.S.U.'s T. Harry Williams had recently published his Huey Long for which he received national attention. Robert Penn Warren taught at L.S.U in the 1930's and there assembled ideas later incorporated into All the King's Men.

The notion to actually make a film about Long crystalized with Culbert's receipt of a three-year Kellogg National Fellowship in 1981. The grant provided release time to collect and catalogue diverse archival materials. From this research, it became apparent that no satisfactory documentary film treating Long's life existed. The Kellogg Fellowship enabled a great deal of the preliminary research for such a film to be accomplished over the next two years.

The research of both written and audio-visual material took place primarily in Washington D.C. and Louisiana. During this time Culbert was able to trace a large collection of documents relating to Long's life, rare recordings of his speeches and still more dramatic newsreels and other motion pictures of Long in action. He was also able to assemble tapes and filmed recollections of many of Long's closest associates. (See Appendix: State of Archival Material.)

As this research was proceeding, a group of scholars representing diverse and complementary interests was assembled to advise the project. They include

Waldo Braden of L.S.U., an expert on Southern oral traditions; Robert Snyder of the University of South Florida, a Huey Long specialist; and Arthur Schlesinger and William Leuchtenberg, both distinguished historians with special knowledge of New Deal America.

In 1982, Alan Brinkley's superb book on Huey Long and Father Coughlin, Voices of Protest, was published. The book eloquently complements our own conviction in the importance of Long and his unique place in American history. Brinkley's work has directly helped shape our thinking of the project itself, and he has agreed to act as special consultant for this film.

Burns and Kilberg brought their professional capabilities to the film, providing a realizable vision and treatment for it. Burns' Brooklyn Bridge, perhaps one of the best humanities film projects made, is, like The Life and Times of Huey P. Long, an inspiring combination of archival, live, and interview footage. It tried to reflect the diversity and integrity of effort that came together in the Bridge, as well as the diverse kinds of response that the Bridge, as an enduring event, has elicited. The Life and Times of Huey P. Long seeks to embody a similar richness and thus demands a similar multi-disciplinary approach.

In Spring, 1983, a draft proposal was prepared and discussions were initiated with Tamara Robinson, Director of Program Development at the Washington PBS station, WETA. Both Ms Robinson and WETA responded enthusiastically. It was agreed that WETA would be the entry station for a national PBS broadcast and that The Life and Times of Huey P. Long would be a top priority on WETA's program development agenda.

Finally, after review and extensive critique by the panel of advisors, the proposal was revised to incorporate their perceptions and suggestions. It is the fruit of this collaboration that is submitted here to the National Endowment for the Humanities for production funding.

INTRODUCTION

> If you were living in Louisiana, you knew you were living in history defining itself before your eyes. And you knew that you were not seeing a half-drunk hick buffoon performing an old routine, but were witnessing a drama which was a version of the world's drama, and the drama of history, too, the old drama of power and ethics.
>
> Robert Penn Warren on Huey Long

The image of Huey Long, self-proclaimed "Kingfish" of Louisiana, has perhaps dimmed in the minds of most Americans today. To his contemporaries, the thought of Huey's image ever dimming would have seemed strange indeed. For in a time of economic and political crisis, Long's brilliant political instincts and vivid personality electrified and polarized the nation. His character was as ambiguous as his political legacy. He was a Southern demagogue in the familiar mode. He was a populist leader carrying a proud tradition into a new age. He was a buffoon and a bumpkin on the staid stage of national politics. He was a skilled politician building a political machine with all the tools the twentieth-century afforded. He educated the poor. He built roads and universities. He bent a state to his own will and imperiled the institutions of a democracy. He died in his own blood, struck down by an assassin in the State Capitol, an Art Deco Skyscraper he personally had constructed.

The special circumstances that coalesced to carry Long to power and Long's fierce will to dominate those circumstances are inseparable. However imperfectly, Long initiated, presided over and embodied changes in the nature of the democratic structure of our nation and helped forge a new political tradition. Like his contemporaries, we are seduced by Long's charm, enthralled by the force of his personality, aroused by his ideals and repelled by his perversion of democracy. Was Long a bad man? Perhaps. But he was also a man in whom the threads of an era are knotted together.

The Life and Times of Huey P. Long will be an hour long 16mm color film for national broadcast over the Public Broadcasting Service and for distribution to schools, libraries, museums and other institutions throughout the country. The film will be a portrait of a politician, but not just the story of one extraordinary man. For it is also the biography of an age,

illuminating its moods, textures, motivations and contradictions. In Long's life are refracted the residual aspects of an older age and the developing tendencies of a new one. That age is ours, and in this resides Long's special importance, historically and symbolically, for contemporary awareness.

We are not interested in making political judgements in this film. This would be too limited and shortsighted. We are more interested in observing Long as one would, say, a volcano -- as a powerful phenomenon. His life invites diverse inquiry: into politics, to be sure, but into culture, myth, literature and psychology as well. In the following treatment we relate the highlights of Long's career. This will form the narrative continuity and internal structure of our film. In the next section, we offer an interpretation of Long's career that suggests the larger setting -- cultural, political and moral -- in which we will set that career. Finally, in a section on production style and visualization we will describe how the film will actually be assembled.

TREATMENT: BIOGRAPHY

Huey Long was born in Winnfield, Louisiana on August 30, 1893 into a family of adequate if not auspicious means. Winnfield was cotton and stock raising country in the north-central part of the state. The land was too poor for large scale exploitation, so Winn Parish had always been an area dominated by small businessmen and small but independent farmers. During the 1870's and 1880's Winnfield had been a prominent populist stronghold in Louisiana. Populist sentiment, and the circumstances that elicited those sentiments, were still to be felt in Winnfield during Long's boyhood.

From his earliest school days Long cultivated a reputation as an iconoclast with extraordinary persuasive skills. He used these skills as he hit the road in 1910 as a travelling salesman for "Cottolene" -- a lard substitute. Long's sales skills soon became evident in the unprecedented orders he piled up. Long alternated the next several years between a series of sales jobs -- all equally successful -- and attempts at college -- much less so. It was at one of Huey's Cottolene promotions -- a "Bake-off" in Shreveport -- that he met his future wife, the winner of that contest, Rose McConnell. Eventually marriage pushed Long into steadier work and to admission to the bar after only one year at Tulane Law School. Long's first big case was characteristic: He won a judgement for a widow against the biggest (in fact the only) bank in Winnfield, which coincidentally was Long's landlord.

Law was business, but politics was the natural habitat of Huey Long. In 1916 he joined State Senator S.J. Harper in a campaign against limited employers' liability in workmen's injury cases. Within two years, he had won election, at age 25, to a post on the State Railroad Commission -- a potent body which regulated public services as well as railroads. Soon he was tackling the biggest "public service" in the state -- Standard Oil and the oil pipelines. Though he had little success against Standard Oil, this fight plus his success in challenging exorbitant telephone rate increases, his pressure on railroads to improve services and facilities and his constant attempts to tax corporations more heavily won him attention and political influence in Louisiana.

In many respects, Louisiana was ready for Huey Long. Since emerging from Reconstruction, the state had been controlled by an oligarchy not found elsewhere in the South, or at least not to the same degree. In addition to the traditional cotton and tobacco interests, Louisiana had powerful groups of rice and sugar planters, lumber companies, utilities and mercantile interests operating along the Mississippi. Overshadowing everything was Standard Oil, for many decades the only genuine corporation in the South. The New Orleans political machine, the Old Regulars or Choctaws, controlled the State through alliances with courthouse rings in outlying parishes. Taken together, these economic and political interests created what V.O. Key characterized as, "a case of arrested political development." In literacy Louisiana ranked last in the nation. Key argues, "As good a supposition as any in that the longer the period of unrestrained exploitation, the more violent will be reaction when it comes." Huey Long was part of that reaction.

By 1924 he was ready to run for governor. For months Long traipsed over Louisiana's backlands, using thousands of circulars to spread the word and an automobile to get himself around--both innovations in Louisiana politics. Long's platform consisted of constant attack on Standard Oil and the old oligarchy. He didn't win this time but he did surprise everyone by garnering thirty-one percent of the vote. Four more years of business as usual would make the governorship ripe for Long in 1928. Adopting the slogan, "Every Man a King, But No One Wears a Crown," Long campaigned more intensely than ever. He reviled his opponents as "thieves, bugs and lice" to shouts of "pour it on 'em, Huey!" Piling up huge majorities in rural northern parishes, Long became governor in 1928 at the age of 35.

In his campaign for the governorship, Long did more than revile entrenched powers--he touched the hearts of the voters, nowhere better exemplified than in his speech at the Evangeline Oak:

> And it is here under this oak where Evangeline waited for her lover, Gabriel, who never came. This oak is an immortal spot, made so by Longfellow's poem, but Evangeline is not the only one who has waited here in disappointment.

> Where are the schools that you have waited for your children to have, that have never come? Where are the roads and the highways that you send your money to build, that are no nearer now than ever before? Where are the institutions to care for the sick and disabled? Evangeline wept bitter tears in her disappointment, but it lasted through only one lifetime. Your tears in this country, around his oak, have lasted for generations. Give me the chance to dry the eyes of those who still weep here.

More importantly, through patronage, bravado and his genius for political manipulation, Long soon gained control of the legislature and began to deliver on these promises.

Long vastly expanded and improved the quality of education. He provided free textbooks and school bus service, established night schools and traveling libraries, lowered tuition rates and expanded the State University system. Providing the textbooks was a monumental breakthrough for Long. Louisiana had a state law prohibiting using state funds for sectarian purposes. Long argued he was giving the books to children, rather than to schools. He appropriated over $750,000 for free books, and took a giant step toward wiping out illiteracy.

Likewise, Long vastly expanded and improved the quality of public health. He doubled the capacity of Louisiana's charity hospitals, founded a school of medicine at LSU, and hopitals for the treatment of epileptics and the retarded, and improved institutions for the blind, insane, and tuberculin.

In a matter of seven years, Long administrations constructed more roads and bridges than all preceeding administrations combined. To finance these achievements Long engaged in deficit spending before President Roosevelt made it common practice. In doing so, he lifted the state, almost overnight from a condition of near feudalism into the modern world.

As governor, he embraced utterly and completely the political life. He maintained two hotel suites; in New Orleans at the Roosevelt Hotel, and in Baton Rouge at the Heidelberg. There he held court, meeting with his lieutenants frequently through the night. He worked and received his ceaseless flow of visitors in bed, attired in fine silk pajamas and a scarlet silk robe. It was not unusual to receive a phone call at 3:00 a.m. from the governor with orders to present oneself for a 4:00 a.m. meeting. When Kingfish beckoned, little fish heeded. He was rarely seen either at home with his family or at the governor's mansion he had built to resemble the White House.

In 1929, his power consolidated, Long decided to attack really big game: Standard Oil, his old nemesis. He proposed a 5-cent-a-barrel tax on all oil refined in Louisiana. For once he was outgunned. Bolstered by the strength of the oil companies, Long's opponents struck back with a move for impeachment on eight separate counts. Long himself countered with an intense public campaign. Since the newpapers were unanimously against him, public speaking from loud-speaker trucks and over radio was crucial. It turned the tide for Long.

After impeachment failed, Long moved with special zeal to consolidate a personal power in Lousiana of unprecedented breadth and ominous implications. His efforts had a reliable financial base in the "contributions" to Long deducted automatically from the monthly paychecks of state employees. A Treasury agent reported, "Long and his gang are stealing everything in the state."

With Lousiana under control, Long directed his attention to his next great ambition. He wanted to become a national figure. It was the typical Long sense of humor, style and political savvy that provided one of his first "issues"--the correct method of eating potlikker, the juice left after boiling vegetables and their greens. Long insisted that you had to dunk cornpone in the potlikker, then eat the pone. His opponents, a nationwide group that included the editor of the Atlanta Constitution and Governor Franklin Roosevelt, considered crumbling the pone into the juice the preferred method. Roosevelt wrote Long that he was "deeply stirred by the great controversy." The whole nation got a chuckle out of Long. The point wasn't missed that this was the food of the poor. Baiting his enemies in Louisiana, Long called his recipe "potlikker a le dictator."

Meanwhile Long's domination of the state had become almost inviolable. He was elected U.S. Senator in 1930, but didn't give up the job of governor for fourteen months while he assured the election of a new governor subservient to himself.

Once in the U.S. Senate, Long quickly asserted himself, attacking the conservative leadership of his own party, refusing committee assignments and filibustering for his newest campaign to re-distribute wealth. Franklin Roosevelt represented for Long a last attempt to participate in mainstream national politics. Long helped broker Roosevelt's nomination and worked hard for his election. But within a year of the inauguaration, Long had split with Roosevelt, able to tolerate neither the cautious first steps of the

early New Deal nor the fact that it would be Roosevelt, not Long who controlled the terms of their relationship.

Long began to build his own national organization. He had already taken tentative first steps. He published a state-wide newspaper, The Lousiana Progress. His intervention helped win the Senatorial election in Arkansas for Hattie Caraway in 1932. He increased his lock on Lousiana by having his man, John Overton, elected U.S. Senator in 1932. But there were hurdles ahead. Long was exposed to national ignominy in 1933 when he urinated on a fellow guest at the Sands Point Casino in New York, and had his eye blackened for this performance. The election of Overton was contested in the U.S. Senate by the former incumbent. And Long's candidate for mayor of New Orleans was crushed in the 1934 election.

While these problems at first seemed to suggest the eclipse of Long's career, they turned out to be transitory. Long soon re-established his hegemony in Louisiana in irrefutable style. He had passed in the state legislature an extraordinary series of acts that gave him virtually dictatorial powers. To an unprecedented extent, the acts transformed a government based on checks and balances to government in the hands of one man. Now he was responsible to the voters alone. The voters continued to support him.

He also made other moves in the national arena. The Louisiana Progress, after a publishing hiatus, re-emerged as The American Progress. His autobiography, Every Man a King, was published. He started talking on nationwide radio. By 1935 he had become one of NBC's biggest draws. He established the clubs that were to push the plan central to the rest of his public career, the "Share Our Wealth" clubs. Long was never clear about how his "Share Our Wealth" plan would be put into effect, but it struck the right chord for many Depression era Americans.

Increasingly, Long used his Senate platform to campaign for his own issues rather than for the work of the Senate. His vituperative attacks and his routine filibustering did not endear him to his fellow Senators. But all this activity did have its effect. His national strength was growing. The "Share Our Wealth" movement expanded from a few clubs in the hills of Louisiana into a nationwide organization of some 27,000 clubs and a membership list of 7,500,000 names. Long began to exert influence in states such as Ohio and California where his personal political power and style were virtually unknown. He also began to reach out to other prominent leaders of popular dissent--Father Coughlin in Detroit with his National Union for Social Justice; Dr.

Francis Townsend in California with his Old Age Revolving Pension Plan; Milo Reno in Iowa with his Farm Holiday Associaiton--in the first efforts towards a national alliance of protest, under Long's auspices. As Presidential Advisor, Rexford G. Tugwell once observed, "Father Coughlin, Reno, Townsend, et al were after all pygmies compared to Huey. He (was) a major phenomenon." Long was not merely the only one of these activists to have actually held elective office, but his "Share Our Wealth" plan was the only movement based on a reform program that antedated the New Deal itself. By 1935 even such old line reform politicians as the LaFollettes in Wisconsin and Floyd Olsen in Minnesota issued qualified statements of support for Long and the share the wealth efforts. To top it all off, one of the first "scientific" nationwide political polls indicated Long might receive an 11% portion of the vote in a Presidential contest--perhaps enough to swing the election.

During 1935 President Roosevelt called for five pieces of "must" legislation: a social security bill, a banking bill, a public utility holding bill, a labor relations bill, and a soak-the-rich tax bill. The legislation of the "Second New Deal" was a direct response to a number of conditions: recent Supreme Cout decisions, growing criticism of the business community, a more liberal Congress, and, of course, Huey Long.

It did not look as if Long would run for the nation's highest office. In early September, 1935 he returned to Louisiana to call a special session of the legislature and ram through 42 new bills. One of them was clearly aimed at unseating and insulting one of Long's last powerful enemies remaining in Louisiana, Judge Benjamin Pavy of St. Landry Parrish. The next day, Pavy's son-in-law, Dr. Carl Weiss, stepped out from behind the pillar in the Capitol building and put a bullet into Long's abdomen. While Long's bodyguards pumped over 50 bullets into Weiss' body, Long was rushed to the hospital. He was operated on, but the doctors bungled the job. Huey Long died from internal bleeding two days later, after telling an aide, "I still have so much to do." He had just turned forty-two.

TREATMENT: INTERPRETATION

It has been said of Long that all he had for ideology was "a sense of crisis and of opportunity." The crisis was real enough. The indigent condition of the Lousiiana populace; their grotesquely inadequate social, educational and medical services; the almost feudal lockgrip in which corporations like Standard Oil, the utilities, the railroads, and a handful of plantation aristocrats held the state's economic and political structure all clearly begat Long's opportunity. The sense of his career is vivid only when it is connected to the stark physical and economic circumstances of the constituency he represented. But to characterize Long as merely an opportunist with a heart would be to sell him short as a politician and to underestimate the degree to which he spoke for beliefs and longings as profound, persistant and powerful as any in the history of this country.

The broader problems that Huey Long addressed were reflected in obvious, disquieting changes in American life. Even before the Depression, small farmers could no longer afford to stay on their land. Local industrialists were being bought out or driven to bankruptcy. Ownership of newspapers was being consolidated by the "money powers." Local merchants, and the sustaining credit they extended, were being replaced by chain stores. "Where is the corner grocery store?" was a plaint that rose from all corners of the country and was echoed by Long in the Senate. There was a pervasive sense of alienation--of loss of local control and local institutions. The heralded fruits of progress--the automobile, the telephone, the radio--provided graphic evidence of this change and only exacerbated the sense of distance and isolation from effective power over one's own life. The resurgence of the Klu Klux Klan, the debates over prohibitionist fundamentalism and other social unrest in the '20's reflected America's uneasiness with these changes. The Depression, compounding these discontents with extreme economic hardship, focused attention on the problems and on proposals for their solution.

Long's flamboyant, pugnacious style may have first attracted the attention of the electorate, but it was his message that held them. And his message--from the earliest attacks on Standard Oil to the national "Share Our Wealth" campaign--addressed exactly these concerns. "Share Our Wealth", for

example, provided first of all a prescription for reform which embodied in it an attack on large, distant, impersonal institutions. Like Populist movements before it, "Share Our Wealth" would de-centralize power to local communities, limit ownership and promote small scale, middle-class enterprize. People would control their own livlihood. Long's goal, after all, was "a home and the comforts of a home including...an automobile and a radio" for each American.

Second, Long's program explained the obstacles to this quintessentially American utopia: Wall street bankers and their cohorts in the international banking establishment. Long never tired of excoriating from any platform, including the Senate floor, the "members of the Morgan House", "Barney" Baruch, and their cronies. It was these rich, bloated autocrats, callously and selfishly manipulating lives and money from their remote aeries in "distant power centers" who were the cause of the Depression. "Beyond that point where the accumulation of (property) becomes a menace to our society and the well being of others," Long stated in 1934, "no one should be allowed to go." It should be noted that Long did not base his attacks on simplistic appeals to racism, anti-Semitism, anti-communism, or warnings of immorality or irreligion, but on economic issues of genuine importance.

Third, Long offered a simple prescription for reform--spread the wealth around to the people and get that great engine of American energy and ingenuity working again. To do this would require the use of the Federal government. Only government could face the power of international finance. But it would be a strictly limited use of government, creating no <u>new</u> "distant power centers."

These were perhaps naive explanations and prescriptions. Long provided distant enemies while ignoring local economic, political and social problems. Local potentates could be tyrants too. Those lamenting the loss of the country store were themselves shopping through Sears. And what was to happen to the great aglomerations of capital, the corporations? Was stock to be redistributed? That would change nothing. The contradicitons in Long's program were unavoidable. Long wanted to see material progress, but in essence he was resisting the tools of modernity. What Long was fighting was in fact a great abstract tide of history which had been steadily advancing in the United States.

But of course, contradictions didn't nullify the power of Long's appeal. Opposition to remote, powerful central authority, and the concommitant belief

that power should be dispersed among a sturdy independent citizenry had formed the core of American political protest for over a century. It had been an element in early anti-Mason and anti-Papist agitation, in the Greenbackers, the Grangers, and the Knights of Labor in the 1870's, and especially in the Populists in the 1870's and 1880's. Even more importantly, the roots of those protests can be found in the mainstream principles epitomized by Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, and by the anti-slavery, anti-plantation-aristocrat settlements of Lincoln's Republican Party.

Long never acknowledged these links, but growing up in Winn County he could not have been unaware of them. That Long did not try to copy the Populists' attempts in establishing local institutions and relied on one big Federal intercession only proved how late in the game it was. Nearly half of the land in the South and Midwest was already farmed in tenantry. The national corporate behemoths were well established. Standardized popular culture was increasingly pervasive. But however late it may have been, long familiarity with this message was one of Long's great allies. People gravitated to themes so deeply imbedded and so often reiterated in the political culture.

At the center of Long's career was the insight he had, together with the will and impudence, to give voice to the discontent and aspirations of an under-represented class. He literally transported a sizeable and growing fraction of American society from neglect to political importance. It is this achievement, and the nature of the man who made it his life's work, that is the focus of our film.

How did Huey Long accomplish what he did? His objective goals, couched in terms of an established tradition of millenial political promise also appealed directly to newer anxieties arising from the changing social, economic and political realities of life in early 20th century America. With a salesman's instincts for timing, audience, and opportunity, he joined messianic bible-beating fervor and a vulgar, at time barroom brand of exhortation to an urgent political appeal. He frankly offered his constituency an image of their own political and economic deprivations and marginality within a system that conspired, he tirelessly insisted, to pass them by.

This is the key to the "comic-opera performance" that was Long's political style. Lampooning, parodying and defaming old-guard Louisiana and later national political traditions, Long knew he could have it both ways. He could altruistic-

ally champion the rights of an underclass while grasping the power they willingly thrust upon him. A space had opened up between the ponderous old political establishment and the impatience of an underclass for change. Long managed briefly to align the discrepancies that separated them, filling a political vacuum.

To do this required both a sense of tradition and a genius for innovation. What Huey Long knew so well was how to exploit every available means of representation and persuasion and, where, necessary, to invent new ones. He did both with an energy and ingenuity borne of his certainty that a new history was there to be made. Undoubtedly, he was cynical and clearly understood the possiblities of great personal power for anyone with the talent and will to forge that new history. A born performer, his buffoonery, his antic newsreels, his constant grandstanding showed him how much diversion and entertainment could accomplish while substantial political progress was largely unforthcoming. As Long himself said, he wanted to substitute a kind of "gaiety for the tragedy of politics."

Our film then will place Long in the perspective of residual traditions, burlesque charlatan evangelism, and medicine show quackery, but also in emergent traditions of advertisement and increasing media sophistication. The creations of the twentieth century--advertisement, sound trucks, newsreel, mass circular and especially radio--had become the political tools par excellence. Many politicians tried to master them. Hitler was perhaps the most chilling example. In the United States there was the Detroit "radio priest" and radical leader, Father Coughlin. The greatest master of the new media in America was Long's greatest nemesis, Franklin Roosevelt. But Long was one of their undeniable peers. And he had other political tools as well. He was an adept manipulator of the classic smoke-filled backroom and an extraordinary political orator. And he was uncanny at shaping the less tangible but not less powerful kinds of representation that live in the minds of a citizenry and compel their beliefs.

Long was a master of representation in every mode and our film will seek to convey the unity and complexity of Long's mastery. Through aural and visual archival sources, the film will explore his early (1924) use of radio, the tireless sound-trucking around Louisiana, the unprecedented deluge of circulars through which he succeeded in all but monopolizing the politician's prize asset, familiarity. Newspapers like Long's own Louisiana Progress and countless newsreels and radio files testify to the way politics for Long became indistinguishable from the systems of communication he very often himself created.

Long was never a profound thinker. His quick wit and facile rationalizations covered an undeniable expedient quality of thought. But behind even this was perhaps Long's intuition that the effect, and not the quality, of information commands belief in an age of rapid communication. His economic ideas were based on a handful of obsolete magazine articles. Biblical references, when not irrelevant, were sometimes mis-cited or non-existent. But Long had a genius for statistics, "facts," and citations that reflected, not so much an objective reality, as the emotional truth of his constituency's response to reality. In endless circulars, newsreels, and radio appeals, Long launched bewildering statistical attacks on his enemies, confident that the speed of their delivery would always outpace in political effectiveness the slower analytic effort to counter them.

As all of this suggests, a large part of Long's great interest as a personality lies in the extent to which he could assume, with a vengeance, the contours not only of the audience but of the media to which he resorted. A politician of images, his very physical movements were likened to the "flickering images rushing across the screen in early silent films." Like this metaphor, our film will evoke the staccato changeability and power of Long's political temperament, and its close kinship to the rhythms of American cultural life as it was increasingly defined in relation to a popular culture of jazz and country music, radio, movies, and mass communication.

Long's unique blend of visionary utopianism and new Madison Avenue savvy established a tradition in American politics. He updated vaudeville, making it politically serious and politically expedient. This is nowhere clearer than in his ability to capitalize on his own flamboyant excesses--converting, for example, the effrontery of his pajama-clad reception of a German naval officer into the national media triumph that his formal-wear apology garnered him.

It hardly mattered in the short run whether Long's policies were coherent or his goals realizable, apart from the strictly private goal of maximizing power. "The end justifies the means," Long once said of his political style. "I would do it some other way if there was time and if it wasn't necessary to do it this way." Long's "means" set a new pace for contemporary politics. Speed was essential. Long once forced forty-four bills in two hours through the Louisiana State legislature, and this while a United States senator. Saturation was his principle of political power. Literally millions of circulars

covered the state and nation during a Long campaign. His system of total patronage held that no state job was too small for consideration as an instrument of political leverage. Indeed, Long was one of the first American politicians to exploit the possibility that political power, in a mass society, can operate ubiquitously. Perhaps above all, however, it was the element of intimacy that most defined Long's style. He could project solidarity with the working man, even from his black Packard limousine or surrounded by a platoon of beefy bodyguards. It was this kind of Jacksonian appeal, to the modest but irreducible individuality of the average citizen, that allowed Long to claim himself their absolute representative. He could represent them absolutely because he was them absolutely. And this total identification of political representative and represented polity licensed, in Long's mind, absolute power. When a political opponent, outraged by Long's dictatorial behavior, once waved a copy of the Louisiana State Constitution in Huey's face, the Governor brushed the man aside with the remark, "I am the Constitution around here now." Long's constant direct media communication with his supporters excused in the minds of many his relentless eclipse of democratic decision-making.

His opponents of course thought otherwise. No amount of media contact could countervail what seemed to be the actions of a demagogue and a con man. For them, Long was a figure more in the style of Argentina's Juan Perron -- a ruthless quasi-populist, quasi-fascist dictator -- than a modern American politician. Total identification with the represented polity may have licensed, in Long's mind, absolute power. But absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely.

In this Long was no exception. He subjected the government of Louisiana to the will of one man. And his methods in this could be both seriously crooked and seriously brutal. The "tithes" all state workers paid to Long's coffers were neither entirely voluntary nor entirely accounted for. One of the reasons the Long organization ran so smoothly was that it was well oiled with unreported graft. Nor was Long above engineering elections by calling out the National Guard, by tampering with ballot boxes, or by whatever other chicanery presented itself to insure results conducive to himself. Furthermore, Long set out not only to defeat, but to humiliate and destroy all his opponents -- whether they were honorable, like newspaper editor Hodding Carter Sr., or corrupt and reprehensible like some of the old plantation

aristocrats. Even for a politician, he was not particular about the people he enlisted in his service. Gerald L.K. Smith, for example, was Long's extremely effective chief organizer and recruiter for the "Share Our Wealth" clubs. But Smith's devotion to Long was so slavish as to seem unbalanced. He even wore Long's cast-off ties and suits, and reportedly slept at the foot of Long's bed, "just so he could be close to Huey." After Long's death, Smith continued with his increasingly sordid, red-baiting, rabidly anti-semitic, fundamentalist political career.

Arthur Schlesinger, a consultant to this project, summarized these objections by stating about Long, "He had a greed for money and power, a hatred of the oligarchy that stood in his way, a cunning sense of the rancor of the underdog, and a determination to exploit that rancor for his own purposes, and a muddled, self-serving desire to make things easier for people like himself." These aspects of Long's career will be closely examined in the film through direct example and commentary.

Huey Long was a man where many roads met. He embodied dissention which, if he did not resolve, he at least forged into temporary connection: between country and city; between oligarchy and new mass politics; between the demand for responsible democratic government and the exegencies of a people in need; between the pieties of a religious and the cynicism of a secular culture; between vaudeville and a new electronic media. It is these many trends that our film will isolate and draw out. Their complexity and diversity is the life of a culture at a certain moment of its history. Their strange, fascinating and even improbable unity is the life of Huey Long.

In studying Long's life, this film will trace the changing architecture not only of an era's homes and monuments, but of its political and social imagination. The Life and Times of Huey P. Long is a biography and by the same token an examination of the psychology of an age: its political ethics; popular and high literature; advertising and communication. And in all of these are intertwined the rapidly developing history of new modes of moving, seeing, hearing, sharing and understanding. It is this that makes Long's life one of paramount importance to contemporary humanistic understanding and to the historical apprehension of a crucial phase of recent American history.

TREATMENT: PRODUCTION STYLE AND VISUALIZATION

> "Come to think of it, there ain't a thing but dirt on this green God's globe except what's under water, and that's dirt too. It's dirt makes the grass grow. A diamond ain't a thing in the world but a piece of dirt that got awful hot. And God-a-Mighty picked up a handful of dirt and blew on it and made you and me and George Washington and mankind blessed in faculty and apprehension. It all depends on what you do with dirt."
>
> --Willie Stark in All the King's Men by Robert Penn Warren

The film will open with a timeless live shot of a hot strip of two-lane blacktop; the quintessential image of Long's Louisiana and Warren's All the King's Men. Heat shimmers on the surface of the road as it disappears over a hill. It is a road built by Huey. As the images change to other buildings and locations evoking Long's Louisiana, narration and historical quote communicate that the year is 1934, August. In many ways this month is the zenith of Long's career. The headlines around the country scream, "Kingfish Long Made Dictator of Louisiana!" He has installed his "frog" O.K. Allen as Governor, but the Legislature in special session has made Huey's word law. From this throne, Long will seriously look beyond the parishes of Louisiana to a nation he thought was ripe for his picking. Within the next thirteen months, he will become a frequent and familiar figure on the national scene, a threat to FDR's re-election, and a target for an assasin's bullet. Who is Huey Long and where did he come from? How could one man usurp so much power? The story begins with the archival images of Winn Parish in the 1890's as Populist and Socialist fever sweep the country.

As the biographical treatment attests, The Life and Times of Huey Long will be essentially the story of an important figure in an important age. With this in mind, the film will recount the dramatic story of Long's life and career: family, Louisiana, early life, schooling and jobs, elective office, the Depression, national politics and assassination. This simple chronology readily divides itself into three major periods of Long's life: Introduction & Rise to Power; Kingfish of Louisiana; and the National Scene & End. These three units will direct not only the course of the research but the final film as well. To this structure we plan to introduce stylistic techniques which will elevate the

the narrative from a mere recitation of fact.

We believe, first, that it is necessary throughout the film to acknowledge and reflect the forces shaping the lives, habits, feelings and expressions of our subject. The story of Huey Long is parallel to and echoes Prohibition, the rise of facism in Europe, the advent of talkies and the automobile in the U.S., the bonus marches, and gangsters. All of these elements will invigorate the narrative: set mood, establish place and motivation, and ground Long in the times that fostered him.

The narration itself will be comprised of not just one third person narrator--which will be used transitionally to advance the story--but of a chorus of voices identifying the major characters through excerpted newspaper quote, diaries, historic radio broadcasts, letters, advertising copy, and speeches. With the color of the language, the style of articulation, the incidental historical information inherent in each excerpt, and in the order of their presentation, these quotes will detail and chart Long's life. It is our intent that the evidence of the past--an old photograph, an archival document or an excerpt of someone's writing--be allowed to survive without undo manipulation.

In the last ten years of making historical films of this nature we have evolved a production style in which the script develops as the filming of archival, live and interview footage is collected and catalogued. We have found that instead of filming images which owe their origination solely to the directives of an, at best, preliminary script, we film images that are appealing for their visual power. Concurrently, we are gathering and distilling the volume of historical quotes and accounts from hundreds of sources. As the process develops, the narrative, which is a combination of the two sections of this proposal on biography and interpretation, will be supplemented and in many cases replaced by these historical, first-person excerpts. This, with transcripts made from on camera interviews, begins to form a basis for editing and experimenting with combinations of the visual material. A successful example of this method of approach is illustrated in our most recent film, Brooklyn Bridge, which is being submitted with this proposal.

Visually, three distinct styles of filming will be combined and juxtaposed throughout the film as we have indicated; archival photography (both still and moving); live modern cinematography and the comments of scholars and those personally connected with Long. To this material and set significantly apart from it, we will add appropriate clips from the feature film All the King's Men and the comments of Robert Penn Warren, author of the novel from which

the film was made.

The archival material, in the form of old photographs, documents, recorded radio broadcasts and other motion pictures, is varied and quite substantial. The newsreel footage follows Long's rise to national prominence in traditional and expected ways, but often one finds dramatic re-creations of the more infamous scandals and events in Long's life. The Sands Point incident and the much celebrated "Pajama Scandal" are two examples of this. (It was not uncommon for Long to aid in these "documentary" efforts although most often a Long look-alike was employed.) There is newsreel footage of his funeral, his speeches and his campaigns. In keeping with our stated intentions, other footage not directly related to Long, but indicative of the Depression era, both in the U.S. and in Europe, will be used. As the chronology of the film progresses, the wealth of this material on the Twenties and the Thirties increases. From music and popular culture, to politics and world war, the images of context can be amply and artistically provided.

Static imagery will be rephotographed with an energetic and exploring camera eye. It is not our intention to have these images appear as slides, but actively filmed with respect for the ability of the single image to convey complex information. We will isolate minute parts of the image, employ complicated movements, pans and zooms, and generally penetrate more deeply than a surface "reading" of the image. In this way, the visuals serve a process of discovery rather than serving as so much illustration.

Much of this material has been identified, isolated and catalogued for filming. It is found in a variety of commercial film archives: John E. Allen, Sherman Grindberg, and Fox Movietonews. Other collections are housed in the Library of Congress and the National Archive in Washington, D.C. In Louisiana, Long material is found at the Louisiana State University Archives and Manuscript collection and the Tulane University Manuscripts collection, among others. Professor David Culbert, historical consultant and director of research for this project, has done preliminary research at all these institutions and has initiated negotiations to have the archives released for this production.

Recently, we were made aware of a substantial number of rare 78 LP

records of Long's speeches which are proving to be an invaluable resource. Not only is his unique style of oratory freely displayed here, and his presence very much alive, but much of his manipulative technique is revealed. Long's bogus bible citations are just one example. For the film, the juxtaposition of the speech and narration which simply acknowledges or exposes this fraud is both humorous and frightening -- typical of the ambiguity Long engenders.

The live modern cinematography will be shot primarily in Louisiana and to some extent in Washington D.C. It will give a sense of the place and products in Huey Long's life. From the steps of his extraordinary Art Deco State Capitol, to the bayous and Mississippi levees, Long's Louisiana is still there. It is our feeling that sensitive cinematography is a necessary complement and counterpoint to archival material. The more timeless of these shots can be used evocatively within historical passages, while others simply reflect and affirm our belief in the power of carefully composed images to engage. This filming will be done in all lights, at every time of day, in all seasons.

Finally, we will include in the film excerpts from interviews with those affected by Huey Long. They form two groups. First are those personally and subjectively caught up with Long -- family, friends and acquaintances. They include his son Russell, now a U.S. Senator, who daily receives letters from constituents exhorting him to a style more reminiscent of his father; a daughter, Rose, who is a recluse and remembers with some pain the rejection being related to Huey Long brought; Don DeVol, a crony and long-time admirer; Tulane University law professor Cecil Morgan, an early enemy; H. Payne Brezeale, a personal friend; and Ruth Johnson, an eyewitness to his death among others. We'll also be talking to Hodding Carter Jr., whose father, the liberal Southern newspaper editor Hodding Carter Sr., was subject to some of Long's most determined, unscrupulous attacks. This group promises to enlarge a personal sense of the man and, we suspect, the myth, with stories, anecdotes, and folk history. These sequences will be interspersed throughout the film, offering sometimes humorous rest, sometimes cutting commentary. The interviews will occasionally replace the narrative, and will be structured to offer a range of views that reflect actual opinions.

The second group including Arthur Schlesinger, historian, William Leuchtenberg, historian, Alan Brinkley, historian and author of a recent American Book Award winner for biography on Long, and the late T. Harry Williams, Long's biographer of note (who spoke for the camera before his death) are those experts able to describe more objectively the milieu from which Long sprang, the forces which propelled him to power and kept him there, and finally his impact on a larger national scene. They are also able to respond to more interpretive questions concerning Long's psychology, career and motivations. We are particularly fortunate that our group of advisors represents a wide spectrum of scholarly opinion about Long. While the facts about Long are not in dispute, their significance and weight is. Leuchtenberg and Williams tend to emphasize Long's achievement in Louisiana and his deep appeal to aspects of the American political heritage. Schlesinger and Brinkley take a more jaundiced view, with more emphasis on the dangerous political precidents Long set; on his uncouth, sometimes vicious actions; on the unreliability of his political promises to the nation; and on the elements of personal aggrandizement in his career. These differences will add to the rich texture of admiration, detestation and contradiction that is characteristic of the reaction to Long and of our film. Ultimately they complete the picture and suggest how we might accurately view and judge him.

In the first section of the film, Introduction and Rise to Power, these commentators would be held until the end so as to analyze the philosophical and cultural roots of Huey Long and how those roots pushed him towards a position of dominance in Louisiana. This would follow, after the opening sequences of the film, an early interplay of images from the scrapbooks of the Long family dating from the 1870's, clips from the early newsreels and talkies, (one thinks of relevant images from The Birth of a Nation), broadsides and circulars from travelling vaudeville shows and circuses, handbills and position papers of the amateur populists that the rural areas fostered, and finally the comments of family and friends. This variety would give a rich texture to an exploration of the early times of Long.

For the famous Evangeline Oak speech, for example, as Huey voices (this time an actor's voice) his promise to "dry the tears" of his people, we plan to dissolve from the archival, badly faded image of that speech to the present day grove of large shady trees and soft grass. As the camera moves through this area and away to other live images of the state (dirt

farms, highways, etc.), we continue to hear the echo of Long's speech, "Where are the schools, where are the roads and highways...?" This transition from archival to live (and often back again) is a device that is quite effective, not only dramatically, but in terms of communicating the power of the evidence of the past. We will employ this method frequently throughout the film.

In the subsequent sections of the film on Huey's dominence in the politics of Louisiana, and then his rise to national prominence, we plan to continue using the same interplay of live, archival image and voice, only giving over more to talking newsreel, interviews with family, friends, and consultants. It is our intention to allow this mixture to unfold with a minimum of imposing, dominating narration. The collective impression of the evidence is most important to us; more so than the possible didactic judgements and conclusions of an overpowering narrator.

Further, in another example of visualization for the Green Pajamas incident, and outraged newspaper account can be matched first with the polished newsreel presentation of that exploit (handled by Huey with surprising panache), and later with the repitious outtakes from that newsreel (which we have secured) which betray a further layer and level of manipulation. In an interesting development for another scene, we have found in our preliminary research a rare photograph of Long sitting among his colleagues in the State House minutes before he would be fatally shot. It is a strangely unsettling and powerful image full of the premonition of his death. Here he is in his seat of power, at the height of his career. The narration at this moment would be obvious: "During that week back home he would manage to ram through the Legislature 42 new bills. As he sat for the photograph and rested, he would have no idea that just outside Carl Weiss waited." An interview with an eyewitness would follow.

We are planning to add a final element. Robert Penn Warren for the most part acknowledges no direct connection between Long and Willie Stark, the fictional character in his novel <u>All The King's Men</u> which was later made into a superb dramatic film starring Broderick Crawford. But his masterpiece is the most visible example of a long line of works which draw on the story of Huey Long for their inspiration. Besides early television dramas,

(one directed by Sidney Lumet), an opera and many stage versions of his life, (and Willie's) Huey has influenced John Dos Passos' Number One, Hamilton Basso's Sun in Capricorn, and Adrian Locke Langley's A Lion Is In The Streets, among others. The film is interested in incorporating these works in a brief section near the end on the popular and cultural response to this phenomenon called Huey Long.

In relation to All The King's Men, we wish to forge a dramatic connection between Long and Stark to help further understand Long's rise to power and mythic proportions. Warren's story is a massive, poetic, almost biblical moral tale with contemporary ethical questions. At three or four logical intervals in our narrative, therefore, we plan to interrupt the chronology with a short parallel excerpt from the film All The King's Men followed by commentary and dramatic readings (like the quote that heads this section of the proposal) by Warren himself. We desire to isolate him from other commentators and make distinct the movie scenes from similar or possibly similar archival footage. These selections would be short "entr'actes" not completely related to the body of the treatment. We believe this will be a dramatic and effective way to, among other things, enlarge the context and understanding of Huey Long.

Robert Penn Warren in a recent letter: "One more thing. A phenomenon like Long is primarily possible because there is a vaccuum of responsible power. Louisiana was politically and socially moribund when Long took over... Whatever his methods -- ghastly no doubt -- he broke enough window panes to let some fresh air into the boxed miasma. A 'strong man' emerges not because of his own strength so much as from weakness, idiocy or crookedness of others, no matter how well born or mannered." Clearly Warren enriches an exploration of Long's political and cultural landscape. While he was perhaps a dictator, Long emerges as a complex character not susceptible to cliche or easy pidgeonholing.

PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANTS

Director: Ken Burns, whose recent film, Brooklyn Bridge, received an Academy Award nomination as well as a Christopher Award, the Erik Barnouw Prize for Historical Filmmaking, a CINE Golden Eagle and many other awards and honors, will direct this film. Burns will participate fully in all phases of production including research, script development and editing. He will also direct all camera sequences. Burns will devote one year, virtually full-time, to the production of The Life and Times of Huey P. Long.

Currently Burns, with the help of a Guggenheim Fellowship, is concluding work on another historical documentary, The Shakers: Hands to work, Hearts to God. He has also done several films on the culture and life of New England, in which he resides, including A Certain Slant of Light on Emily Dickenson with Julie Harris. Burns also acts as an American cameraman for various foreign networks such as the BBC, Italian RAI and others.

With Richard Kilberg, Burns is a principal in RKB Productions.

Producer: Richard Kilberg, the other principal in RKB Productions, will act as Producer for The Life and Times of Huey P. Long. The collaboration of Kilberg with Ken Burns first bore fruit with the Brooklyn Bridge, on which Kilberg acted as Executive Producer and shared many of the honors that resulted. Kilberg will devote one year, virtually full-time, to this film, while participating fully in research, scripting, shooting and editing. Kilberg will also oversee all production tasks including financial and funding management, logistics, and production management.

Currently Kilberg is working on a series of six European concerts by Claudio Arrau to be taped live for television this fall, as well as on a performance documentary about Glenn Miller. Previously Kilberg spent five years in Public Broadcasting, starting out as a location manager for the Adams Chronicals and concluding as an Associate Director of Programming for national projects at WNET/13. Most recently Kilberg worked for Home Box Office as a production supervisor for such shows as "HBO Magazine", "Champions of American Sport", (a film documentary), "Catch a Rising Star 10th Anniversary" and many live sporting events.

ADVISORS

David Culbert is historical consultant and director of research. He is Associate Professor of History at Louisiana State University where he has taught since 1971. He is the author of News for Everyman: Radio and Foreign Affairs (1976), Mission to Moscow (1980) and an 80 minute documentary film about the 1968 Tet Offensive, Television's Vietnam: The Impact of Visual Images (1982), for which he selected the archival images, wrote the script, conducted the interviews, and served as on-camera narrator. Culbert has been a Fellow of the Smithsonian's Wilson Center for Scholars and Yale's National Humanities Institute. For the past three years, as a Kellogg National Fellow, Culbert has been collecting aural and visual documents for a film about Huey Long. He will spend twenty days locating archival footage and other materials in Louisiana, Washington D.C., and New York City. He will also spend eight additional days as a consultant: one reviewing the proposal; three in day-long script conferences; one to review archival footage; and three at intervals during the editing of the film. He will be responsible for the factual accuracy of the completed film.

Alan Brinkley, author of Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression (1982), is Associate Professor of History at Harvard University. Brinkley's fine book, an American Book Award winner, has helped inform the writing of this proposal. Brinkley will spend eight days as consultant: one reviewing the proposal; three in day-long script conferences; one to review archival footage, and three days at intervals during the editing of the film. He himself will be the subject of a filmed interview.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., author of numerous books about New Deal America, including The Politics of Upheaval (1960) with its influential portrait of Huey Long, is Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities at the City College of New York. Schlesinger, an advisor to Presidents himself, will relate Long to the policies of Franklin Roosevelt. A former critic for

Esquire, Schlesinger has long concerned himself with film as a tool for analyzing the past. He will spend six days as consultant: one reviewing the proposal; three in day-long script conferences; two at intervals during the editing of the film. He will also be the subject of a filmed interview.

William Leuchtenberg is Keenan Professor of History at the University of North Carolina and the author of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-40 (1963), among many other publications. Leuchtenberg will help us place Long in the proper historical perspective, especially as he related to the natioanl political scene and Franklin Roosevelt. Leuchtenberg also has extensive experience working with historical film producers in both commercial and non-profit endeavors. He will spent six days as consultant: one reviewing the proposal; three in day long script conferences; two at intervals during the editing of the film. He too will be the subject of a filmed interview.

Robert Snyder, Assistant Professor of American Studies, University of South Florida and author of numerous prize-winning articles about Huey Long. In addition to his extensive knowledge of Long's actions and influences in Louisiana, Snyder is a student of documentary photography of the South in the 1930's. He will help locate and select appropriate images of Long's world. Snyder will spend six days as consultant; one reviewing the proposal; three in day-long script conferences; two at intervals during the editing of the film.

Waldo Braden is Boyd Professor of Speech, Emeritus, Louisiana State University, and author of Oratory in the New South (1979) and The Oral Tradition in the South (1983) among other works. Braden has already been the subject of a filmed interview by Culbert concerning Long's abilities as a persuasive speaker. Braden will spend six days as consultant: three in day-long script conferences; two at intervals during the editing. He will be the subject of a filmed interview at places where Huey Long made some of his most notable speeches.

PLAN OF WORK

At the present time we have (or shortly will have) applications pending at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and some foundations that have indicated an interest in historical film projects besides this application to the National Endowment for the Humanities. As this plan of work shows, we plan to start work on this film January 1, 1984 even though the N.E.H. would be unable to commit its own funding before April of 1984. We are confident of our ability to raise the necessary starting funds and will keep the Endowment informed of our progress.

JANUARY 1 to MARCH 1, 1984. Pre-production. This stage will see the initial setting up of the production: the arrangements with suppliers, the lab and other services; the hiring and final scheduling of crew, air travel, and consultant sessions; and beginning research. Research will be conducted on a number of fronts: securing and reviewing all static archival images, obtaining feature film rights and release, locating and ordering newsreel and other moving archival material, and finding and assembling the 500 to 750 historical quotes for possible use in the final film. At this time a trip to Louisiana will be made to film the "winter" there and to scout locations for all subsequent trips (archival, interview as well as live photography). We will also use that time to interview any participant of advanced age or desirous of the convenience of this date.

MARCH 1 to APRIL 1, 1984. The producer and director will work this month finalizing preparations for shooting. This entails, besides obvious logistical considerations, preparation of a shot list, securing duplicate archival material for live photography matching, and questions for interviewees. Review of collected historical excerpts will take place with the consultants to determine specific requirements when filming archival material. We have determined that the filming will take place in three major periods of 12 days: first in April, later in June, and finally in September. Four days, or so, would be held in reserve for reshooting, make-up, etc.

MARCH 1 to JULY 1, 1984. The producer and director will work periodically (around shooting schedule) with researcher Culbert and his assistant who have been collecting historical excerpts and other archival material. The purpose of these sessions would be to assemble the quotes with narration into a rough working script. At this stage, several script review sessions would take place with the consultants. These meetings would take the form of group discussions and single sessions with each of the consultants.

APRIL 1 to APRIL 15, 1984. First Filming Period. Primary emphasis of this shoot will be placed on archival filming, with some spring filming in Louisiana anticipated and perhaps one or two interviews with participants in Louisiana. Most of the filming will take place in the South, though as much archival material from other sources will be gathered for filming in our project headquarters in New Hampshire.

JUNE 1984. Second Filming Period. Concentration on finishing all archival filming in Washington, D.C. and Louisiana. Principal live cinematagraphy of Louisiana locations and remaining interviews if

PLAN OF WORK con't

possible of Long friends, family and acquaintances.

JUNE 1984, JULY 1984. Review with consultants of all material shot and collected to date. Script conferences and revisions will take place at this time. Organization of footage into editing categories by the assistant editor. Transcripts made of interviews to date for incorporation into the script.

AUGUST 1 to NOVEMBER 1, 1984. Editing. Editing of all material shot in accordance with working script. Continual review by consultants of progress of editing. (It is anticipated that a rough cut will be available for review by September 15, 1984.)

SEPTEMBER 15 to OCTOBER 1, 1984. Last Filming Period. This series of shooting days will capture fall light in Louisiana, any remaining archival material (most likely in N.Y.), the majority of the consultants who we have decided will speak on camera, and those shots dictated by the editing.

NOVEMNER 1 to DECEMBER 31, 1984. Post-production schedule. Any last reshoots remaining taken during this period. Final editing changes as a result of consultant meetings. Final narration and historical voices recorded. Sound mix, lab work and the production of prints. Final accounting of books and closing of production office. Design of poster and other publicity materials. Scheduling of national PBS broadcast with WETA/Washington our sponsoring station.

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DISTRIBUTION

The producers expect the film to be distributed in the following ways:

1. Public Television Broadcasts
2. 16mm Educational Film Market
3. Cable and Foreign Television and Video Cassette
4. Museum, Cultural, and Civic Institution Screening

The producers have agreed with the Washington PBS station WETA that WETA will be the entry station for the broadcast of The Life and Times of Huey P. Long. The producers' previous film, Brooklyn Bridge, drew unprecidented audiences for its initial broadcast, rating in the PBS all-time top ten, and even larger audiences for the repeat. They hope to match that success with this film. They are still in negotiation with WETA regarding various other subjects including marketing and educational tie-ins, other distribution, promotion and developmental assistance.

A commercial 16mm film distributor in the educational market such as Pyramid Films or Direct Cinema Ltd. will be engaged. Brooklyn Bridge experienced great success in this market with extensive penetration into the school, club, library, civic organization and cultural institution markets. And as they did with that film, the producers will make personal speaking appearances when requested at screenings by these institutions.

The producers have also had conversations with cable, cassette, and foreign distributors who have expressed significant interest.

CHAPTER 07

Structuring a Documentary Narrative

STRUCTURING A DOCUMENTARY NARRATIVE

SUBCHAPTERS

Embrace the Laws of Storytelling

Keep Rearranging Structure Until It Works

Hook Your Audience Immediately

Introduce Large Stories Through Small Details

Use Chronology as a Compass

Boil the Pot

Send Them Home Safe

CHAPTER REVIEW

Every story has a narrative arc with a beginning, middle, and end. As Greek philosopher Aristotle posited, the ideal story should feature a main character, or protagonist, who encounters an obstacle, or antagonist. The conflict develops and climaxes, and then ends with a resolution, or dénouement.

When a story is true, however, storytelling is complicated by two facts: 1) there is already a fixed, known chronology of events that should not be falsified, and 2) that chronology may not fit neatly into the laws of narrative arc. This does not mean that documentarians are therefore doomed to make didactic, dry, and polemical films. Nonfiction filmmakers can harness the very same storytelling tools wielded by fiction filmmakers, and move people at an emotional level every bit as effectively as does Steven Spielberg.

Narrative arcs exist at every level of storytelling. The sentence, the paragraph, and the scene all develop and climax. In a television series, each individual episode should have an arc of its own, while at the same time fitting into the larger arc of the season—and in an ideal world, that season would fit neatly into a planned arc for the entire run. Building a compelling story structure takes forethought, continual refinement, and a willingness to experiment—to move, rearrange, and delete until it works.

How a story begins, for Ken, is the most important and challenging decision to make about narrative structure. Beginnings must be strong, and establish from the very first scene a promise to the audience that this is a story worth paying attention to. However, beginnings do not necessarily need to start with the first chronological moment of the story. *The Civil War* series actually opened with a single paragraph about one person, who witnessed both the start and the end of the war.

In historical documentaries, the middle of the story is unavoidably about chronology—this happened, and then that happened, and then this happened. Flashbacks can sometimes be useful to give expository details and context, but most of the time straight chronology simply works best. Ken insists that there is no greater drama than the order that things actually happened. The artistry of non-fiction storytelling is to create the feeling that from moment to moment, no one knows what is going to happen next.

Ken offers no "law of the climax." Rather, he compares endings to a pot of water—the story gets hotter and hotter until it reaches a boiling point, and that's the climax. Endings can be subtle, or they can be

"When you're trying to do a documentary about true subjects, whether it's history or not, you're always in a battle between the sort of obvious demands of story and the fact that human life often defies that."

dramatic, and Ken's process for finding a film's resolution is highly intuitive. One thing that he typically tries to do, however, is to "bring the viewer home safely." When a story has been particularly horrific, such as in *The Vietnam War* series, Ken tries to return to more positive emotions, and to leave the audience with a sense of hope and "renewed humanity."

LEARN MORE

The laws of storytelling were first outlined in Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 B.C.), the oldest surviving philosophical treatise on dramatic structure. You can read the full work online for free, thanks to Project Gutenberg, a digital collection of literature that is in the public domain.

ASSIGNMENT

In your notebook, brainstorm some possible beginnings, middles, and endings for your own film idea.

- How might your story start? How will you hook your audience and convince them to stay with your story, for however long it takes?
- In the middle of your film, what is the order of events that you want to cover? How can you make each moment feel suspenseful, with an outcome that is in doubt?
- How might your story end? How will you give your audience a sense of closure, and what will you do to 'bring them home safely'?

Refer to these notes and revise them as necessary throughout the process of structuring and editing your film. Expect that the various elements of your narrative arc will frequently shift and evolve as you gain clarity and be willing—until the very end—to experiment with new structural elements to best serve the story.

CHAPTER 08

Sourcing Archival Materials

SOURCING ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

SUBCHAPTERS

Look Beyond the Great Men

Be Insatiably Curious

Be Tenacious and Pursue a Variety of Sources

Think of Research Like Making Maple Syrup

Think About Aesthetics as Well as Narrative

Good Detective Work Takes Time

Pivot With Your Discoveries

CHAPTER REVIEW

Archival material is simultaneously proof that something happened, as well as a means to recreate that past. There are endless possibilities for what you may find, including still photos, footage, newspapers, online articles, paintings, etchings, sketches, letters, journals, and diaries. And there are hundreds of places where you may need to look, including archives, personal collections, auction houses, and more. Search in places you wouldn't initially think to look, and ask about collections that no one else asks about. Like a detective, follow every lead as far as it will go, until you unearth that vital clue to the past.

Don't limit yourself to easy-to-access material about well-known historical figures. Dig for evidence of what life was like for ordinary people as well. Then investigate your findings for clues about deeper sources—the raw footage from which a newsreel was edited, for instance. Ask yourself: what was the original source this came from?

Whatever you find, you will need to secure copies of the material for your film. Commercial archival houses charge fairly high rates for usage rights, but other institutions such as libraries or non-profit archives often charge only a modest or negotiable permission fee. Some material may even exist in the public domain, meaning there is no copyright and anyone can use that material free of charge.

Ken compares archival research to making maple syrup—you need 40 gallons of sap in order to make one gallon of syrup. In the same way, he recommends that you collect much more than you think you need—at least 40 times the material that you ultimately plan to use in your film. You are gathering options for storytelling—for instance, a light background for one purpose, a dark background for another; or several different colors or facial expressions or shadings. The goal is to gather at your fingertips all available variations, in order to explore every artistic and dramatic possibility. Only with a 40 or 50 to one ratio will you be able to distill the essence of your story.

Persistence is crucial to gathering so much material. Ken is especially tenacious when approaching individuals who are reluctant to share personal artifacts. He relates one example where he spent six months wooing an individual to share material for his *Jazz* series, until finally the person was convinced. Because it often takes a long time to find the perfect artifact, never limit yourself to one discrete research stage. Keep investigating sources throughout your process, even during postproduction and finishing. You never know when you might strike storytelling gold, something that is worth opening your film back up to include.

"It's all about following leads."

Footage in the video courtesy of May 4 Collection. Kent State University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.

LEARN MORE:

There is a rich treasure trove of archival materials out there waiting to be discovered—and it's never been easier to explore. Digitized collections of millions of images, newspaper articles, sheet music, audio recordings, and more are available online, thanks to sources like the Library of Congress, the National Archives, Documenting the American South, the New York Public Library, and many others. Every state has at least one digital collection of its own. Just peruse this list from the Open Education Database to identify your local archive.

Whenever you research archival material for potential use in your work, make sure to investigate what copyright clearances are necessary. One source of available materials are those that have entered the public domain. Be sure to do your due diligence on the applicable copyright laws before you proceed with any materials. One thing to note is that copyright law is different in each country so be sure to understand the local laws.

Not sure how to tell whether the image, artifact, or footage you want to use is under copyright in the United States? First, review this helpful guide published by the United States Copyright Office. The Copyright Office also has an online search tool that allows you to consult copyright records from 1978 or later. To search records older than 1978, consult this database created by Google Books, which has scanned 91 volumes (from 1923 through 1977) of the Copyright Office's catalog.

Additionally, rights-free material is often demarcated online either with a Creative Commons logo (often designated by a pair of encircled letter 'c's); or a Public Domain Mark (consisting of a copyright symbol crossed out by a single slash). Learn more on the Creative Commons website.

In addition to the concept of public domain, there is another legal concept relevant to documentary filmmaking called fair use. The term suggests that there are certain circumstances under which excerpts from copyrighted material can be used without permission from the copyright owner. Those circumstances are outlined and explained in a manual published by the Center for Media and Social Impact, called "Documentary Filmmakers' Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use."

ASSIGNMENT:

Explore the vast online collection of the Library of Congress. Try searching for materials about a specific topic, perhaps something related to your own film idea. Or, try the following guided exercise:

Let's suppose you are researching a film about the invention of flight at Kitty Hawk by Orville and Wilbur Wright. Visit the Library of Congress website, and see if they have any resources you could use for your project.

- To the left of the search bar at the top, click the 'All Formats' button to view the dropdown menu. What filters are available to focus your search? To cast the widest possible net, keep 'All Formats' selected. But if you are overwhelmed by too many results, you can narrow your search with this tool.

- Next, type your search term into the 'Search Loc.gov' form. Which do you think will best yield the best results: Flight? Invention of Flight? Kitty Hawk? Wright Brothers? Something else?

- Once you have honed into a manageable list of relevant results, find one item that is particularly intriguing to you. (Note that you can navigate your results by scrolling to the bottom of the page and clicking to a new page, or increasing the number of results per page.) Click on that item, and download a digital copy.

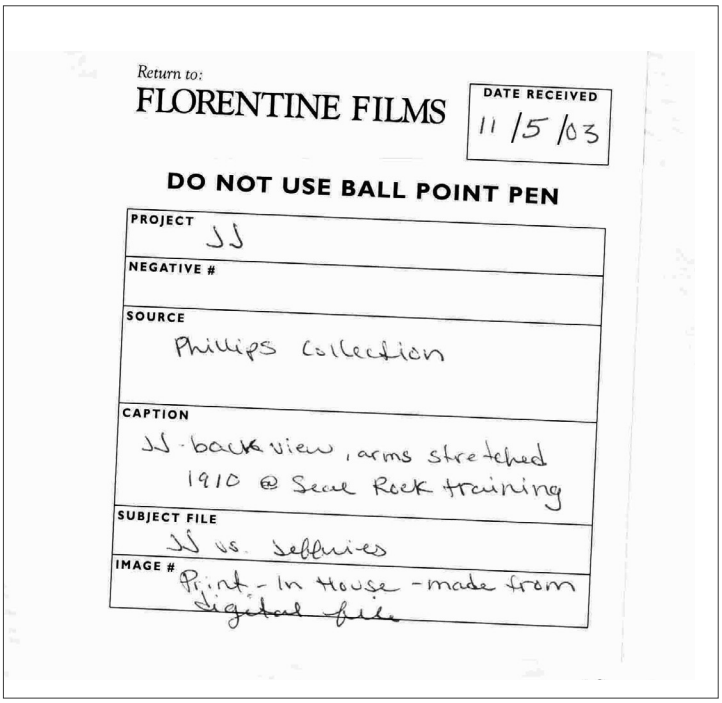
- Scroll further down for information listed under 'About this item.' Who created this item and when? In what collection is the original item being housed? What information would you need to request access to the original?

- Return to your search results. Try to find a collection to click on, rather than an individual item. What happens to the search bar once you are inside the collection?

- You may have noticed that collections automatically default to a sub-page called About this Collection. To explore the full collection, click the link to Collection Items. If you'd rather not scroll through the thumbnails and would prefer to view items full screen, open the dropdown box next to View, select Slideshow, and click Go. Tap the double-arrow at the top right corner to expand to full screen, and enjoy exploring!

FROM THE ARCHIVE:

Take a glance at this photo request slip from Ken's research for the film *Unforgivable Blackness*. Ken used 13 powerful black-and-white photos to reconstruct a key boxing match in the film (you will get the chance in a later chapter to see how the fight was cut together). To find these images, Ken had to consult four different archival sources across the United States: the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., the Nevada Historical Society, the Schomburg Center at the New York Public Library, and an individual archival photograph collector named Don Scott. Remember this when embarking on image research for your own film: always keep digging. A scene may be impossible to build using photographs from only one source. Plumb the depths of as many archives as are needed in order to tell your story.



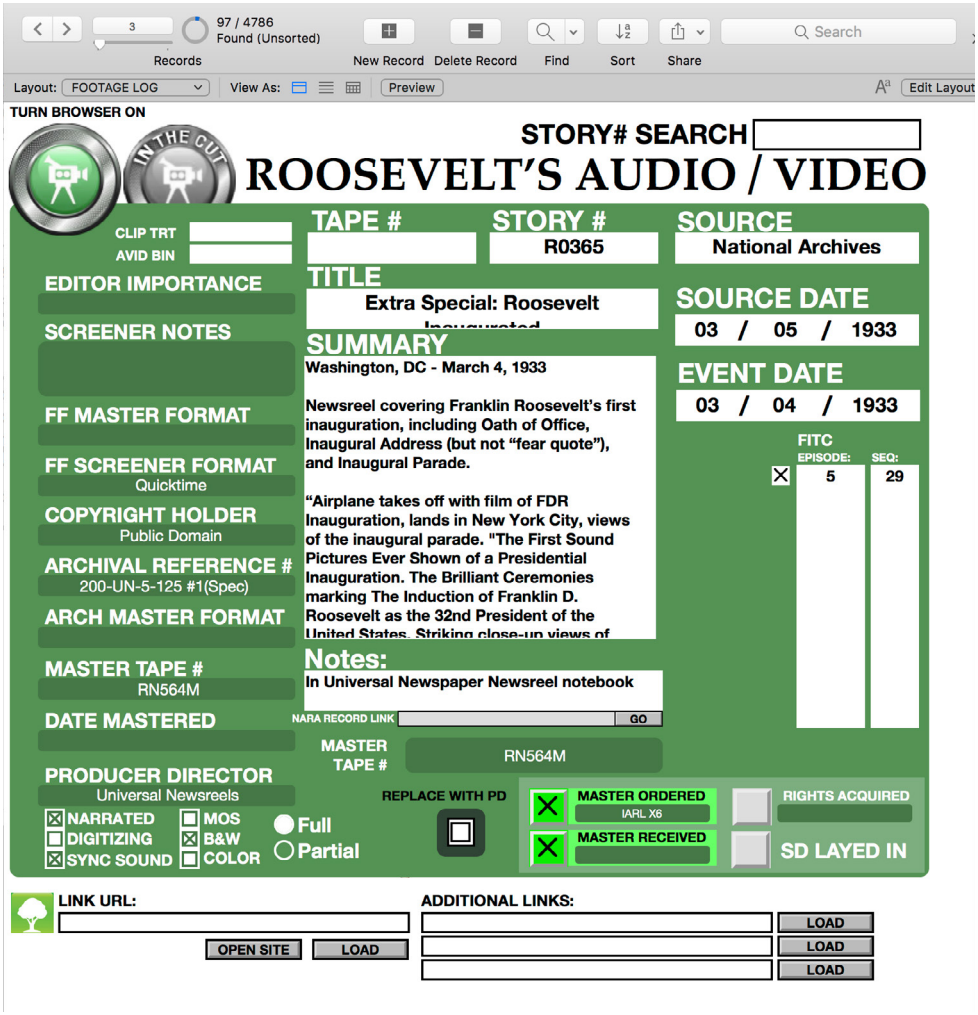
Return to:
FLORENTINE FILMS

DATE RECEIVED
11/5/03

DO NOT USE BALL POINT PEN

PROJECT: JJ
NEGATIVE #:
SOURCE: Phillips Collection
CAPTION: JJ - back view, arms stretched 1910 @ Seal Rock training
SUBJECT FILE: JJ vs. Jeffries
IMAGE #: Print - In House - made from digital file

Staying organized with archival sources is essential throughout the research and editing process. The image below show's Ken's unique database for *The Roosevelts*, which he and his team use to track copyrights, formats, image descriptions, and source details.



CHAPTER 09

Shaping Nonfiction Characters

SHAPING NONFICTION CHARACTERS

SUBCHAPTERS

Make Space for Complex Characters and Reserve Judgement

Understanding Character Arcs: Frederick Douglass, *The Civil War*

Layered Conflicts Make Compelling Characters

CHAPTER REVIEW

Conflict is the driving engine of story. When writing fiction, storytellers have free rein to create conflict and drive each character's journey forward. When it comes to shaping non-fiction characters, however, documentary filmmakers face the additional challenge of feeling bound to factual accuracy.

Human life is three-dimensional, complex, and often contradictory—it rarely conforms to a tidy character arc. The responsibility Ken assigns himself is to use the tools of filmmaking and the artifacts of history to 'wake the dead,' and in so doing bring stories from the past to life. You must strive to remain true to the spirit of a person's life, even if you are selecting only certain aspects to include in your narrative. For instance, the first episode of *The Civil War* ("The Cause") features Frederick Douglass as a prominent character, yet it cannot possibly include every detail of his rich life story. Instead, the episode highlights three especially relevant moments when Douglass agitated for slavery's abolition, which are both reflective of Douglass's spirit and integral to the themes of the film.

Avoid the temptation to reduce characters to simple archetypes such as "good" or "bad." This may seem like an expedient way to create conflict between characters, but a more compelling option is to explore internal tensions *within* characters. These psychological conflicts may unlock a personal transformation that becomes key to a character's three-act arc, such as that of the Marine Corps volunteer John Musgrave in *The Vietnam War*. Torn between patriotism and horror at what he has been asked to do on the battlefield, Musgrave returns home and ultimately pivots from soldier to anti-war activist—a transformation that mirrors that of the nation itself.

LEARN MORE

Read *The Art of Character: Creating Memorable Characters for Fiction, Film, and TV* (Penguin Books, 2013) by David Corbett. Although authored by a novelist, the lessons and tips in this book are equally applicable to both narrative and documentary film.

ASSIGNMENTS

If you are working on a project of your own, take a moment to think in depth about your main character. Or, if you're not making a film at this time, choose a living or historic person whose biographical details you can quickly research for this exercise. In your notebook, write down some thoughts on the following questions:

"You have to liberate your characters to their full human dimension, whether they're historical or not."

Kent State Protest Photo courtesy of the Office of Public Affairs Records, A5000.0020.1, Louisiana State University Archives, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.

Part One: Goals and Obstacles

- What are some essential goals or needs that drive this person's actions? List at least three things that this person wants to achieve.

- Is there anything that is blocking this person from achieving their goals? Think about both external obstacles as well as internal obstacles, which can manifest as character flaws working at cross-purposes with that person's interests. Don't shy away from such flaws—they allow your character to be complex and nuanced, and thus more human.

Part Two: Character Arc and Transformation

- Your main character should have a fully developed arc, with a beginning, middle, and end. Think about the start of this person's journey. How will you introduce your audience to who this person is, what they want, and why? Is there a scene that you have shot (or that you could write) that reveals right off the bat what your main character is trying to achieve?

- Next, think about the ways in which your character's story will deepen and develop. How will you dramatize for an audience any internal struggles that this person is undergoing? What scenes would best demonstrate the external obstacles that this person must overcome? Try to be specific, identifying the places of tension and conflict in this person's life, and how to illustrate them with the actual events, actions, and images.

- Last, your character's arc needs an ending (even if their journey in real life is continuing beyond your film). Identify at least one transformation that this person has undergone by the time your film wraps up. Have they overcome, eliminated, or circumvented any obstacles? Have they changed anything about themselves, their beliefs, or their approach to life? How is this person different now than when we first met them? And how will you show that in your film? Again, be specific and describe an actual scene that could demonstrate how this character has changed.

CHAPTER 10

Case Study: *The Vietnam War* Episode Boards

CASE STUDY: *THE VIETNAM WAR* EPISODE BOARDS

SUBCHAPTERS

Visualize Your Structure

Tease Characters and Themes in Act One

Build Structure Around Characters

Balance Larger Themes With Individual Stories

Face the Brutal Triage of Choice

CHAPTER REVIEW

Story structure can be tricky to discuss without visualizing it on paper in some way. At various points in his process, Ken creates what he calls an "episode board," which represents each scene on an individual note card, with different colors assigned to recurring locations, themes, and characters. These cards are arranged in the current order of a work-in-progress episode, and taped or pinned to a board that everyone on the creative team can study and discuss.

Episode boards are incredibly valuable tools for collaboration. They translate the linear, time-based medium of film into an instantly visible reference, almost like a table of contents. Moveable note cards make story structure flexible and easy to adjust. After editing a new cut of an episode, the team rearranges the note cards to reflect that change, so everyone has an updated visual reference.

These boards also help Ken assess the balance of content in each episode and spot larger themes. For *The Vietnam War*, a separate board for each episode of the series was created. Colored cards are used to represent the different kinds of content in the episode—yellow to designate Americans, green to represent Vietnam, and red for North Vietnam once it separated. Seeing the colors on the board allows the team to gauge for balance in the episode. Episode two presented a persistent problem for Ken and his team. They struggled for years with how to structure its first act, which involved a complicated geopolitical situation. They finally realized that viewers needed the story to be anchored to more intimate moments with three recurring American characters: President Kennedy, the soldiers drawn into the conflict, and the journalists covering the events. Only then did the first act cohere.

LEARN MORE

Ken's process of creating episode boards is very hands-on, using tangible note cards and physical boards. If you prefer to work digitally, there are several tools that enable you to take this process into the virtual world:

- Cardboard. CardBoard is a sticky note application that mimics having a physical board on the wall and using Post-Its to create and discuss ideas.
- StoriesOnBoard. StoriesOnBoard is a more comprehensive tool that enables you to prioritize tasks and create subsections.
- RealtimeBoard. RealTimeBoard includes an infinite virtual white-board that can be used to visualize complex and branching story structures.

"We insist that each episode stand alone and have its own arc."

The Vietnam War Intro - Footage in the video courtesy of PROGRESS Filmverleih GmbH.

ASSIGNMENT

Choose a documentary or fiction film that you love, something that you have already watched several times and would enjoy examining more closely. As you watch from beginning to end, take note of each new scene and list them in sequence on a piece of paper. (A scene in cinema is essentially a unit of story that occurs in a single location without a break in time.) You've now captured the skeletal story structure of the film, listed in a working table of contents.

Next, skim the table of contents and identify three to four dominant locations, characters, or themes from the film that could be designated with different colors. The movie *The Matrix*, for example, could be assigned three colors: blue for the Matrix simulation; red for the Real World; and yellow for the Construct training simulation.

Get your hands on some colored note cards, a sheet of poster board, and some tape. Transfer each scene from your table of contents to its corresponding colored card, and tape them in sequence to the poster board.

Now that you've created your favorite film's episode board, take a look. Examine any patterns that seem to emerge. Do you notice anything about the underlying story structure that you may not have noticed otherwise?

CHAPTER 11

Writing a Script

WRITING A SCRIPT

SUBCHAPTERS

Use All the Narrative Elements at Your Disposal

Use Early Drafts to Determine Your Film's Narrative Arc

Write With Poetic Detail

Build Structure Around Facts

Create Dimension Through Different Narrative POV

Words Are Not Set in Stone

Use Caveats When the Facts Are Missing

Case Study: *The Civil War*

Use Words to Fight Abstraction

CHAPTER REVIEW

The trick to writing a good documentary script is to avoid making it feel like an educational lecture, a history lesson, or something that's good for you. Nonfiction films can be every bit as artful and cinematic as fiction films, and Ken strongly believes that the writing in his scripts can reach literary levels.

Skillful documentary writers interweave and balance neutral, third-person descriptions of what happened with intimate, first-person accounts from those who actually lived through those events. Such first person voices can be drawn from interviews with living witnesses, archival footage, newsreels, or dramatized readings of written artifacts. You don't need to use all of these sources, but the interplay of multiple—and sometimes contradictory—perspectives can elevate your writing to something more than the sum of its parts.

Your first draft is often the most important one you will write. This version is the product of months of research, discussion, treatments, and structural outlines, and thus contains the full potential of what your film will look like. However unformed or sprawling it may be, refer to this first draft often as you refine your film's structure.

Filmmakers are often afraid of words, thinking primarily in pictures. Ken encourages you to reverse this inclination, and engage in the writing process free of any concern for whether there are images to match your words. Concentrate on the story first. Write each scene as it needs to be written, and trust that the visuals will follow.

Find impactful ways to deliver information. For instance, the fact that six million Jews died in the Holocaust can be made even more haunting by revealing that two out of every three European Jews were killed by 1945. Choose phrasings that highlight the underlying implications and magnitude of a given fact. Still, no matter how poetic their expression, truth claims in nonfiction filmmaking must adhere to verifiable facts. Always consult scholars on your topic, and document your research and the evidence for any assertions made in your script. When the evidence isn't air tight, but strongly suggests that something happened, figure out a way to communicate that it *may* be true. Err on the side of conservatism by qualifying best guesses with a caveat, and avoid conjecture, theory, and conspiracy.

"In the beginning is the word and the word is throughout, but it is not written in stone."

LEARN MORE

Documentary Storytelling (Routledge, 2015) by Sheila Curran Bernard has stood the test of time and is now in its fourth edition. Consult this text during your quest to find your film's story and write your first draft.

ASSIGNMENT

Ken's documentary scripts are fusions of written elements from multiple sources, including interview selects, narration, and dramatized first-person voices. Other documentarians may not use any narration or first person voice at all, and work instead from a more focused palette of interviews and vérité scenes. For such films, a formal script may not be necessary, and a simpler paper edit will do. Paper edits begin with transcripts of the raw interviews, which are then excerpted and organized in an electronic document before any editing begins. Still other documentary filmmakers work purely with vérité footage (no sit-down interviews), and create their story entirely within the timeline of the editing software. In this case, the script is more of a transcript—a *product* of editing, rather than a formative document to guide and shape editing. No matter the method, all of these scripting processes share the same goal of crafting a compelling story.

If your own film requires scripting narration and selecting first-person accounts to record as voiceover, then you've got some work cut out for you before you can begin editing. Any practiced writer will tell you that the best way to complete a first draft is to simply write every day. Finding the discipline to write your first draft can be challenging, but fear not—there are tools out there to keep you accountable and to track your progress.

If you think you would benefit from a single, intense period of focused writing, sign up for National Novel Writing Month in November. (Not to worry that you are writing a script rather than a novel—the process is still the same.)

If you want a more flexible, less compressed option, try the 750 Words challenge.

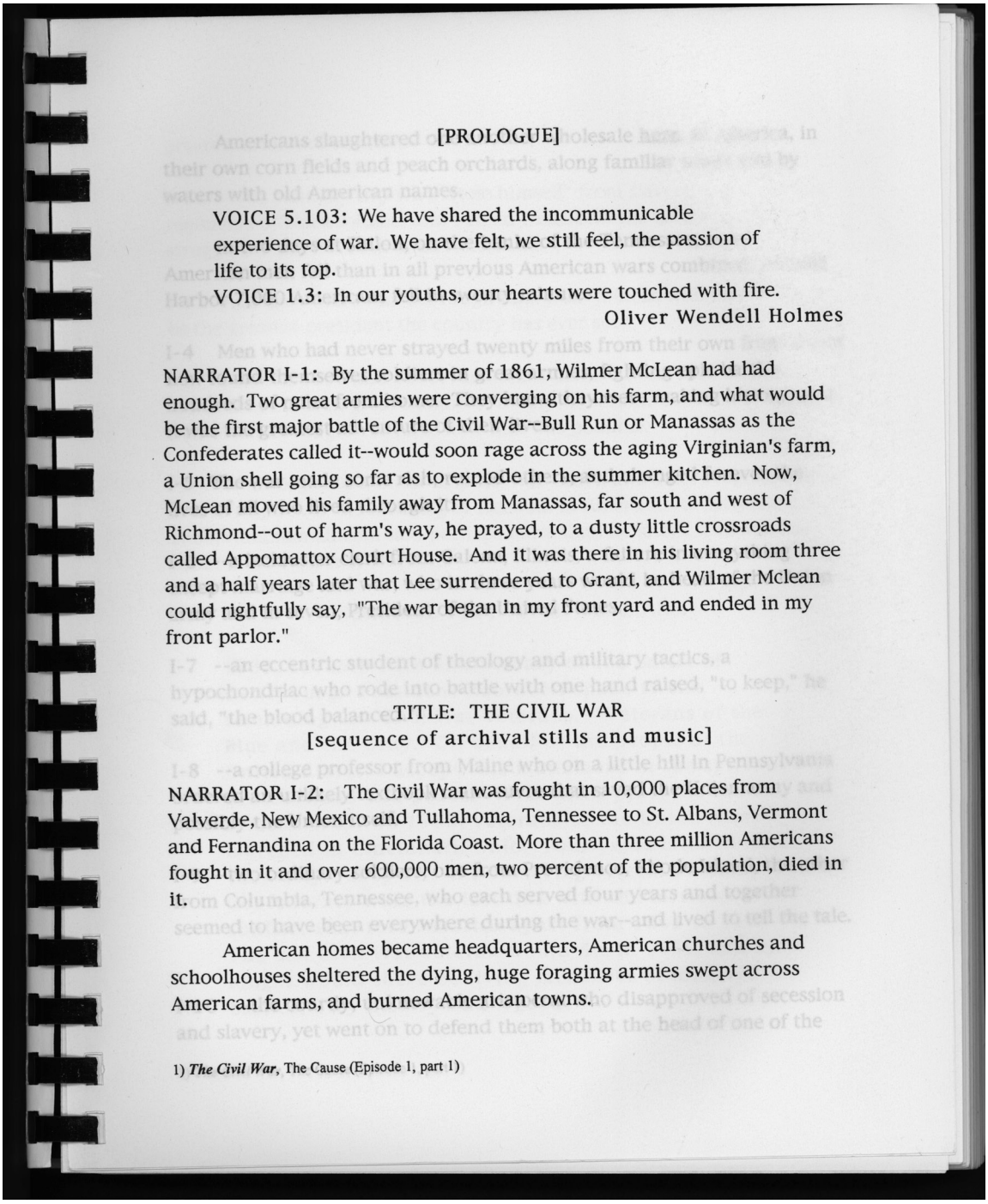
Use either of these tools to help you focus and stay accountable to yourself, and write that first draft!

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Writing a script for a history documentary that is in the 'Ken Burns' style involves much more than drafting narration. There are creative choices to be made in the sequencing, timing, and arrangement of every other filmic elements as well, such as first person accounts, archival footage and photos, live cinematography, interview excerpts, and even music. Crafting the flow of these elements is a very real part of storytelling, and thus should be considered writing. Filmmaking, as Ken defines it, is similar to composing a symphony: "it's multiple instruments working at the same time."

Ken discusses, in depth, the writing of the first episode of *The Civil War* series, "The Cause." Read the first eight pages from this script, reproduced on the following pages, and pay special attention to how multiple components and voices are woven together. Follow along by watching the film itself, either on DVD or by streaming it online, and think about the questions below:

- When first-person voices are dramatized, what is their effect on the story? What do you think is their main strength?
- What is the function of narration in this script? What does it achieve that can't be accomplished by other means?
- Why do you think present-day experts, such Shelby Foote and Barbara Fields, were included in this opening? What do they contribute or add that the narration and first person voices could not?
- At one point, newsreel footage is included about the death of the last Civil War veteran. Why do you think Ken chose a period film to tell this part of the story rather than narration or an interview with an expert?



[PROLOGUE]

VOICE 5.103: We have shared the incommunicable experience of war. We have felt, we still feel, the passion of life to its top.

VOICE 1.3: In our youths, our hearts were touched with fire.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

NARRATOR I-1: By the summer of 1861, Wilmer McLean had had enough. Two great armies were converging on his farm, and what would be the first major battle of the Civil War--Bull Run or Manassas as the Confederates called it--would soon rage across the aging Virginian's farm, a Union shell going so far as to explode in the summer kitchen. Now, McLean moved his family away from Manassas, far south and west of Richmond--out of harm's way, he prayed, to a dusty little crossroads called Appomattox Court House. And it was there in his living room three and a half years later that Lee surrendered to Grant, and Wilmer Mclean could rightfully say, "The war began in my front yard and ended in my front parlor."

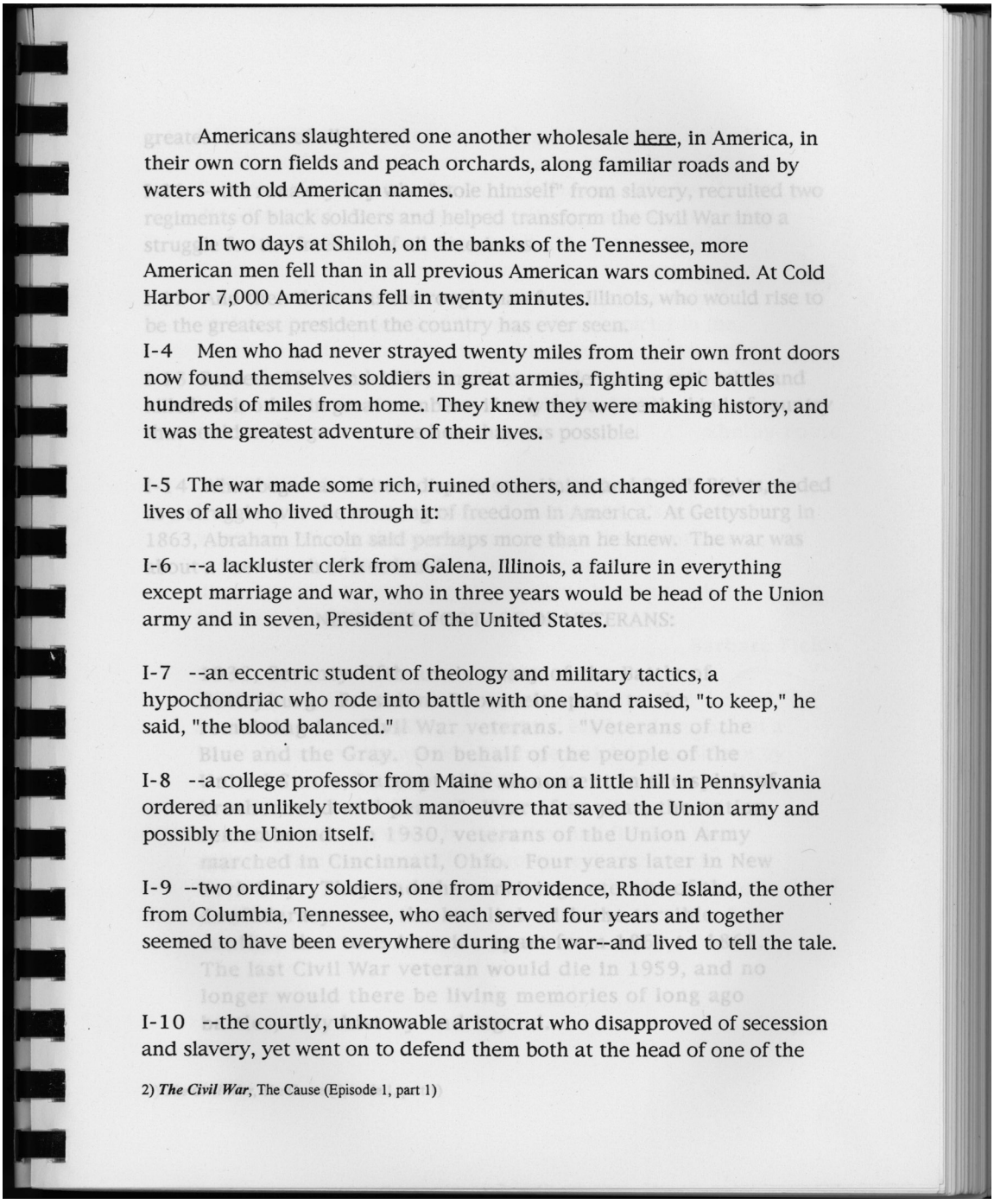
TITLE: THE CIVIL WAR

[sequence of archival stills and music]

NARRATOR I-2: The Civil War was fought in 10,000 places from Valverde, New Mexico and Tullahoma, Tennessee to St. Albans, Vermont and Fernandina on the Florida Coast. More than three million Americans fought in it and over 600,000 men, two percent of the population, died in it.

American homes became headquarters, American churches and schoolhouses sheltered the dying, huge foraging armies swept across American farms, and burned American towns.

1) ***The Civil War***, The Cause (Episode 1, part 1)



Americans slaughtered one another wholesale here, in America, in their own corn fields and peach orchards, along familiar roads and by waters with old American names.

In two days at Shiloh, on the banks of the Tennessee, more American men fell than in all previous American wars combined. At Cold Harbor 7,000 Americans fell in twenty minutes.

I-4 Men who had never strayed twenty miles from their own front doors now found themselves soldiers in great armies, fighting epic battles hundreds of miles from home. They knew they were making history, and it was the greatest adventure of their lives.

I-5 The war made some rich, ruined others, and changed forever the lives of all who lived through it:

I-6 --a lackluster clerk from Galena, Illinois, a failure in everything except marriage and war, who in three years would be head of the Union army and in seven, President of the United States.

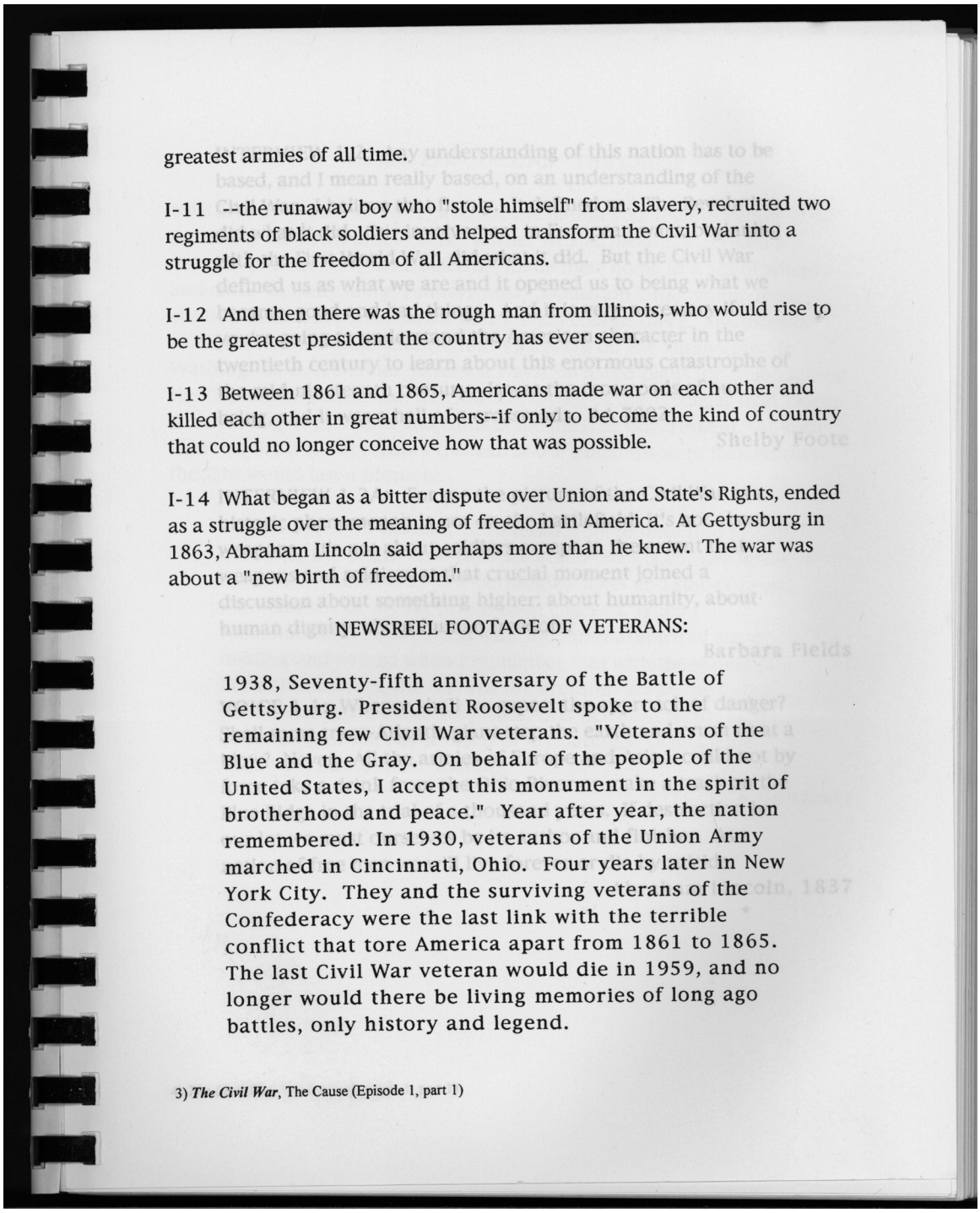
I-7 --an eccentric student of theology and military tactics, a hypochondriac who rode into battle with one hand raised, "to keep," he said, "the blood balanced."

I-8 --a college professor from Maine who on a little hill in Pennsylvania ordered an unlikely textbook manoeuvre that saved the Union army and possibly the Union itself.

I-9 --two ordinary soldiers, one from Providence, Rhode Island, the other from Columbia, Tennessee, who each served four years and together seemed to have been everywhere during the war--and lived to tell the tale.

I-10 --the courtly, unknowable aristocrat who disapproved of secession and slavery, yet went on to defend them both at the head of one of the

2) ***The Civil War***, The Cause (Episode 1, part 1)



greatest armies of all time.

I-11 --the runaway boy who "stole himself" from slavery, recruited two regiments of black soldiers and helped transform the Civil War into a struggle for the freedom of all Americans.

I-12 And then there was the rough man from Illinois, who would rise to be the greatest president the country has ever seen.

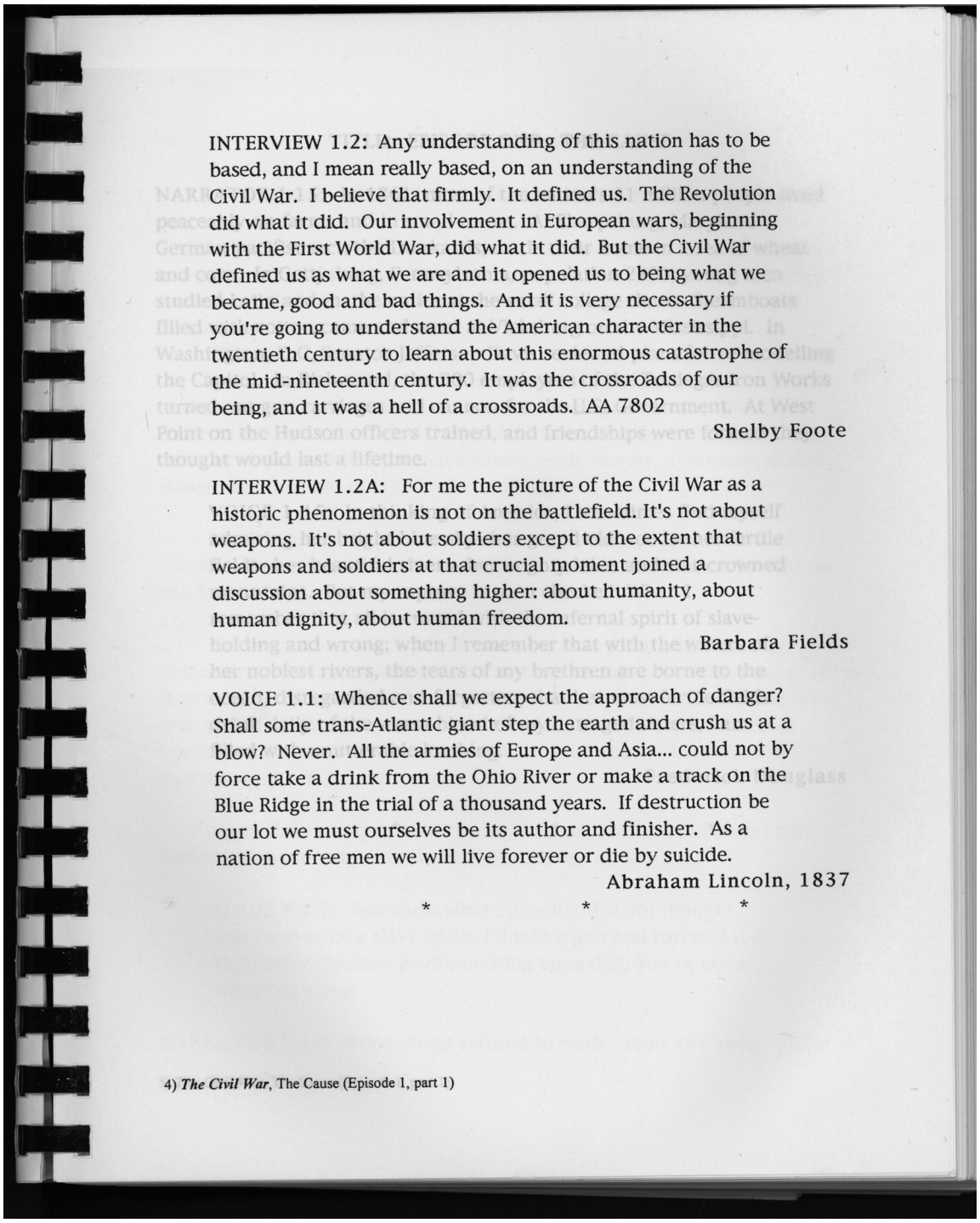
I-13 Between 1861 and 1865, Americans made war on each other and killed each other in great numbers--if only to become the kind of country that could no longer conceive how that was possible.

I-14 What began as a bitter dispute over Union and State's Rights, ended as a struggle over the meaning of freedom in America. At Gettysburg in 1863, Abraham Lincoln said perhaps more than he knew. The war was about a "new birth of freedom."

NEWSREEL FOOTAGE OF VETERANS:

1938, Seventy-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Gettsyburg. President Roosevelt spoke to the remaining few Civil War veterans. "Veterans of the Blue and the Gray. On behalf of the people of the United States, I accept this monument in the spirit of brotherhood and peace." Year after year, the nation remembered. In 1930, veterans of the Union Army marched in Cincinnati, Ohio. Four years later in New York City. They and the surviving veterans of the Confederacy were the last link with the terrible conflict that tore America apart from 1861 to 1865. The last Civil War veteran would die in 1959, and no longer would there be living memories of long ago battles, only history and legend.

3) ***The Civil War***, The Cause (Episode 1, part 1)



INTERVIEW 1.2: Any understanding of this nation has to be based, and I mean really based, on an understanding of the Civil War. I believe that firmly. It defined us. The Revolution did what it did. Our involvement in European wars, beginning with the First World War, did what it did. But the Civil War defined us as what we are and it opened us to being what we became, good and bad things. And it is very necessary if you're going to understand the American character in the twentieth century to learn about this enormous catastrophe of the mid-nineteenth century. It was the crossroads of our being, and it was a hell of a crossroads. AA 7802

Shelby Foote

INTERVIEW 1.2A: For me the picture of the Civil War as a historic phenomenon is not on the battlefield. It's not about weapons. It's not about soldiers except to the extent that weapons and soldiers at that crucial moment joined a discussion about something higher: about humanity, about human dignity, about human freedom.

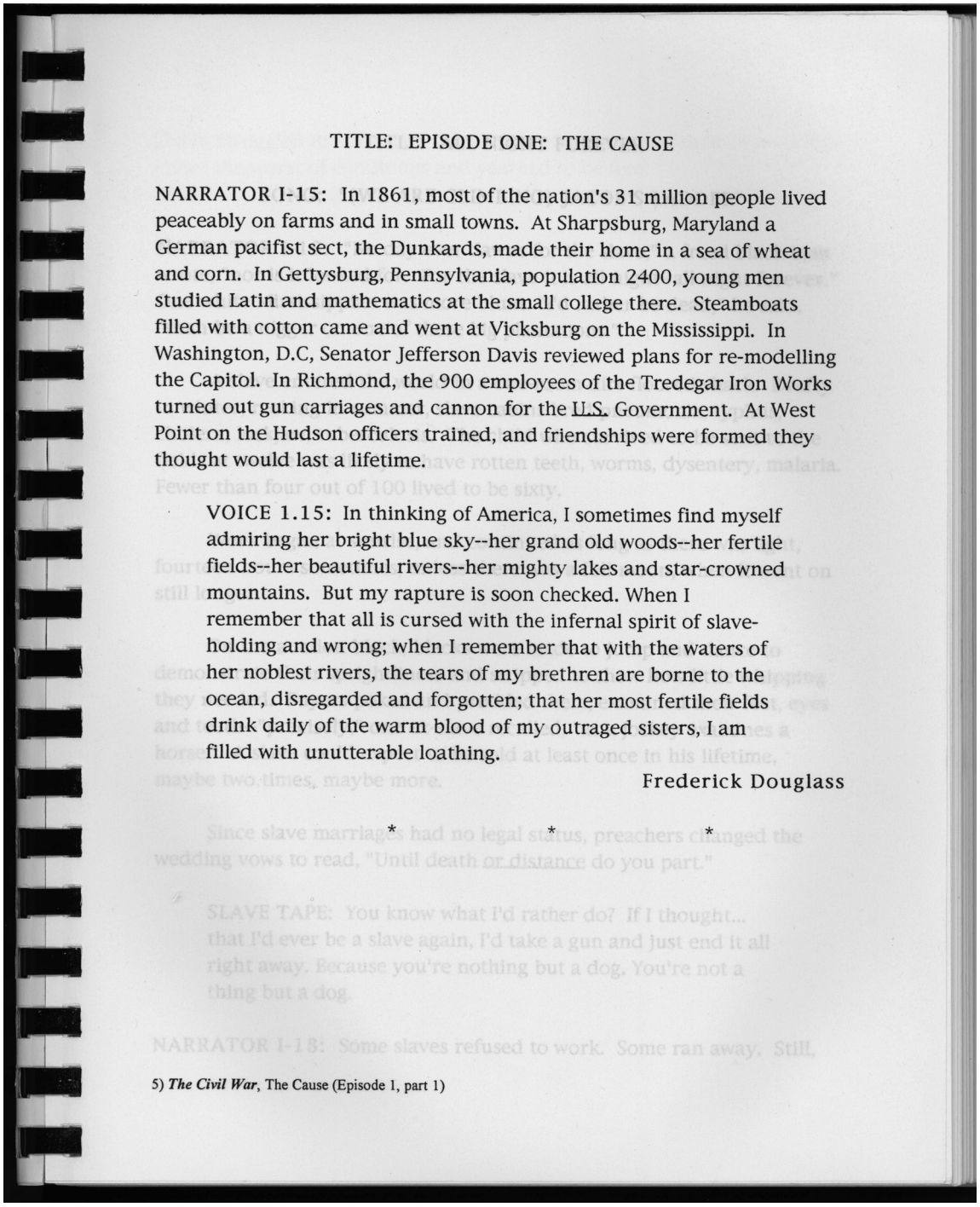
Barbara Fields

VOICE 1.1: Whence shall we expect the approach of danger? Shall some trans-Atlantic giant step the earth and crush us at a blow? Never. All the armies of Europe and Asia... could not by force take a drink from the Ohio River or make a track on the Blue Ridge in the trial of a thousand years. If destruction be our lot we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of free men we will live forever or die by suicide.

Abraham Lincoln, 1837

* * *

4) ***The Civil War***, The Cause (Episode 1, part 1)



TITLE: EPISODE ONE: THE CAUSE

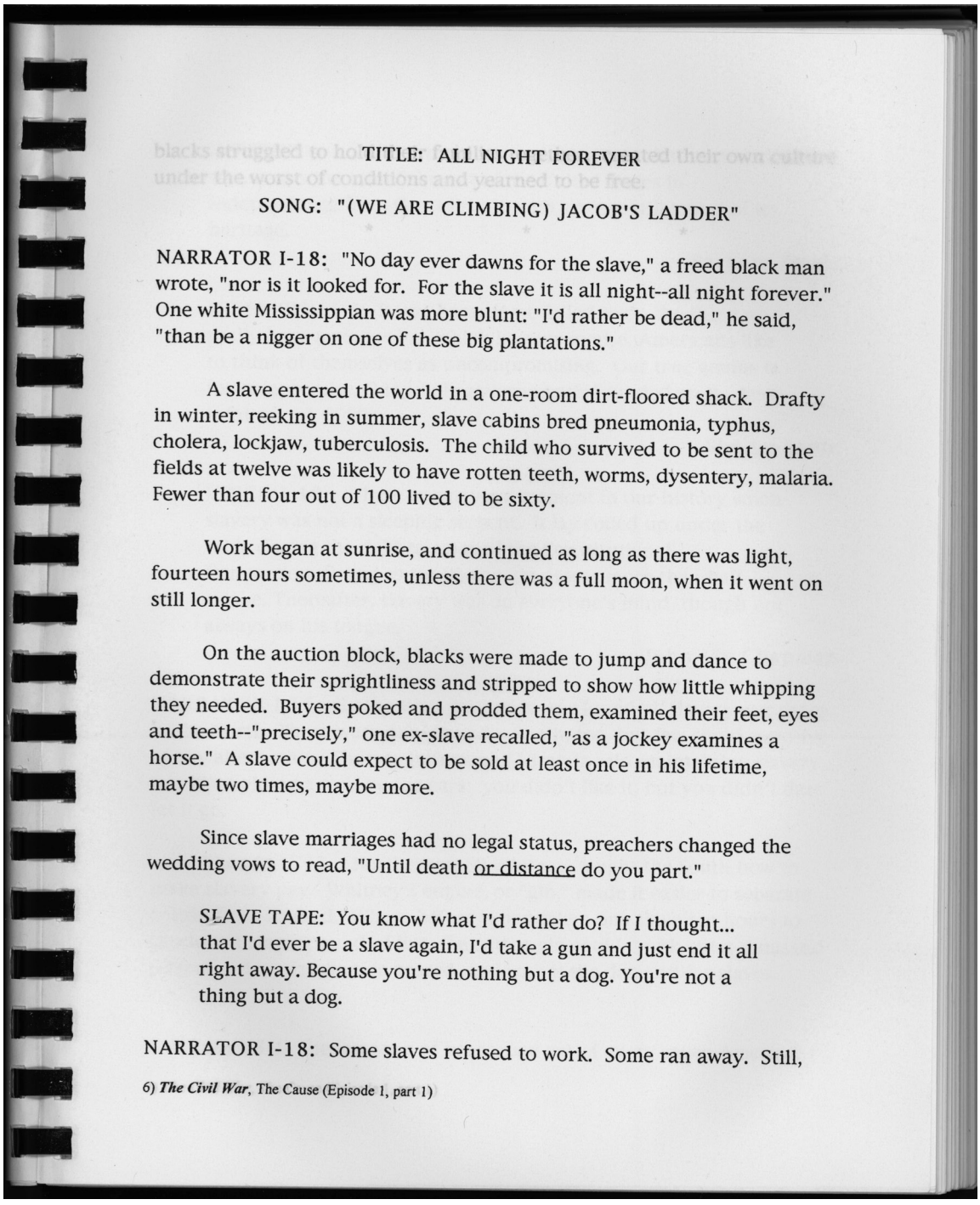
NARRATOR I-15: In 1861, most of the nation's 31 million people lived peaceably on farms and in small towns. At Sharpsburg, Maryland a German pacifist sect, the Dunkards, made their home in a sea of wheat and corn. In Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, population 2400, young men studied Latin and mathematics at the small college there. Steamboats filled with cotton came and went at Vicksburg on the Mississippi. In Washington, D.C, Senator Jefferson Davis reviewed plans for re-modelling the Capitol. In Richmond, the 900 employees of the Tredegar Iron Works turned out gun carriages and cannon for the U.S. Government. At West Point on the Hudson officers trained, and friendships were formed they thought would last a lifetime.

VOICE 1.15: In thinking of America, I sometimes find myself admiring her bright blue sky--her grand old woods--her fertile fields--her beautiful rivers--her mighty lakes and star-crowned mountains. But my rapture is soon checked. When I remember that all is cursed with the infernal spirit of slave-holding and wrong; when I remember that with the waters of her noblest rivers, the tears of my brethren are borne to the ocean, disregarded and forgotten; that her most fertile fields drink daily of the warm blood of my outraged sisters, I am filled with unutterable loathing.

Frederick Douglass

* * *

5) ***The Civil War***, The Cause (Episode 1, part 1)



TITLE: ALL NIGHT FOREVER

SONG: "(WE ARE CLIMBING) JACOB'S LADDER"

NARRATOR I-18: "No day ever dawns for the slave," a freed black man wrote, "nor is it looked for. For the slave it is all night--all night forever." One white Mississippian was more blunt: "I'd rather be dead," he said, "than be a nigger on one of these big plantations."

A slave entered the world in a one-room dirt-floored shack. Drafty in winter, reeking in summer, slave cabins bred pneumonia, typhus, cholera, lockjaw, tuberculosis. The child who survived to be sent to the fields at twelve was likely to have rotten teeth, worms, dysentery, malaria. Fewer than four out of 100 lived to be sixty.

Work began at sunrise, and continued as long as there was light, fourteen hours sometimes, unless there was a full moon, when it went on still longer.

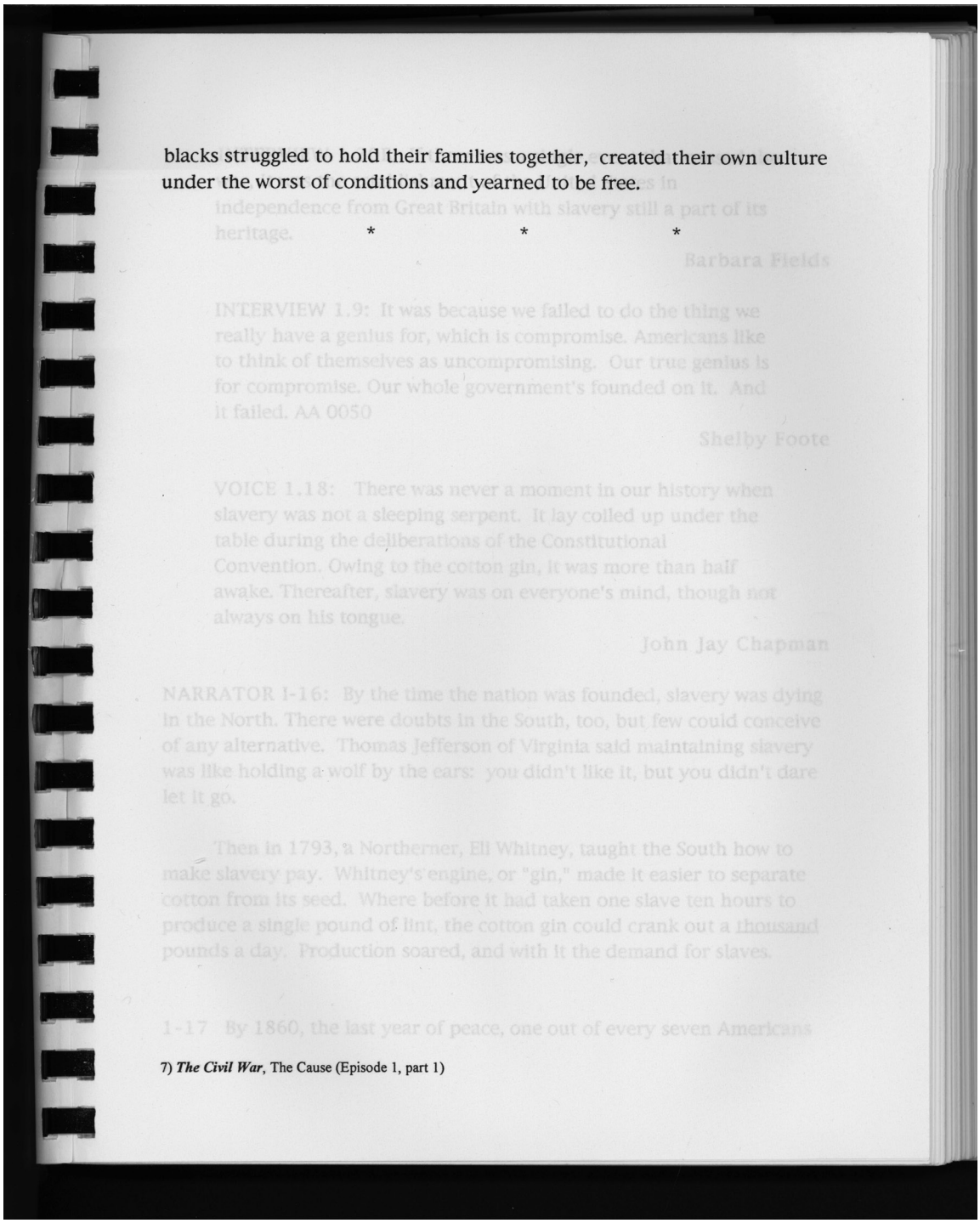
On the auction block, blacks were made to jump and dance to demonstrate their sprightliness and stripped to show how little whipping they needed. Buyers poked and prodded them, examined their feet, eyes and teeth--"precisely," one ex-slave recalled, "as a jockey examines a horse." A slave could expect to be sold at least once in his lifetime, maybe two times, maybe more.

Since slave marriages had no legal status, preachers changed the wedding vows to read, "Until death or distance do you part."

SLAVE TAPE: You know what I'd rather do? If I thought... that I'd ever be a slave again, I'd take a gun and just end it all right away. Because you're nothing but a dog. You're not a thing but a dog.

NARRATOR I-18: Some slaves refused to work. Some ran away. Still,

6) ***The Civil War***, The Cause (Episode 1, part 1)



blacks struggled to hold their families together, created their own culture under the worst of conditions and yearned to be free.

* * *

7) ***The Civil War***, The Cause (Episode 1, part 1)

CHAPTER 12

Visual Storytelling: Cinematic Techniques

VISUAL STORYTELLING: CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

SUBCHAPTERS

The Cinematic Power of the Still Image

Create Meaning Through Juxtaposition

Activate Your Audience's Imagination

Create Meaning Through Duration and Motion

Search for Imaginative Equivalence

The Conversation Between Word and Image (1+1=3)

CHAPTER REVIEW

For Ken, still photographs are absolutely central to his craft—even more so than archival footage. Taken literally, footage is nothing more than a rapid series of still images that our brain interprets as continuous movement through persistence of vision. This is why Ken calls the photograph the "building block" of film.

Ken's first memory is of his father, an amateur photographer, building a darkroom. Ever since, the still image has captured Ken's imagination. He challenges you to treat each photograph as if it were a master shot, containing within it a wide shot, a medium shot, a close-up, and an extreme close-up, a tilt, a pan, a reveal, inserts of details, and more. Try also "listening" to that photograph, hearing in your mind potential sound effects that could make that moment in time come alive.

Whereas other filmmakers may feel limited by still photography, Ken revels in its potential to activate an audience's imagination. Still images require viewers to visualize what has happened and what is about to happen. They allow us to dwell upon and study the details, and to wonder about the emotions contained within a moment. Your challenge is to figure out how to manipulate that photograph in a meaningful and cinematic way that engages the audience and serves the complex, dramatic needs of the narrative.

A powerful tool in visual storytelling is the juxtaposition of two images. Film editing is by definition the successive pairing of one image with the next. By pairing two images, Ken maintains that you are actually *changing* each image in the mind of the viewer. The memory of the preceding image enters into conversation with the current image, and the next image further alters the meaning of the sequence. Our understanding of the very first shot of a film is changed by what follows, and the impact of the final shot depends entirely on what came before.

To select the best photograph for a particular purpose, Ken encourages you to look beyond "mere illustration," and towards something he calls "equivalency." A photo that illustrates something does nothing more than show exactly what is being discussed. An image that has equivalence brings something new to the mix, an element that may symbolize, add to, or even contradict what is being discussed. In illustration, the picture and the word are saying the same thing and have the same value (1+1 = 2). In equivalency, the picture and the word each say something different but related, so that the combination adds something entirely new to the mix (1+1 = 3).

"If you don't activate your audience's imagination, you've just said, 'I didn't really know what to do. Here's my slideshow. ...And we're not interested in a slideshow."

Footage in the video courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society

LEARN MORE:

Sometimes there are great lessons to learn in unexpected places. *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud (Tundra Publishing, 1993) is a graphic novel about sequential storytelling with words and pictures. In the book, McCloud breaks down how an artist can juxtapose two images, or pair pictures with words, in ways that elevate the combination into something else entirely. The lessons in the book, while ostensibly about comic books, are also applicable to storyboarding, filmmaking, and visual perception in general.

How the mind perceives images is endlessly fascinating, including a phenomenon that Ken mentions called *persistence of vision*—the basis for experiencing film. Check out Veritasium's "Persistence of Vision" video on YouTube.

ASSIGNMENT:

At the core of a film scene is the frame itself—a single image. For this exercise, turn your focus to what Ken calls "the DNA" of his films, which is the still image.

The Master Shot:

Dig through still images that you are considering for your current creative project. If you don't have a work in progress right now, then raid your family's shelf of fading photo albums for this exercise.

Look for a photo that could become your master shot—an image that has it all, including a long shot, a medium shot, a close-up, an extreme close-up, a tilt, a pan, a reveal, and an insert of details. Think about complex sound effects that you could add to bring that photo to life. Now, scan and import this photo into the editing software of your choice and begin to play. What story can you tell with this photo? How can you recreate the mood of that day? What emotions can you reveal in the image? How can you use duration and motion to activate the imagination of your audience?

Juxtaposition of Images:

From the same collection of images that you dug through for the Master Shot exercise, search for two photos that when juxtaposed tell an interesting story. For example, a beautiful panorama of the Grand Canyon could be followed by a photo of an exhausted, sunburnt, and sweat-drenched family wishing they were back to the comforts of their air-conditioned hotel. Alternatively, find one photo with an interesting reveal, such as a close-up shot of the delighted birthday girl, and then a pan to her brother pouting in the corner. Play around, and explore the storytelling potential of juxtaposition.

llustration Versus Equivalency:
Search for a powerful quotation that resonates with you, or perhaps spoken by someone you just interviewed for your current film. Record these words as voiceover using your preferred editing software. What might be an appropriate image to pair with those words that is "mere illustration"—the obvious choice that adds nothing surprising? What would be a more counter-intuitive image to pair with that quotation, an equivalency that elevates 1+1 to 3? Search for images that would do the trick and start experimenting.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

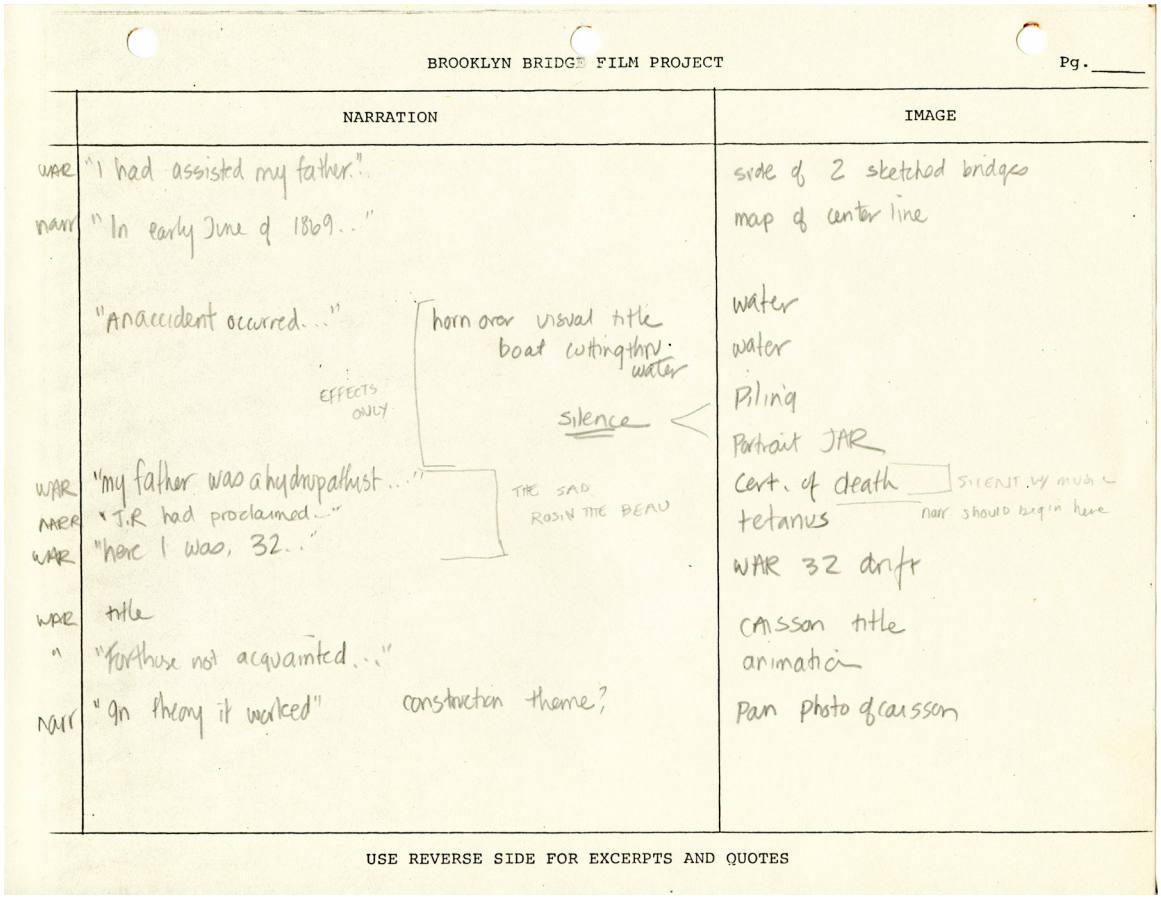
The signature "Ken Burns Effect" is achieved by shooting close-ups, pans, and tilts of archival material. This behind-the-scenes photograph shows you how Ken did it back when they shot on film (these moves are now done digitally).

Ken saved a wealth of planning documents from his first film, *Brooklyn Bridge*. One artifact is a simple sheet of paper that has been divided into two columns, labeled NARRATION and IMAGE.

The Narration column lists key phrases from the script, and the Image column contains Ken's brainstorm for what visual element to pair with those words.

Study Ken's image choices. Which ones seem like they are literally illustrating the assigned words? Which ones seem to be creating a higher equivalency?

As you move from script to image for your own film, use this simple two-column exercise to brainstorm what visual elements you need to collect to tell your story.



BROOKLYN BRIDGE FILM PROJECT Pg.____

	NARRATION	IMAGE
WAR	"I had assisted my father."	side of 2 sketched bridges
narr	"In early June of 1869..."	map of center line
	"An accident occurred..."	water
	horn over visual title	water
	boat cutting thru water	Piling
	EFFECTS ONLY	Portrait JAR
	silence	Cert. of death
WAR	"my father was a hydropathist..."	tetanus
narr	"J.R had proclaimed..."	SILENT. MY MUSIC narr should begin here
WAR	"here I was, 32..."	WAR 32 drift
WAR	title	CAISSON title
"	"for those not acquainted..."	animation
narr	"In theory it worked"	Pan Photo of caisson
	THE SAD ROSIN THE BEAU	
	construction theme?	

USE REVERSE SIDE FOR EXCERPTS AND QUOTES

CHAPTER 13

Visual Storytelling: *Unforgivable Blackness* Case Study

VISUAL STORYTELLING: *UNFORGIVABLE BLACKNESS* CASE STUDY

SUBCHAPTERS

Strive for the Transcendent

CHAPTER REVIEW

Images can complement each other, or contrast with one another. What's more, they have the power to arrest time, allowing you to dwell on a single moment and explore it in greater depth. In his two-part film *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson,* Ken had access to plenty of newsreel footage of a famous fight between Jack Johnson and Jim Jeffries, yet he chose instead to focus on a selection of particularly arresting photographs.

Ken gives several examples of the images he juxtaposed to tell the story of the fight in a rich and dynamic way. One involves two establishing shots that, when paired together, bring viewers into the hustle-and-bustle of a crowd converging together into a boxing stadium. A second instance involves intercutting between opposing fighters in the ring. The last example explores the potential of a single photograph to be divided into foreground and background in order to tell a story of defeat and triumph.

Ken also shares an artifact from his own archive: his photo board. This archival board sheds light on the origins of the signature style that has become known as "the Ken Burns Effect." Before editing software enabled users to digitally pan and zoom, Ken filmed each photo by hand, physically moving a fixed-lens camera back and forth, side to side, in order to create the motions he desired. In this final example, a long, slow zoom to an extreme close-up of Jack Johnson's powerful back is juxtaposed with the equally striking words of W.E.B. Du Bois.

LEARN MORE

Steve Jobs obtained legal permission to use Ken's name in 2002. The next year, a new version of Apple's iMovie software was released, featuring a tool called the "Ken Burns Effect," which enabled users to digitally pan across and zoom into or out of a still photograph.

An interesting wrinkle in the story is that Ken doesn't even give himself credit for inventing the technique—he was inspired by Colin Low and Wolf Koenig's 1957 documentary, *City of Gold*, Perry Miller Adato's documentary, *Gertrude Stein: When This You See, Remember Me*, as well as numerous feature films. You can view City of Gold for free on the National Film Board of Canada's website.

"You don't really have to say anything. The picture is doing all the work for you."

Music under clip from *American Lives Episode 6: Unforgivable Blackness The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* #5: "Prey For Me" Composed and Performed by Kim Cuda. Cuda Music Publishing.

ASSIGNMENT

Look for examples of arresting time in the movies you watch. The *Transformers* franchise peppers slow motion shots throughout its action sequences, and there are more artful films such as Martin Scorsese's *Silence* (2016), which features a slow motion shot during its climax that is certain to give you chills.

In your own project, challenge yourself to think beyond live footage, and explore ways to freeze or slow down moments in your story in order to dwell on the implications and emotions of an unfolding event.

CHAPTER 14

Selecting Interview Subjects

SELECTING INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

SUBCHAPTERS

Vet Subjects With a Pre-Interview

Find Experts Who Paint the Details

Be Honest, Be Persistent

Stay Open to Possibilities

CHAPTER REVIEW

When searching for subjects to interview for your film, cast a very wide net. For *The Vietnam War*, Ken estimates that although the team spoke with more than 1,000 potential subjects, they ultimately shot interviews with only 100 or so—a ratio of about 10 to 1. For historical documentaries, Ken tends to seek out two different types of individuals: those who are either academic experts in the subject matter, or who were themselves involved in the actual events. The historians are the easier ones to track down, and are often eager to share their expertise. Actual witnesses to history are of a different sort. Finding these individuals can be a challenge, and they may turn out to be camera shy. Assuming you can get them on camera, there's no guarantee that you will succeed in drawing out a compelling testimony from them.

A wise first step in your search for subjects is to conduct a pre-interview; that is, a conversation either in person or over the phone long before a camera is present. Note how well they tell their story, and whether the details of their life fit well within the larger narrative you are planning for your film. Only go to the expense and effort of filming an official interview if you see potential there. True, there is always a risk to the pre-interview: the subject may tell a captivating tale off camera, but then fail to perform well on camera. Plan for this likelihood, and trust that by casting your net wide, you will still gather enough compelling content to make your film.

A different challenge exists when interviewing expert historians, who are sometimes prone to explaining too much in their answers, thereby giving away the whole story. A compelling expert will recount events as though they are occurring in the present, helping viewers to imagine the limited perspective of those who don't know yet what fate will befall them.

One final caution: In your search for subjects, try not to dismiss anyone too quickly. They may just end up being the best interview in your film!

ASSIGNMENTS

Whomever you would like to approach for an interview, there is an art to wooing potential subjects. Ken prefers to reach out by phone, and typically uses a version of the following approach:

- "I'm [name], and I'm a documentary filmmaker."
- "We're making a film on [subject], and we'd like to consider you to be interviewed."

"You never know when this person's gonna turn into the best interview in that film."

- "I'd like to talk to you, is it possible to meet?"
- "If not, can we do this over the phone right now?"
- If someone says they're not interested, then say, "Thank you."
- If they feel essential to the film you are making, then approach them again later on. Ken recommends reaching out to them three or four times over a period of six months.

When you're ready to start setting up interviews for a film project, try employing Ken's tactic. Or, if you're not comfortable reaching out via phone, adapt his script into a concise email.

Before reaching out to anyone, create a set of questions that would be beneficial to ask during pre-interviews. Then bite the bullet and approach them about your project!

Once you have conducted pre-interviews with everyone, choose one person to start with, and set up a date and time to film an actual sit-down interview with them.

CHAPTER 15

Conducting an Interview

CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW

SUBCHAPTERS

Put Your Interview Subject at Ease

Be a Visual Listener

Simple Questions Make for Wide Possibilities

Honor Your Interview Subject

It's Not About You, It's About the Answer

CHAPTER REVIEW

Ken may be a master, but he still gets nervous before every interview. In a way, that's helpful to his process—the nervousness makes Ken take special care to put his interview subjects at ease, and that in turn helps ensure that they are at their best on camera.

Many subjects go into their interview nervous as well, especially when in front of a camera crew. Reassure them that there are no mistakes, and that there's plenty of time. Set up clear expectations for how the interview will proceed: whether to look at you or at the camera, how in-depth their answers should be, and how to elaborate beyond a 'yes' or 'no' response. Throughout your conversation, affirm that they are doing a great job.

If someone seems to be getting off track in their storytelling, try not to interrupt them mid-sentence. Instead, use your body language to actively listen, and subtly steer the conversation. Ken, for instance, nods vigorously when he wants someone to continue with their train of thought, but he might break eye contact and look down if he wants someone to wrap up their story.

Go into each interview with a set of questions that you'd like to ask. Ken recommends starting at a fairly general level, and points out that simple questions like 'what is jazz?' can lead to complex and nuanced answers. As the conversation develops, remember to stay flexible. It's okay to go off script! As you listen, stay attuned to your subject's emotions and interests, and pursue lines of questioning that occur to you in the moment. The goal is not to check off a list of premeditated questions, but to create the right conditions to get a fantastic answer.

Sometimes an interview can go wrong. When it does, Ken always interprets the fault as his own. Look for ways to adjust your own approach to put your subject at greater ease. No matter how much someone may be struggling, conduct every interview patiently and respectfully. By virtue of the simple fact that they are giving you permission to use their image, subjects deserve to be treated with honor.

"It ain't about you. It's about the answer."

LEARN MORE

For more tips from a master interviewer, check out this conversation with Terry Gross, long-time host of the NPR radio show *Fresh Air*.

Can't get enough Terry Gross? Continue with this *New York Times* profile and then learn by listening to archived *Fresh Air* podcasts on NPR.org.

Perhaps you prefer Ira Glass for your radio fix. Watch *Slate's* four-part video series about "how Ira Glass gets people to talk," and then dig into his acclaimed radio show *This American Life*.

ASSIGNMENTS

When you're ready to begin interviewing subjects for your film, employ Ken's techniques to set your subjects up for success. If you're not at this stage with a film project yet, strengthen your interview skills by practicing with a friend or creative collaborator.

When your subject arrives, Ken suggests setting expectations by sharing the following tips with them:

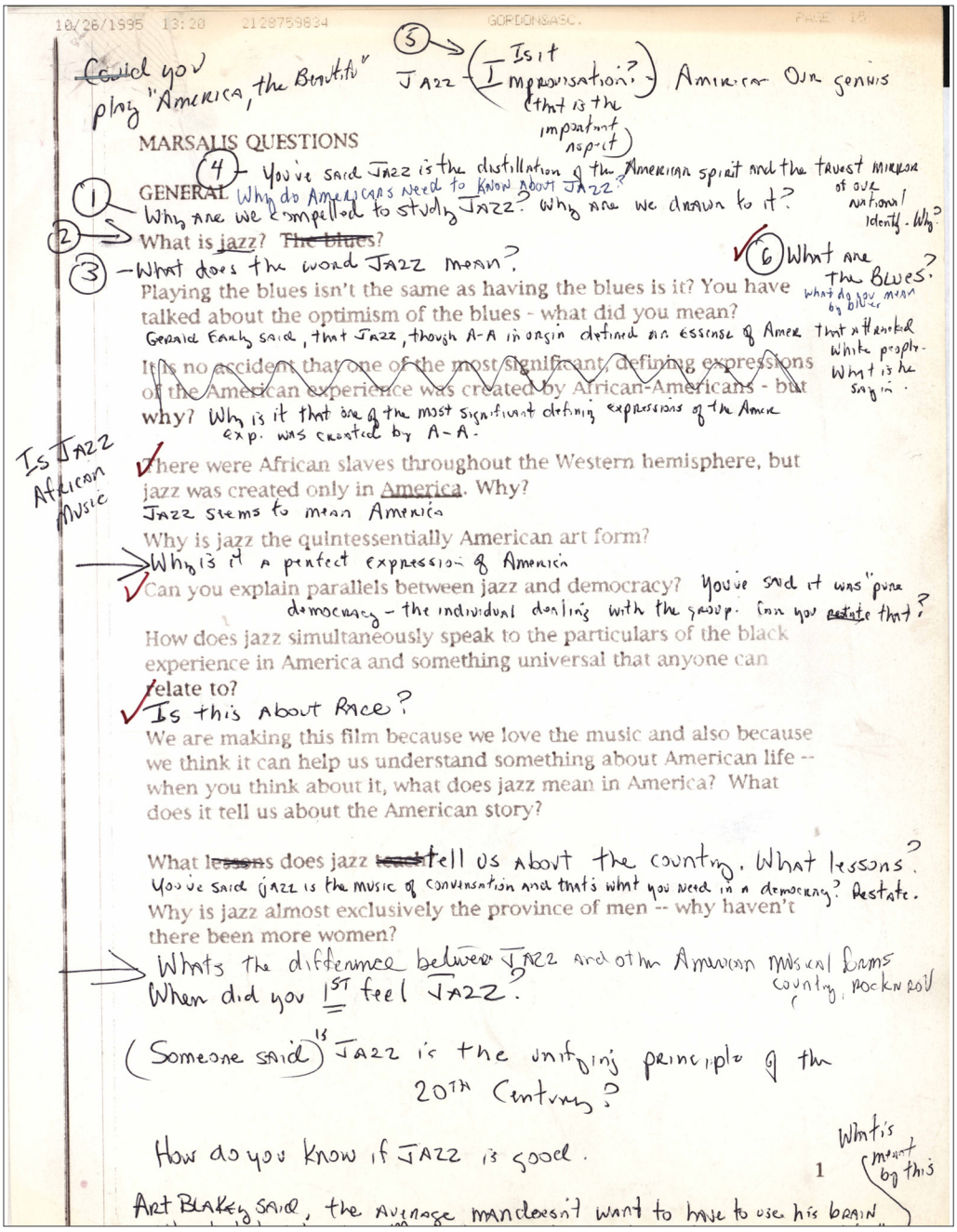
- "Don't look into the camera, look at me. I'll be right up next to the camera."
- "I'll ask you a question. I don't need a one syllable yes or no, but I also don't need a chapter. I need a paragraph."
- "Just remember that my question won't be in the final film, it will be edited out. So if I ask you 'Do you like chocolate ice cream?', if you say 'yes' or 'no,' that's meaningless to [an audience]. But if you say, 'I love chocolate ice cream,' you've just put my question into the answer."

Before you roll the camera, help orient your subject as to what to expect by adapting this script into your own. Remember to help them relax, and put them at ease by establishing a friendly rapport. If an interview gets off to a rocky start, see Chapter 16: Case Study: Navigating a Challenging Interview for tips on how to recover.

As needed, try to steer the next conversation using non-verbal cues like Ken describes in this lesson. Practice signaling to that person that they should continue talking, or that they should wrap up their story. If you're struggling, never fear. With practice, you'll get the hang of it.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

To develop a sense of the type of interview questions that work well, and why, it may help to examine the following artifact from Ken's personal archives. Ken shares a fax containing questions for jazz musician and composer Wynton Marsalis. He calls this his 'marching papers' for the interview, but he almost immediately goes off script, and scribbles new questions in the margins.



For the following exercise, suppose you are the one answering Ken's questions. In your notebook, write down your own answers to the first question as originally written on Ken's fax—"What is jazz? The blues?" Even if you know nothing about jazz history or theory, pretend you do, and use whatever knowledge you have in your answer, however squishy.

When you finish writing, reflect on whether this was an easy or hard question to answer. In a way, the wording is very direct and to the point, but perhaps it needs to be unpacked further in order to get to more a meaty answer.

Now, start over. Copy and then answer in sequence each of the questions that Ken improvised in the moment (the ones numbered one through six and then circled). Once you finish, compare your new answers to the original. Are you more articulate in one or the other? Which questions prompted you to write the longest answer? Did any of Ken's ad-lib questions unlock something for you that made the question of "what is jazz" easier to answer?

In Ken's own words, "Nowhere does it say, 'Get Wynton to do this.' It's something that happens because you create certain conditions in the questions that you ask." What conditions can you create in the interviews for your own project in order to make great moments possible?

CHAPTER 16

Navigating a Challenging Interview

NAVIGATING A CHALLENGING INTERVIEW

SUBCHAPTERS

Case Study: Paul Fussell, *The War*

Putting Emotionally Potent Interviews to Use

CHAPTER REVIEW

Documentaries often grapple with challenging material, and that can entail asking your subjects to talk about painful memories and difficult experiences on camera. In such sensitive situations, it is your job to gently ease your guest into the topic, helping them feel comfortable with sharing such intimate details about their lives. One of the first and simplest tricks is to always have water available. A difficult topic can trigger a dry throat or cottony mouth, which can in turn initiate a feedback loop of self-awareness and nerves. A quick swig of water can help.

To access elusive or guarded memories, ask your subject to describe past events as if they were happening in the present, rather than in the distant past. Ken shares an example of this strategy from raw interview footage for his series *The War*. For over three reels of film (about 32 minutes), Second Lieutenant Paul Fussell struggled to describe his experiences in a natural, non-academic way. Ken was beginning to worry that they might need to stop rolling the camera. His key breakthrough came between reels, when Ken picked up on a peripheral comment that Paul made about replacement recruits being 'kids.' Ken used this as an opportunity to ask about Paul's own age at the time, which prompted Paul to more easily imagine himself as a 19-year-old soldier again.

Listen very closely for ideas or emotions that seem hidden beneath any hesitations or awkwardness. Try reflecting what you observe back to the subject. In Paul's case, Ken noted simply: "You've seen some bad stuff. You've seen some horrible things. Tell me about that." In a way, this is more of a summary than a question, but it worked to unlock Paul's memory and led to one of the most impactful moments of the film. Use this same strategy in your own practice. By reflecting what you've been hearing or sensing during an interview, you are holding up a mirror to your subject that can help them to clarify and more vividly describe what they feel.

Finally, if a line of questioning is going nowhere, let go of your agenda. Throw out any preconceptions of how you thought the conversation should go, and take a step back. Listen for what your subject truly wants to talk about, and then improvise.

"We should be pretty honest that in most of our interviews, we're there for what we could call the tough stuff, the difficult stuff, the painful stuff."

Variations for the Healing of Arinuschka, Arvo Pärt, used with kind permission of Universal Edition AG, www.universaledition.com

LEARN MORE

Ken's approach to navigating a challenging interview actually has a lot in common with the technique of active listening, used in counseling and psychotherapy. Popularized by the therapist and author Carl Rogers in the 1950s, this technique involves paraphrasing and restating the feelings and words of the speaker. Doing so shows that you are listening and trying to understand someone's experiences, and gives them an opportunity to clarify and elaborate. Active listening is often even more effective than asking a question when the goal is to encourage someone to keep talking.

To learn more about active listening, check out a book by Carl Rogers called *A Way of Being* (Houghton Mifflin, 1980), published near the end of his life and career. The first chapter, "Experiences in Communication," is especially relevant to the present discussion.

ASSIGNMENTS

When you tackle the assignment from Chapter 15: Conducting an Interview, try to follow the tips outlined in this chapter. Provide your subject with a glass of water, give plenty of positive reinforcement, and listen actively. Be ready to pivot with your subject's answers and emotions in order to follow the strongest story.

After you've finished conducting your first interview, reflect back on how you did, and write in your notebook responses to the following questions:

- Were there moments when you could tell that your subject was nervous? How could you tell?
- Were you able to make your subject feel at ease? What did you do or say to help them feel more comfortable?
- In terms of your own questions and prompts during the interview, what worked and what didn't? Think about questions that got a one-word answer, versus questions that prompted a compelling and detailed story. What distinguished one prompt from the other?
- How closely did you stick to your question list? If you veered off, when and why did you pursue a new line of questioning, and what was the fruit of that detour?

CHAPTER 17

Nonfiction Cinematography

NONFICTION CINEMATOGRAPHY

SUBCHAPTERS

Derive Style From the Demands of Your Story

Steal the Shot

Don't Be Limited by Gear

Case Study: POV in the Battle of Antietam

Lighting an Interview

Shoot Interviews With a Lean Crew

CHAPTER REVIEW

Among the storytelling elements at your disposal, the one most integrally linked to filmmaking is cinematography. Without moving images, there is no movie. Although technically a documentary film could be made using only archival photos and audio, most of Ken's films include new interviews with experts and witnesses. Ken also relies on live cinematography when crafting stories particularly if there are no visual artifacts from the time period. For instance, no footage exists before 1900, and photography wasn't invented until 1839. When your story is older than the technology of film itself (or when there simply wasn't any visual documentation of an event), then live cinematography becomes a primary storytelling tool.

"If there's going to be one rule in documentary filming and in interviewing—do not have your subject in a rocking chair."

You will need to choose a visual style for the cinematography in your film. Ken tends to favor impressionistic compositions in his films, treating them as if they're paintings. But he also uses cinematography to focus the audience's attention and engage them viscerally in a historical moment. In *The Civil War*, live footage was integrated brilliantly into archival scenes about the battle of Antietam. Interestingly, Ken chose not to use Civil War reenactors to portray the troop movements and fighting. He shies away from such techniques, preferring evocative imagery that suggests aspects of an event, without representing it literally. The Antietam sequence begins with a shot of cannons on the battlefield, silhouetted against a red sky. Next, a live footage flyover of yellow cornfields transitions to handheld footage from the point of view of a soldier marching through the fields. None of these images required actors to play a role or mimic an action. In fact, the only reenactment in the entire Civil War series is that of a horse hoof pounding through a puddle of water.

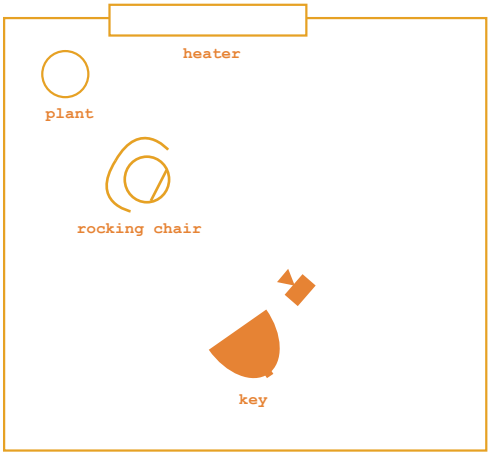
When filming outdoors, Ken generally relies on natural lighting, working with the effects of sun and shadow. He works with a lean crew—a cameraperson, an assistant, a sound person, and himself. For exterior location shoots they travel with a camera, tripod, and sound kit, but rarely with a lighting kit. For sit-down interviews with experts and witnesses, however, controlled lighting is important. You should place your main source of light, called a key light, off to one side of your interview subject so as to create a slight shadow on the opposite side of the person's face. A back light, placed behind the subject, will help to define and highlight the subject's features and outlines. Experiment to find the right balance for your interview, potentially adding a third fill light to soften any harsh shadows created by the other lights. The priority, for Ken, is to light the person you are interviewing in a way that makes them feel comfortable and at ease.

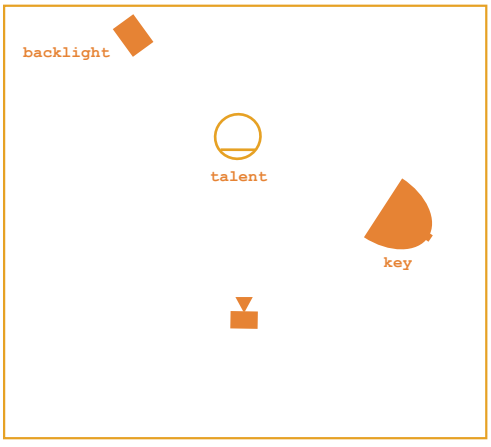
LEARN MORE

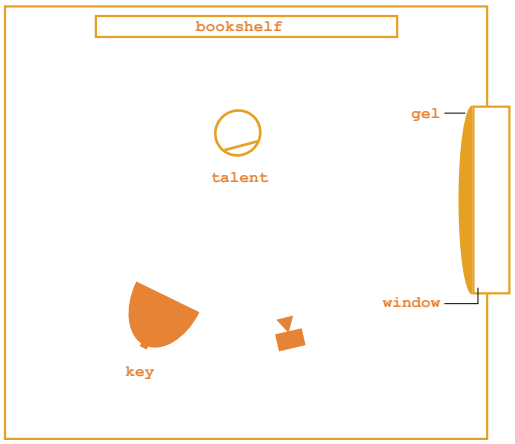
Ken works with a lean crew, and so can you. *The Shut Up and Shoot Documentary Guide* (Routledge, 2014) by Anthony Q Artis is a fun and approachable introduction to low budget documentary filmmaking. Read the book for tips on what kind of gear to use, how to assemble a crew, how to light an interview, and more.

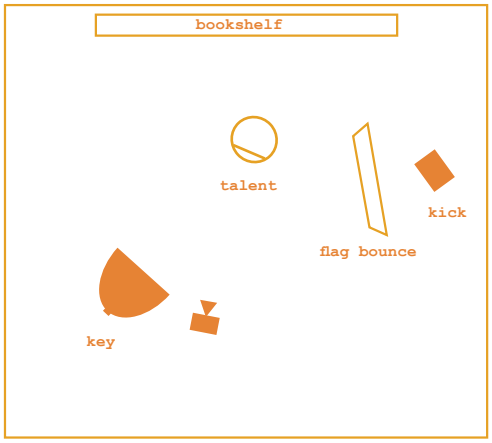
For a more advanced take on the visual craft of filmmaking, check out Blain Brown's *Cinematography: Theory and Practice: Image Making for Cinematographers and Directors, Volume 3* (Routledge, 2016). This text, which is required reading in many film schools, breaks down how each visual element that appears on screen can serve and enhance the story.

For a behind-the-scenes look at the lighting setups for David McCullough's interviews, see the diagrams below illustrating the pared down gear.









ASSIGNMENT

When everyone has a camera in their cell phone, more and more moments in our lives are being documented visually, making it easy to rely on archival imagery in storytelling. It's important to exercise other storytelling muscles, though. For this assignment, think of an important experience in your life that was NOT photographed or filmed. Without relying on actors or re-enactors, how might you represent this experience on screen using cinematography?

Create a shooting script consisting of narration or interview bites about this experience, and then brainstorm footage that you could collect to visually represent the story. Try the following steps:

Take a sheet of paper and draw a line down the center to create two columns.

In the left column, write down each phrase of your narration down in a separate row.

In the right column, brainstorm different ideas for visual images to pair with each phrase of narration.

With this improvised shooting script in hand, go out and shoot all the proposed live footage from the right column, then record your narration from the left column and edit them together in your preferred software.

Remember: when generating ideas for what to shoot, think about visual equivalence, not just illustration!

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Take a quick look at the shot log from Ken's notes for *Brooklyn Bridge,* reproduced on the following pages. There are 13 shots listed for reel 91B, and eight for reel 92. All of them are visual options to pair with narration about the bridge.

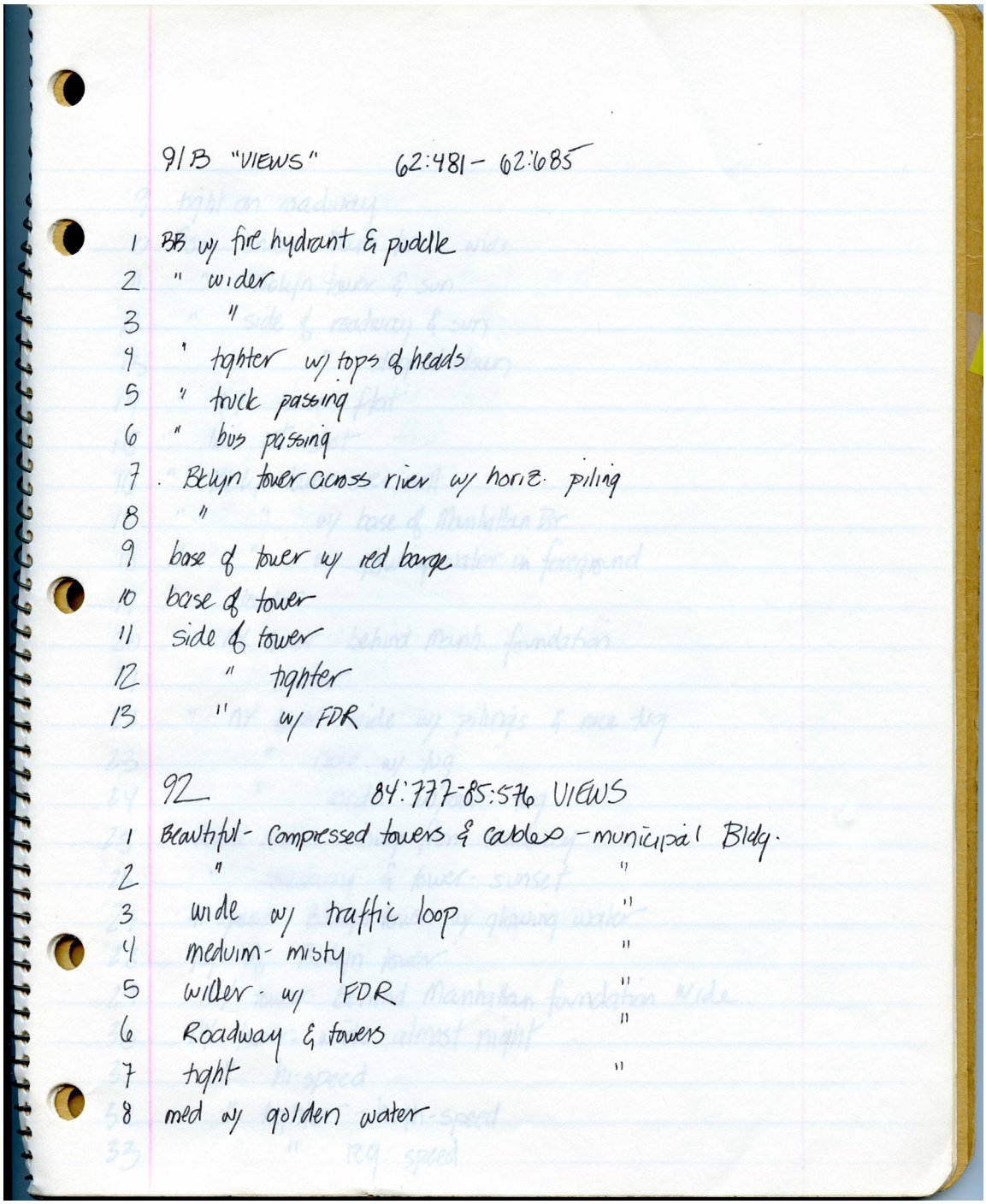
Which shot variation might you choose to pair with narration about tourism in the city?

Which shot might work well with narration about the bridge being a peaceful spot for contemplation?

If the narration is emphasizing the bridge's gritty, industrial surroundings, which shots could you select from?

Choose a final shot from the list that intrigues you, and imagine what narration you might write to accompany that image.

Think about what shot lists you might want to gather for your own film. Approach this as a divergent-thinking task, meaning that you should generate many possible solutions in a free-flowing and spontaneous way. Look for unexpected connections, strive for equivalency as well as illustration, and challenge yourself to think outside the box. You are creating options for your film, and the more flexible your visual palette is, the stronger your visual storytelling will become in the final edit.



9/B "VIEWS" 62:481 – 62:685

1 BB w/ fire hydrant & puddle
2 " wider
3 "
4 " tighter w/ tops of heads
5 " truck passing
6 " bus passing
7 Bklyn tower across river w/ horiz. piling
8 "
9 base of tower w/ red barge
10 base of tower
11 side of tower
12 " tighter
13 " w/ FDR

92 84:777-85:576 VIEWS

1 Beautiful - Compressed towers & cables - municipal Bldg.
2 " "
3 wide w/ traffic loop "
4 medium - misty "
5 wider - w/ FDR "
6 Roadway & towers "
7 tight "
8 med w/ golden water

CHAPTER 18

The Power of Music

THE POWER OF MUSIC

SUBCHAPTERS

Record Music Early On

An Establishing Shot in Your Heart

Music + Picture = the Holy Ghost

The Power of Period Music

Aim High When Sourcing

Keep an Open Mind

Case Study: Pairing Picture With "Ashokan Farewell"

CHAPTER REVIEW

Music is one of the most powerful and efficient tools to generate emotion and engagement in viewers. Yet, for many filmmakers, it is an afterthought, composed only once a film is finished and locked. The composer, in such cases, conforms the music to decisions already made by the editor regarding the pace and rhythm of various scenes. Ken's process takes the reverse approach: he works with a composer to begin recording music right from the start. As a result, the editor conforms their work to fit the music, shortening or lengthening scenes as needed.

"[Music is] not the icing on the cake. It's the fudge."

In his documentaries, Ken embraces a technique that is common in feature films—that of recurring musical themes. In David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), for instance, the main theme is instantly recognizable and appears dozens of times through the score. Musical themes can serve as signals to viewers that an event or emotion similar to what came before is now happening again. Characters may have themes as well, announced during their initial introduction and then reintroduced, with variations, during each subsequent appearance.

At times, there might be recorded music that you think is perfect for your film. Ken encourages you to go ahead and use it, with the caveat that licensing music can often be extremely expensive. You may also decide to work with professional musicians to recreate music of the period, using the same type of instruments that were played at that time. For historical documentaries, this has the benefit of helping resurrect the past and convey to viewers what people were listening to back then.

Think of music as comprising the third part of a holy trinity of film that also includes picture and word. In the same way that words can be paired with pictures, music can be juxtaposed with either image or word to add an additional layer of meaning to the mix. For instance, Ken uses the U.S. anthem "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" in an ironic way in *Unforgivable Blackness*, pairing the music with imagery of racial violence and the Ku Klux Klan, in order to suggest our nation's failed promise of equality.

LEARN MORE

Ken tosses out the term "most favored nations," but unless you license media for a living, you probably have no idea what this means. "MFN" means that you can't pay any rights holder less than the best paid, "most favored" rights holder. In music specifically, this provision helps ensure that the various owners of a piece of music get equal treatment in any licensing deal. If you want to license a song for a film that you are

producing, then there are various separate parties you may need to pay, including anyone involved in the composition of the music (the song-writers) as well as those involved in the master recording (the musicians who performed the music). This can have the effect of driving up the cost of licensing quite a bit for you, the producer. As a result, it can be more affordable to simply hire a composer to write a brand new score for your film than it is to license music that was written and recorded by other rights holders.

What does this legal term have to do with nations? The term dates way back to the 17th century, when European states were first striving to establish equal trade opportunities with one another. The concept has since been applied to music licensing, film and television deals with actors, and to investment agreements in the entertainment industry.

When Ken discusses music for his series *The Civil War*, he mentions "A music" and "B music." Alphabetical letters are used by music theorists when analyzing the structure and form of a piece of music, with each letter designating different sections of a song. Dive deep into musical analysis with the best guide you could ask for: Leonard Bernstein, in the first of his acclaimed "Young People's Concerts." You can read the script of this lecture here or search YouTube for "What is Sonata Form?" and you'll likely find a digitized version of the original television broadcast.

If you're not sure what the main theme of *Lawrence of Arabia* sounds like, a quick Internet search will turn up a free YouTube track. Maurice Jarre composed the soundtrack for the film, as well as for an impressive list of other classics (*Doctor Zhivago*, *A Passage to India*, *Witness*, *Gorillas in the Mist*, *Ghost*, and many more).

Curious about how film composers approach their work? There's a doc for that. *Score: A Film Music Documentary* (2016) offers a glimpse into how Hollywood's best & brightest composers approach the special challenge of the film score.

ASSIGNMENT

If you are currently working on a film, think about the recurring thematic elements and characters in your story. For each major character, brainstorm that person's main qualities, defining characteristics, or motivations. Then, think about what kind of music fits with that role. Should this character be accompanied by elegant classical music? Brooding minor chords? Plucky pop refrains? Complicated jazz riffs? Experiment with pieces of music from your own collection that might define each person in your film. Then, do the same for each important issue that is dealt with in your film. If your documentary investigates corruption, then search for music tracks that sound like corruption. During your search, challenge yourself to experiment with musical styles that are unexpected, that elevate and add new elements to the mix (think of Ken's 1+1 = 3 recommendation from Chapter 12: Visual Storytelling: Cinematic Techniques).

Once you've collected some exciting options, share these with your editor to integrate while cutting, or pass them along to your composer to help convey what you imagine your film could sound like.

If you're feeling stuck, you might need to break free from your own personal music collection, and dig into a stock music source. Check out the stock music collections below.

- APM Music. With over 375,000 tracks (and growing), APM Music is probably the largest stock music library, and includes other services such as custom scoring and music director assistance. APM licensing fees tend to be more expensive than the other stock libraries in this list, but the price comes with quality.

- Jamendo Music. Jamendo is primarily a radio-streaming site, but it does also license music. Browse by genre, or search by keyword.

- Killer Tracks. Like APM Music, Killer Tracks offers other services besides licensing, including music-supervision. They specialize in digital albums, which are original works by well-known composers in the entertainment business.

- Musopen. Musopen is a non-profit library of music in the public domain. You can download recordings for free.

- Pond5. This stock media site allows you to quickly see the cost and listen to previews of music tracks that match your search criteria. They also feature a popular blog with tips for media creators of all types.

- PremiumBeat. PremiumBeat carefully curates its music collection, and provides perpetual licenses that allow you to use a track forever and on multiple projects, with no additional fees. Like Pond5, it features a great blog with info on all aspects of media creation.

- SoundTaxi. SoundTaxi has a great track record of working with brands, and includes many known artists in their collection of royalty free stock music.

- Stockmusic.net. Stockmusic.net allows you to purchase music for a one-time fee. You can search their collection by keyword, genre, instrument, and even mood.

CHAPTER 19

Editing: Process

EDITING: PROCESS

SUBCHAPTERS

Trust Your Editors and Give Them Space

Use a Blind Assembly to Find the Shape of Your Story

Navigating the Horror of the First Assembly

Cultivate a Fresh Eye

Screen Your Work

Give Yourself the Gift of Time

CHAPTER REVIEW

There's no way around it: good documentary storytelling takes time. And editing is absolutely central to that process. All other aspects of film—the research, the script, the images, words, sounds, and music—feed into the edit, where the creative team must synthesize, coordinate, and shape everything into its final form. Trust your collaborators, and try not to micromanage. The editing process cannot be rushed, and no amount of planning, determination, or money can replace the simple fact that the more time you have, the better your film can become.

To reduce the time and energy spent refining story structure early on, Ken developed a process he calls 'the blind assembly.' Occurring before a first picture pass, the blind assembly is done without visual components. Ken records 'scratch' narration himself, which the editor strings together with voiceover and interview selects to make the first cohesive 'look' at the film. The key is to work only with words, so that your editor isn't spending valuable time crafting scenes only for them to be cut out in large swaths as you focus in on your story. In essence, a blind assembly is akin to creating a radio play, and can be used to assess how well the storytelling is working in its purest, aural form.

Your first assembly is going to feel far too long, and painful to watch. Don't fret—this is as it should be. Laying out all your options is an essential step towards honing into the core story you want to tell. What follows next is an iterative process of trimming, restructuring, compressing, and rewriting, continually honing in on the most important narrative elements.

During that revision process, always hold onto your enthusiasm and try to view the film with fresh eyes, as if you are a first time viewer. To aid in this task, hold informal screenings for each successive cut. You can invite anyone you trust, or whom you think will provide helpful insights—friends, neighbors, colleagues, historical advisors, or even subjects from your film. The point is to discuss, find out where viewers are confused or losing interest, and gauge how well your story is working at different points in the edit.

LEARN MORE

POV, a long-running TV series on PBS, is a wonderful showcase of independent nonfiction film. Explore their catalog of shorts and feature films here, catch the next broadcast, or watch a selection of full films online. The website for the series also hosts an informative blog called "Enter the Edit," by Eileen Meyer. Each entry features a conversation with an editor about their craft. It's a great starting point for getting acquainted with the process of editing compelling nonfiction stories.

"Your first assembly should look terrible. It should be way, way long. If it's not terrible and it's not way, way long, something's wrong."

If you want to explore the topic in even more depth, read *Documentary Editing: Principles & Practice* by Jacob Bricca ACE (Routledge 2017). In consultation with some of the best doc editors working today, the book offers strategies for tackling the editing process.

ASSIGNMENT

If you're working on a film, try making a blind assembly for a scene—perhaps one you are struggling with. As Ken recommends, string out only the interview bites, so that you can hear your story structure as a radio play. At this stage, don't worry about adding picture; the idea is to simply see if your story structure is working. Give yourself permission to make it long—the idea is to see which bites or verité moments help craft your story.

After you've listened to it a few times through, identify moments that don't serve your scene, and cut them. Do several rounds of this until you feel it works for your film.

CHAPTER 20

Editing: Principles

EDITING: PRINCIPLES

SUBCHAPTERS

Kill the Little Darlings to Serve the Story Arc

Feel the Edit Musically

Unify Picture and Audio to Create a Singular Sensory Experience

Find the Right Pace for the Scene

Every Addition or Subtraction of a Frame Counts

Let This Imperfect Thing Go

CHAPTER REVIEW

Ken offers a concise definition of editing as "the distillation of the material you've collected into a coherent story." The events in your own daily life, for instance, are manifold and seemingly random, yet if someone asks "How was your day?", you answer by selecting and ordering those events into a more palatable narrative.

That process of distillation involves what Ken calls "merciless triage." You will almost certainly have to sacrifice elements that you love in order to better serve the larger story as a whole. Beautiful shots, interesting moments and engaging scenes must be evaluated in the context of the arc of the entire film—not in isolation. Does a given element propel your film forward, or does it disrupt or destabilize the flow? Approach that question with humility, acknowledging that you may be wrong about whether that element is essential or important, and allow the story to go places that you didn't anticipate.

The work of film editing actually has much in common with music. You can speak about holding either a shot or a note a beat longer, for example, or pausing at a period or a rest. Rhythm and pacing is just as important to movie editing as it is to musical composition. In film, pacing is largely determined by how quickly or slowly the cuts occur. Additionally, images can compete for attention with words. Ensure that viewers have time to process both what they are hearing and what they are seeing. Never force your audience to choose one perceptual channel over the other.

Decisions about pacing are largely intuitive. What are all the elements telling you? What does the scene need? Ken's films often aspire to make the audience lean in with interest, but there are definitely scenes (such as during the Tet Offensive scene in *The Vietnam War*) that call for a fast cutting, MTV-style sensory assault. Let the story determine your pacing, rhythm, and cutting style, rather than vice-versa.

Sometimes the decision about when to cut away from a particular shot may come down to just a few frames of film. Although a 12th of a second may seem barely noticeable, Ken is convinced that it can often make all the difference. He remembers when Amy Stechler, the editor on *Brooklyn Bridge,* challenged him to find one frame of film that she had cut out, and Ken found it. He encourages you to cultivate that same level of awareness and attention to detail.

"Somebody just took out a frame from my film, and I want it back."

How do you know when your film is done? You can fuss and tweak forever, but ultimately there comes a time when you must abandon the polishing and commit to the film as it has been shaped, however imperfect. Your movie then becomes an artifact that ought to be preserved, rather than tinkered with endlessly. Embrace your creative product as it is, and share it with the world.

LEARN MORE

Read *In the Blink of An Eye* by Walter Murch (Silman-James Press, 1992). This classic essay by the acclaimed Hollywood editor explores the question of why cuts work. Less technical than philosophical, it's a wonderful introduction to the intuitions and micro-decisions required of the film editor.

Watch the documentary *The Cutting Edge* (2004). Though released nearly 15 years ago, it's still a highly enjoyable and informative exploration of the craft of film editing. Walter Murch himself, together with a cast of Hollywood directors and editors, discuss the gut feelings behind shaping raw footage into dynamic and arresting cinema.

ASSIGNMENT:

1. To experiment with the difference a single frame can make, try the following exercise. Review your footage from an interview you've shot (perhaps draw upon the one that you were assigned in Chapter 15: Conducting an Interview). Find a moment when your subject has finished speaking, and has ended with a facial expression that you could linger upon before moving on to the next image. Inevitably in the raw footage, that person will eventually shift their position or change their expression. How long can you hold on the expression before it changes?

   To get precise, cue the playhead to just after your subject finishes speaking, and advance one frame at a time until the moment their expression begins to change into something else. Experiment to see what kind of a difference a single frame can make. You should notice that if you hold *too* long before cutting away, then that microsecond shift in your subject's expression will be noticeable, and will perhaps even distract from the emotion you want to linger upon. On the other hand, if you don't hold long enough, it may feel like the editing has cut short the moment, undercutting the emotion and shifting too abruptly to the next image.

   Some editors will go so far as to subtly slow down the speed of a shot and extend the duration of a facial expression, in order to get...just... the right.....pause.

2. The decision to cut a scene from your film can be a difficult and painful one, but many directors soften the blow by including the best deleted scenes as extra features on the DVD (or as bonus content online).

   Search for a DVD or Blu-ray disc that has received strong reviews for its special features. Collector's Editions are often where the richest content can be found, since they are geared towards film enthusiasts who want a glimpse behind the scenes.

   After you finish viewing the main feature, watch all of the deleted scenes that have been made available. Some DVDs even provide an option to listen to a commentary track with the film's director, who explains the decision-making that went into cutting out each scene from the film. Even if there isn't commentary, think about the following questions for each outtake:

   What's working in this scene? Is there anything about it that you really like?

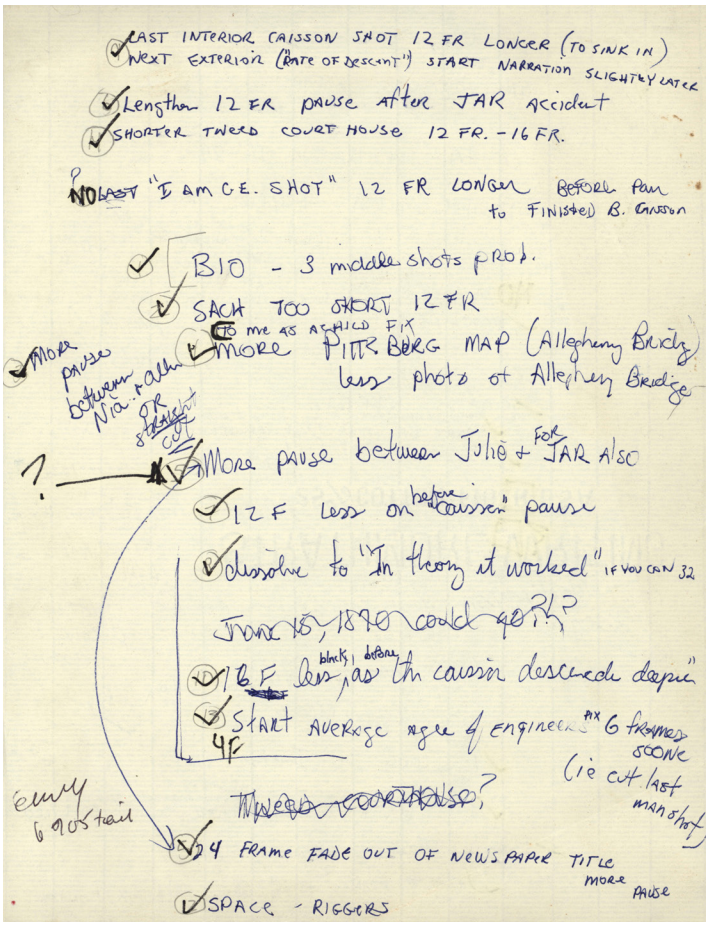
   What's not working in this scene? Does the decision to remove it make sense to you? Why or why not? Would you have made the same call as the director?

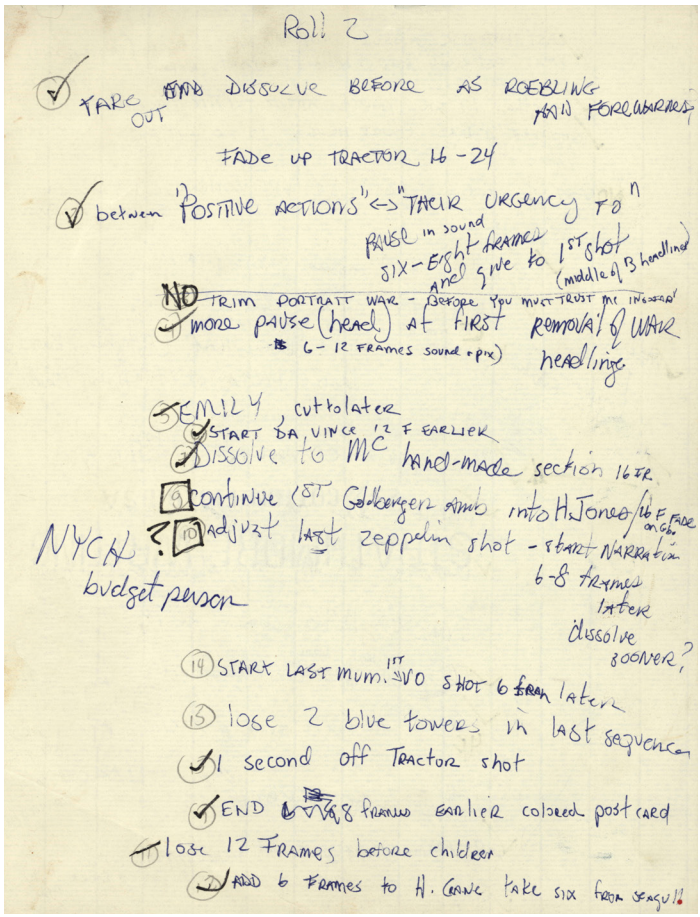
   Revisit the place in the main feature where this scene would have taken place (if that can be determined). What works well about the final version? How might the film have been impacted if the deleted scene was left intact?

   Editing, as Ken likes to say, is a process of distilling the syrup from the sap. Deleted scenes are a great way to see what was separated out from the final film, and why.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

When Ken smiles and says "somebody just took out a frame from my film, and I want it back," he's actually not exaggerating. Check out these notes from Ken's first film, *Brooklyn Bridge*.





As you decipher Ken's handwriting, track the following data:

- Scan the notes for any and every mention of "frames," often abbreviated by Ken as "FR." On these two pages alone, he requests frame adjustments nearly two dozen times!

- In film, there are 24 frames per second, so when Ken requests an adjustment of six frames, he is talking about just a fourth of a second. Reflect on the precision of the changes outlined in these notes. Do you have a perfectionist drive akin to Ken's?

- Ken requests frame adjustments not only to the duration of images, but to other elements of the edit, such as fades, dissolves, pauses in the audio, and the timing of narration and sound effects. Every one of these decisions can impact the rhythm and pacing of the edit. When working on your own project, try to manipulate these filmic elements with as much attention to detail as Ken does here.

CHAPTER 21

Editing Case Study: *The Vietnam War* Introduction

EDITING CASE STUDY: THE VIETNAM WAR INTRODUCTION

SUBCHAPTERS

Draft 4.5, July 2013

Draft 5, September 2013

Draft 12, November 2015

Draft 13, January 2016

Final Cut, October 2017

CHAPTER REVIEW

Dan White is an editor who has worked with Ken for 17 years. Million of viewers around the world have seen *The Vietnam War*. In this case study, Ken shares unique access to the evolution of Episode One by guiding us through four early versions of the opening sequence, and then screening the final result. What is ultimately only an eight-minute scene in the final film began four and a half years earlier as a 28-minute blind assembly—which, you may recall from Chapter 19: Editing: Process, is essentially an audio-only "radio play" of potential narration and interviews for the scene.

"I wanna sort of parachute you into my own process."

In their first blind assembly, Ken's voice can be heard reading scratch narration, which is intended to be temporary and used only to experiment with phrasing and timing for rough edits. Following this narration, Ken tries a technique that has worked well for previous series—that of a *dramatis personae,* or an introduction to the cast of characters. They include choice quotes about the war from over a dozen people, beginning with veteran John Musgrave's confession that "I'm scared of the dark, still."

A few blind assemblies later, all but two of the talking heads have been cut out of the opening. Ken realized that their familiar *dramatis personae* technique isn't really working for this series, and they begin to experiment with an entirely new idea. They cut a visual sequence that involves iconic footage from the Vietnam War being played in reverse, with backwards motion, creating a disorienting experience for the viewer that reflects the troubling memories being replayed in the minds of soldiers who survived the conflict. Still not quite satisfied, Ken searches for a way to also anchor the series in the American experience, and to set up that there were conflicting truths at play for the people involved.

By draft 12, many visual elements are in place, including archival footage that is still watermarked, or digitally stamped with time code and newsreel logos—meaning that the material had not been licensed and paid for yet. But something key has been omitted: the "scared of the dark" quote no longer opens the film. Musgrave's story required viewers to know more about the larger geopolitical context than they could be expected to know at the start of the episode. A new select by Karl Marlantes that speaks of how divisive and traumatic the war was for everyone involved and ends with the rhetorical question "what happened?" serves to better reflect the starting point for the majority of viewers first embarking upon the TV series.

Footage in the video lesson courtesy of Screenocean/Reuters.

Excerpts from "Letters from Vietnam" courtesy of Drew Associates, www.drewassociates.com.

The next version that Ken shares is a rough cut of the film, meaning that he has found the narrative form, rhythm, and pacing for the opening. He is happy with the order of the script, and the imagery in this version is for the most part what will survive to the finished film. What remains is refining, perfecting, and polishing—an iterative process that may still require many drafts and weeks of work.

The final version contains clean, licensed footage, a title card and graphic, composed music and sound effects, and professional narration by none other than Peter Coyote (the actor that Ken will introduce in Chapter 22: Recording and Using Voiceover). Some 80% of the initial blind assembly is gone, including the quote by John Musgrave that originally seemed essential. But what remains, as you will see, is masterful.

LEARN MORE

As you watch the opening sequence to *The Vietnam War*, you might recognize something familiar about the music. If you are a fan of either Nine Inch Nails or the soundtrack to *The Social Network*, then you will know the names of Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross, the two musical artists who contributed nearly ninety minutes of original music to the soundtrack. PBS.org features a brief, though fascinating interview with the frequent collaborators about their work on the project.

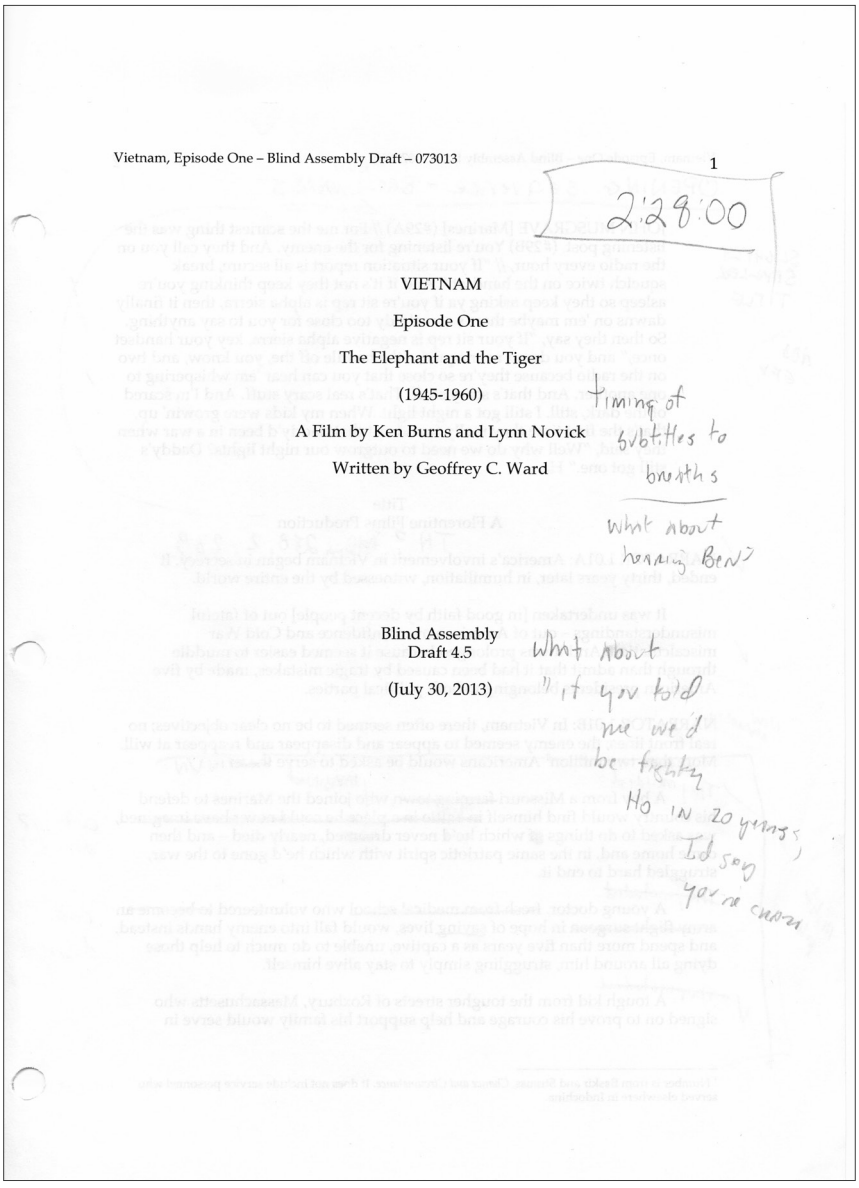
The term *dramatis personae* is Latin, and it means "the masks of the drama." Ken uses the term to indicate something more than simply a cast list. He is introducing his audience to the main storytellers of the film, and creating a first impression of an issue through their eyes. Other filmmakers use *dramatis personae* differently. In the movie *Snatch*, for example, a music montage introduces each character using a momentary freeze frame to identify them by name. *The Royal Tenenbaums* shows each character as a child in its prologue, and then later identifies the actors playing their adult counterparts. In the first episode of *Arrested Development*, a narrator introduces each character with a humorous tidbit about their backstory. As you continue with your own everyday media consumption, be on the lookout for other examples of creative spins on the *dramatis personae* convention.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Let's examine how the editing decisions discussed in this lesson were documented in corresponding scripts, reproduced on the following pages. Compare two drafts of Episode One, the first from blind assembly 4.5, and the second from the final locked picture, draft 16.

First, examine the blind assembly script.

- Take a look at the cover page for this draft. Note that this draft dates from July 3, 2013, and runs for two hours and 28 minutes.



Vietnam, Episode One – Blind Assembly Draft – 073013 1

2:28:00

VIETNAM

Episode One

The Elephant and the Tiger

(1945-1960)

A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick

Written by Geoffrey C. Ward

timing of subtitles to breaths

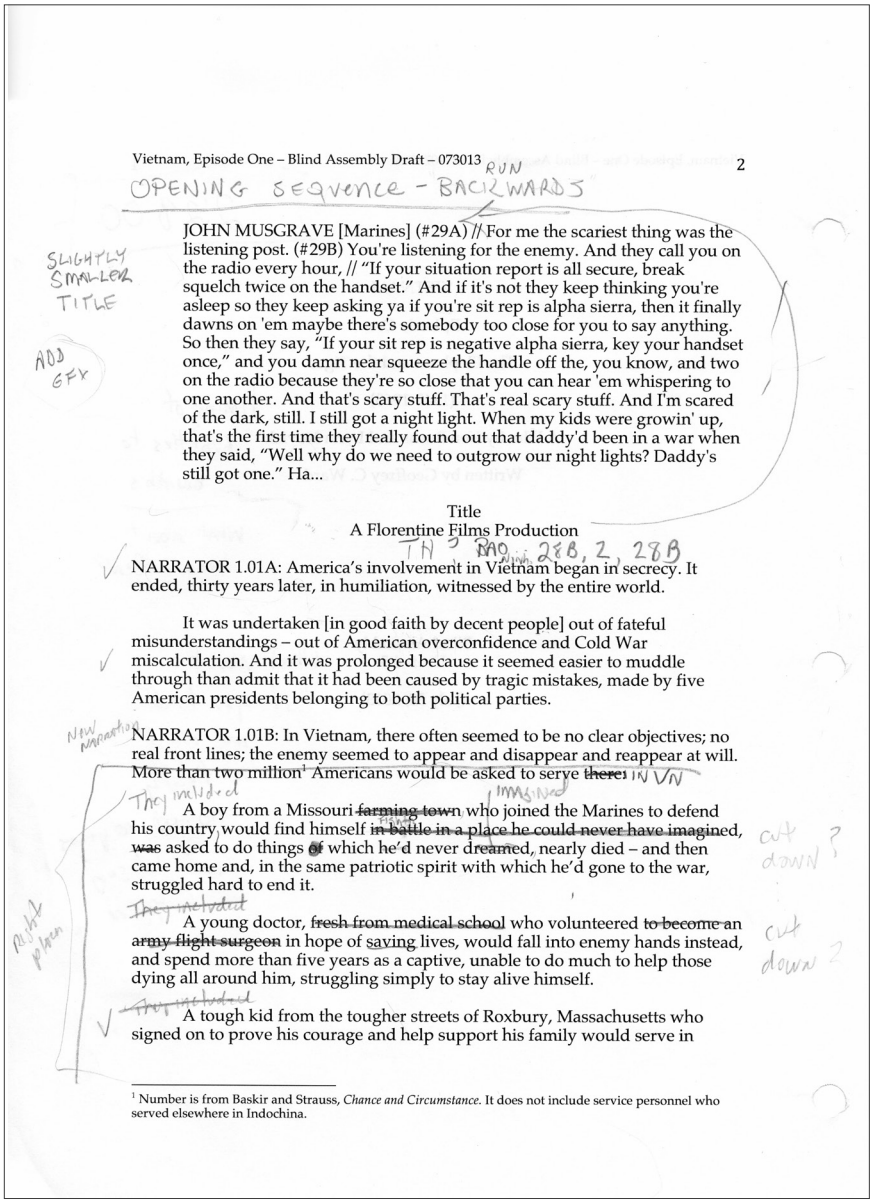
what about hearing Ben?

Blind Assembly
Draft 4.5

(July 30, 2013)

what about "if you told me we'd be fighting Ho in 20 years, I'd say you're crazy"

- Now, read through the first page of the script. How do you feel about the full John Musgrave story? Do you think Ken was right to cut this quotation from the opening of the film? Why or why not?



Vietnam, Episode One – Blind Assembly Draft – 073013 2

OPENING SEQUENCE - BACKWARDS

JOHN MUSGRAVE [Marines] (#29A) // For me the scariest thing was the listening post. (#29B) You're listening for the enemy. And they call you on the radio every hour, // "If your situation report is all secure, break squelch twice on the handset." And if it's not they keep thinking you're asleep so they keep asking ya if you're sit rep is alpha sierra, then it finally dawns on 'em maybe there's somebody too close for you to say anything. So then they say, "If your sit rep is negative alpha sierra, key your handset once," and you damn near squeeze the handle off the, you know, and two on the radio because they're so close that you can hear 'em whispering to one another. And that's scary stuff. That's real scary stuff. And I'm scared of the dark, still. I still got a night light. When my kids were growin' up, that's the first time they really found out that daddy'd been in a war when they said, "Well why do we need to outgrow our night lights? Daddy's still got one." Ha...

Title
A Florentine Films Production

NARRATOR 1.01A: America's involvement in Vietnam began in secrecy. It ended, thirty years later, in humiliation, witnessed by the entire world.

It was undertaken [in good faith by decent people] out of fateful misunderstandings – out of American overconfidence and Cold War miscalculation. And it was prolonged because it seemed easier to muddle through than admit that it had been caused by tragic mistakes, made by five American presidents belonging to both political parties.

NARRATOR 1.01B: In Vietnam, there often seemed to be no clear objectives; no real front lines; the enemy seemed to appear and disappear and reappear at will. More than two million[1] Americans would be asked to serve ~~there~~ in VN

A boy from a Missouri ~~farming town~~ who joined the Marines to defend his country would find himself ~~in battle in a place he could never have imagined~~, ~~was~~ asked to do things ~~of~~ which he'd never ~~dreamed~~, nearly died – and then came home and, in the same patriotic spirit with which he'd gone to the war, struggled hard to end it.

A young doctor, ~~fresh from medical school~~ who volunteered ~~to become an army flight surgeon~~ in hope of saving lives, would fall into enemy hands instead, and spend more than five years as a captive, unable to do much to help those dying all around him, struggling simply to stay alive himself.

A tough kid from the tougher streets of Roxbury, Massachusetts who signed on to prove his courage and help support his family would serve in

[1] Number is from Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*. It does not include service personnel who served elsewhere in Indochina.

Next, read the first two pages of the lock script, up through the title card. These pages contain various notations that reveal aspects of the source material used in the final edit. Re-watch the excerpt from *The Vietnam War* introduction (the last three-and-a-half minutes of the video for this lesson) for clues about what some of these symbols mean.

- The abbreviation MX is used to identify when a music track is being used.

- Brackets following a speaker's name indicate information that appears on screen in their lower-third text ID.

Finally, read through the quotations that occur on pages two and three. Out of all the words uttered and recorded by presidential leaders, Ken selected these specific quotes, and arranged them in reverse chronological order. How would you describe the cumulative effect of these statements, and what historical argument do you think Ken is crafting here?

THE VIETNAM WAR

Episode One

Déjà Vu

(1858-1961)

A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick

Written by Geoffrey C. Ward

Title:
VIEWER DISCRETION ADVISED
This film contains mature content,
strong language and graphic violence.

Title:
A
FLORENTINE FILMS
Production

MX: *The Marine Corps Hymn* - John Philip Sousa

KARL MARLANTES [Marines/1969]: Coming home from Vietnam was close to as traumatic as the war itself. For years, nobody talked about Vietnam. We were friends with a young couple. And it was only after twelve years that the two wives were talking. Found out that we both had been Marines in Vietnam. Never said a word about it. Never mentioned it. And the whole country was like that. It was so divisive. And it's like living in a family with an alcoholic father. It's "Shh… We don't talk about that." Our country did that with Vietnam. It's only been very recently that I think that, you know, the baby boomers are finally starting to say, "What happened? What happened?"

MX: *A Familiar Taste* – Trent Reznor & Atticus Ross

HENRY KISSINGER: What we need now in this country is to heal the wounds and to put Vietnam behind us.

RICHARD NIXON: The killing in this tragic war must stop.

LYNDON JOHNSON: General Westmoreland's strategy is producing results.

LYNDON JOHNSON: The enemy is no longer closer to victory.

ROBERT McNAMARA: No matter how you measure it, we're better off than we thought we would be at this time.

REPORTER: You have been less than candid as to how deeply we are involved in Vietnam.
JOHN KENNEDY: We have increased our assistance to the government, its logistics. We have not sent combat troops there.

DWIGHT EISENHOWER: You have a row of dominoes set up and you knock over the first one and the last one, certainly that it will go over.

HARRY TRUMAN: If aggression is successful in Korea, we can expect it to spread throughout Asia and Europe and to this hemisphere.

Title:
THE VIETNAM WAR

MX: *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* – Bob Dylan

MAX CLELAND [Army]: Viktor Frankl, who survived the death camps... ah... in WWII, wrote a book called Man's Search for Meaning. You know, "to live is to suffer. To survive is to find meaning in suffering." And for those of us who suffered because of Vietnam... ah... that's been our quest... ah... ever since.

NARRATOR: America's involvement in Vietnam began in secrecy. It ended, thirty years later, in failure, witnessed by the entire world.

It was begun in good faith by decent people out of fateful misunderstandings, American overconfidence and Cold War miscalculation.

And it was prolonged because it seemed easier to muddle through than admit that it had been caused by tragic decisions, made by five American presidents, belonging to both political parties.

Before the war was over, more than 58,000 Americans would be dead.

At least 250,000 South Vietnamese troops died in the conflict, as well. So did over a million North Vietnamese soldiers and Viet Cong guerrillas. Two million civilians, north and south, are thought to have perished, as well as tens of thousands more in the neighboring states of Laos and Cambodia.

For many Vietnamese, it was a brutal civil war; for others, the bloody climactic chapter in a century-old struggle for independence.

For those Americans who fought in it, and for those who fought against it back home – as well as for those who merely glimpsed it on the nightly news – the Vietnam War was a decade of agony, the most divisive period since the Civil War.

Vietnam seemed to call everything into question – the value of honor and gallantry; the qualities of cruelty and mercy; the candor of the American government; and what it means to be a patriot.

And those who lived through it have never been able to erase its memory, have never stopped arguing about what really happened, why everything went so badly wrong, who was to blame – and whether it was all worth it.

BAO NINH [N. Vietnamese Army]: It has been forty years. Even the Vietnamese veterans, we avoid talking about the war. People sing about victory, about liberation. They're wrong. Who won and who lost is not a question. In war, no one wins or loses. There is only destruction. Only those who have never fought like to argue about who won and who lost.

CHAPTER 22

Recording and Using Voice-Over

RECORDING AND USING VOICE-OVER

SUBCHAPTERS

The Narrator Should Inhabit the Word

Use First Person Voices to Unlock Your Audience's Imagination

Working With Voice-Over Actors

Tracking a Voice-Over Session

Never Record to Picture

CHAPTER REVIEW

History can be written in the third-person omniscient voice, or retold through first-person eyewitness accounts. Ken interweaves both voices in his films. He calls the third-person voice "God's stenographer," suggesting a confident and objective translation of facts. This voice serves as the viewer's guide through the story, and the person you cast to read narration should be able to clearly enunciate each word without sounding unnatural.

First-person voices of history can be drawn from a variety of sources, including newspaper accounts, military records, telegrams, love letters, diaries, journals, and more. The actors who record these voices are free to be more expressive and dramatic than the narrator in their reading, but they should not project as if they are on a theater stage. Rather, their approach should be that of simply telling a story to an intimate friend or reading a Dear John letter.

Take care in your casting. Try 10 different actors reading the same quote in different ways, and choose the voice that best serves the story. Whether working with a narrator or a voice-over actor, you will likely need to record numerous takes to get things just right. And there probably will not be a single perfect take. Be prepared to divide up sentences and combine fragments from various takes in order to stitch together the perfect reading. Make sure to take careful notes during the recording session, tracking and identifying the best takes as you go. This will prove helpful later on when your editor and sound designer are integrating the voiceover into the film.

Finally, never record to picture. Many filmmakers lock their picture prior to a recording session, and require the voice-over actors to conform their reading to pre-set timings and durations. Instead, Ken recommends giving the actor free rein to do their best work, and then adjusting audio and visuals as needed.

LEARN MORE

What equipment do you need to record high quality voice-over for your film? B&H (the trusted professional source for media hardware) has posted this helpful buying guide for how to set up your own home recording studio.

Want a second opinion? The casting agency Spotlight has posted a conversational (and less technical) guide for those hoping to get started with voice work.

"You're not trying to reach the back row. You're actually trying to make the front row lean in. So it is like telling a story to an intimate friend."

Footage in the video courtesy of UCLA Film & Television Archive

ASSIGNMENT

Filmmakers are frequently admonished to "show, don't tell." And indeed, when poorly written and executed, narration can too often serve to distance the viewer from the characters and events in your story. But there is very much a place for skillful voiceover that clearly and artfully conveys important information to the audience. The device is commonly used in documentaries, but there are also many fiction films that employ voice-over to great effect.

The next time you watch a movie with narration that you enjoy, analyze why it works well. Who is the speaker, the voice that is addressing the audience? What is the narrator's reason for speaking, and what clarifications and commentary do they offer? What tone does the narration take? Is the narrator funny? Wise? Bitter? Wistful? Sarcastic? And what narrative element does the voiceover add to the film that wouldn't be present otherwise?

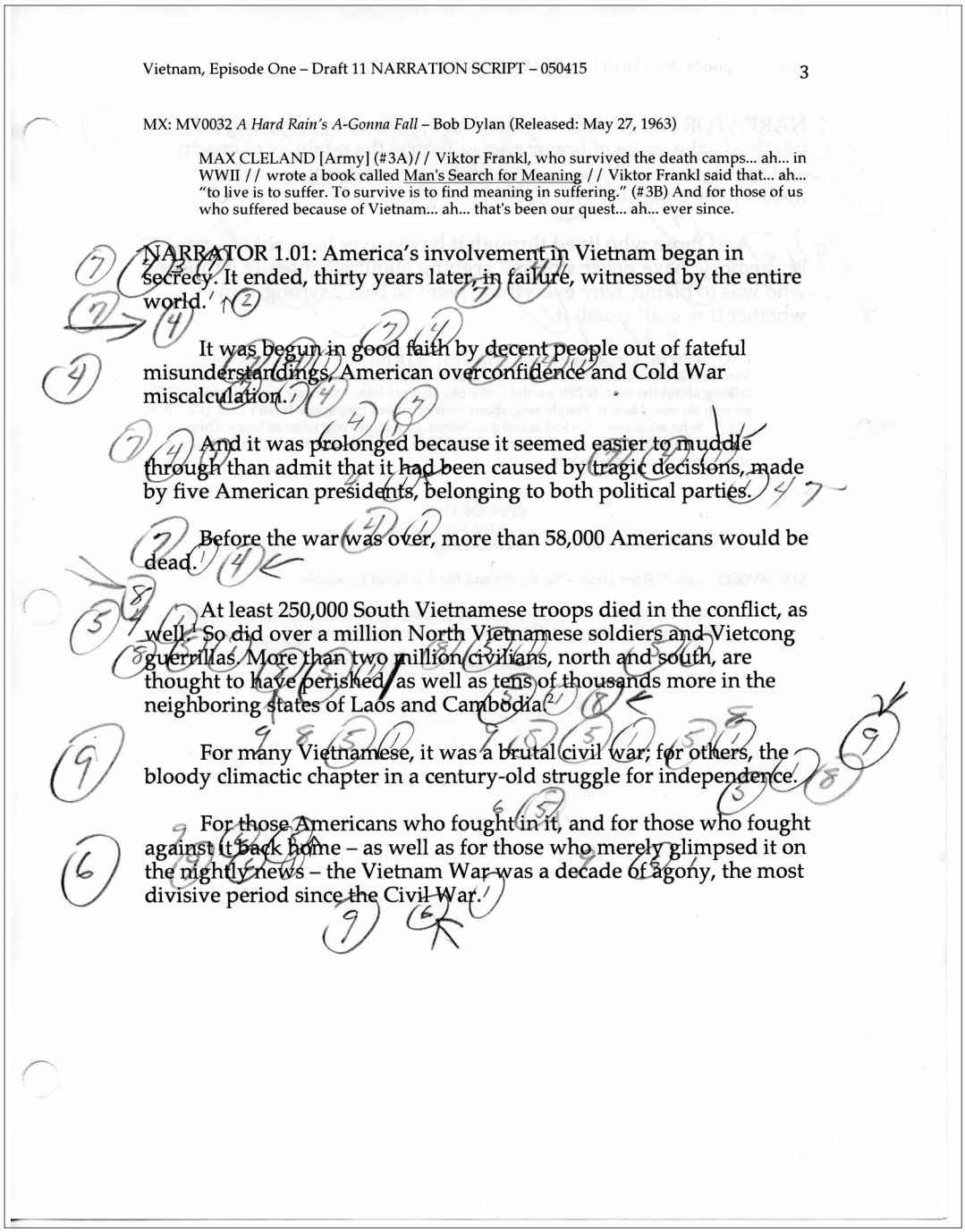
If you're having trouble finding a movie with great voiceover, start with the following recommendations:

- In *Trainspotting* (1996), the voiceover by Ewan McGregor establishes a driving, hyper-frenetic pace that reflects his character's addictions.
- In *The Big Lebowski* (1998), "The Dude" himself doesn't provide the narration. Instead, an almost peripheral character played by Sam Elliot rambles on, spinning a yarn.
- In *Annie Hall* (1977), Woody Allen breaks the fourth wall to share his obsessions and neuroses with the audience in a jittery, anxious manner.
- In *Double Indemnity* (1944), Fred MacMurray's character recounts, in a fatalistic and gloomy tone, the details of the crime that he was persuaded to commit. This black-and-white noir film is a classic example of how voice-over can be used to reveal a character's inner struggles.

As you explore the use of voice-over in fiction films, think about how similar conventions could be used in nonfiction media. What voice, tone, and narrative style do you want to explore for the narration in your own film?

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Ken compares his notes during recording sessions to hieroglyphics—they are tricky to decipher. See what you can make of this page one script from the first episode of *The Vietnam War*.



Vietnam, Episode One – Draft 11 NARRATION SCRIPT – 050415 3

MX: MV0032 *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* – Bob Dylan (Released: May 27, 1963)

MAX CLELAND [Army] (#3A)// Viktor Frankl, who survived the death camps... ah... in WWII // wrote a book called Man's Search for Meaning // Viktor Frankl said that... ah... "to live is to suffer. To survive is to find meaning in suffering." (#3B) And for those of us who suffered because of Vietnam... ah... that's been our quest... ah... ever since.

NARRATOR 1.01: America's involvement in Vietnam began in secrecy. It ended, thirty years later, in failure, witnessed by the entire world.

It was begun in good faith by decent people out of fateful misunderstandings, American overconfidence and Cold War miscalculation.

And it was prolonged because it seemed easier to muddle through than admit that it had been caused by tragic decisions, made by five American presidents, belonging to both political parties.

Before the war was over, more than 58,000 Americans would be dead.

At least 250,000 South Vietnamese troops died in the conflict, as well. So did over a million North Vietnamese soldiers and Vietcong guerrillas. More than two million civilians, north and south, are thought to have perished, as well as tens of thousands more in the neighboring states of Laos and Cambodia.

For many Vietnamese, it was a brutal civil war; for others, the bloody climactic chapter in a century-old struggle for independence.

For those Americans who fought in it, and for those who fought against it back home – as well as for those who merely glimpsed it on the nightly news – the Vietnam War was a decade of agony, the most divisive period since the Civil War.

Remember that for each phrase of narration, Ken writes the number of each take that is a good candidate, and circles especially good ones. A pointing arrow identifies the best take. Here are a few interesting things you might look out for:

- Examine the second-to-last paragraph, beginning with "For many Vietnamese." Because of the complicated sentence structure, Ken actually identifies four separate phrases within this two-line sentence. When working this voice-over into the edit, Ken might pick and choose different takes for each phrase, patching a single line of narration from four different readings.

- Most of the time, punctuation serves as sufficient guide for delineating different phrases of narration. Note the slash mark, however, between the words "are thought to have perished" and "as well as tens of thousands more...". For some reason, Ken wants to give special emphasis to the breath between these two phrase. Why might a longer pause be an effective directorial choice for the voiceover at this point?

- Occasionally, Ken writes and circles a number in the left margin, not clearly attached to any single phrase. This probably signifies the best overall take for a given paragraph of narration. Individual phrases may still be swapped out, but the circled take in the margin will likely serve as the starting point for editing.

CHAPTER 23

Sound Design

SOUND DESIGN

SUBCHAPTERS

Spot for Sound With Story as Your Guide

Use Sound to Immerse Your Audience in the Moment

Seeing Through Sound

Go the Extra Mile

CHAPTER REVIEW

While it may be true that a picture is worth a thousand words, it is also true that a film without sound is missing powerful and essential tools for audience engagement. Words, songs, music, and sound effects: all of those elements are balanced and mixed by the sound designer.

Sound design is growing increasingly sophisticated, utilizing a vast library of realistic and high quality sounds. For example, Ken's series *The Civil War* used 26 discrete tracks of audio. 27 years later, *The Vietnam War* timeline contained 160 discrete audio tracks.

When making films that use old photographs and archival footage, sound design is especially helpful in bringing the past to life. A still photo of a horse and buggy can be made to seem in motion—partly by introducing subtle movement to the image itself, but also with the addition of the sound of hoof beats, wheels rolling on a bumpy dirt road, and a dozen additional sounds we may not even notice, but which contribute to a feeling of richness and reality. As for archival footage, before sync sound was invented, cameras recorded only to film—thus, much of what is available to historical documentarians is silent. Complex, layered sounds must be added and woven together to make such footage feel as though natural sound was being recorded that day.

Interestingly, before Ken's series *The Civil War* was released, there had been an unwritten rule among documentarians that when an expert is speaking, no music or sound effects should be laid underneath. Ken broke this rule, continuing a scene's sound design right on through the follow-up comments by talking head experts. After all, that expert is being used to bring the scene alive in the viewer's imagination, serving the same function as the images and sounds.

As with editing, good sound design takes time. Don't rush the process, and go the extra distance to get the details right. Incredibly, Ken has received letters from enthusiastic viewers correcting him in regards to scenes where a species of bird is chirping that can't be found in that region. And although many viewers are watching on a small screen, Ken wants the sound in his films to be mixed with the highest quality theatrical audio systems in mind.

LEARN MORE

Why does the abbreviation MOS stand for 'without sound'? The joke in Hollywood is that thick-accented German directors of early American cinema mispronounced the phrase as 'mit out sound.' But the term more likely comes from the phrase 'motor only shot.' Back when sound

"We say the cliché, a picture's worth a thousand words. And indeed, it is. But you cannot also deny how important these aural components are, the words spoken, the songs sung, the music played, the effects in all of their glory—whatever it is."

Footage in the video courtesy of Morton County Historical Society, Inc.

and image had to be recorded separately, directors would sometimes request that only the motor in the camera be rolled, without synchronizing a corresponding sound device. Thus, they would call out "motor only shot!"—or MOS.

As you work with specific footage for your film, you may identify a great establishing shot with poor sound. Perhaps there's a lot of background traffic noise (or not enough), or your voice can be heard talking to the assistant off camera. In such cases, there are online resources that can help you find and purchase sound effects for your film. The SFX libraries identified below can help you find the traffic sounds, the crickets or birds chirping, the wind rustling or the creek bubbling that you just couldn't quite capture on your shoot.

- Audio Micro. Audio Micro has a great, high quality collection that also includes music. When you register with the site, you are given access to a fairly sizeable collection of free sound effects.

- FreeSound. FreeSounds makes its modest collection of sound effects completely free under the Creative Commons license.

- Pond5. You already encountered this resource in Chapter 18: The Power of Music. Like many stock libraries, Pond5 includes both music and sound effects.

- Sound Jay. Sound Jay allows you to download individual sounds for free, but if you want easy access to their whole collection, you can purchase a pack of 3,000 sounds in one download.

- Soundsnap. Soundsnap specializes in sound effects, and offers an unlimited subscription.

ASSIGNMENTS

Try the following exercise suggested by Ken himself. Rent the classic Hitchcock horror film *Psycho* (1960), and watch the shower scene with the volume lowered all the way down. It may still be unsettling (after all, Hitchcock was a master visual storyteller) but without the infamous violin chords, the actress's blood-curdling screams, and the sickening sound of a knife used during the attack, the scene just doesn't pack quite the punch. Watch it again, with the sound turned back on. Did you feel a shudder go up your spine? What were you hearing when that happened?

Sometimes that chill that you feel when watching a tense scene comes from an unexpected or unusual sound effect. Ken gives the example of adding a 'banshee scream' to footage of a frightened soldier in the opening of *The Vietnam War*. Think outside the box for your own film. Is there a sound effect that could subtly enhance an emotion that you are striving to convey in a key scene?

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Take a look at this page of Ken's notes from an audio pass review of his first film, *Brooklyn Bridge,* reproduced on the following pages. Consider the following:

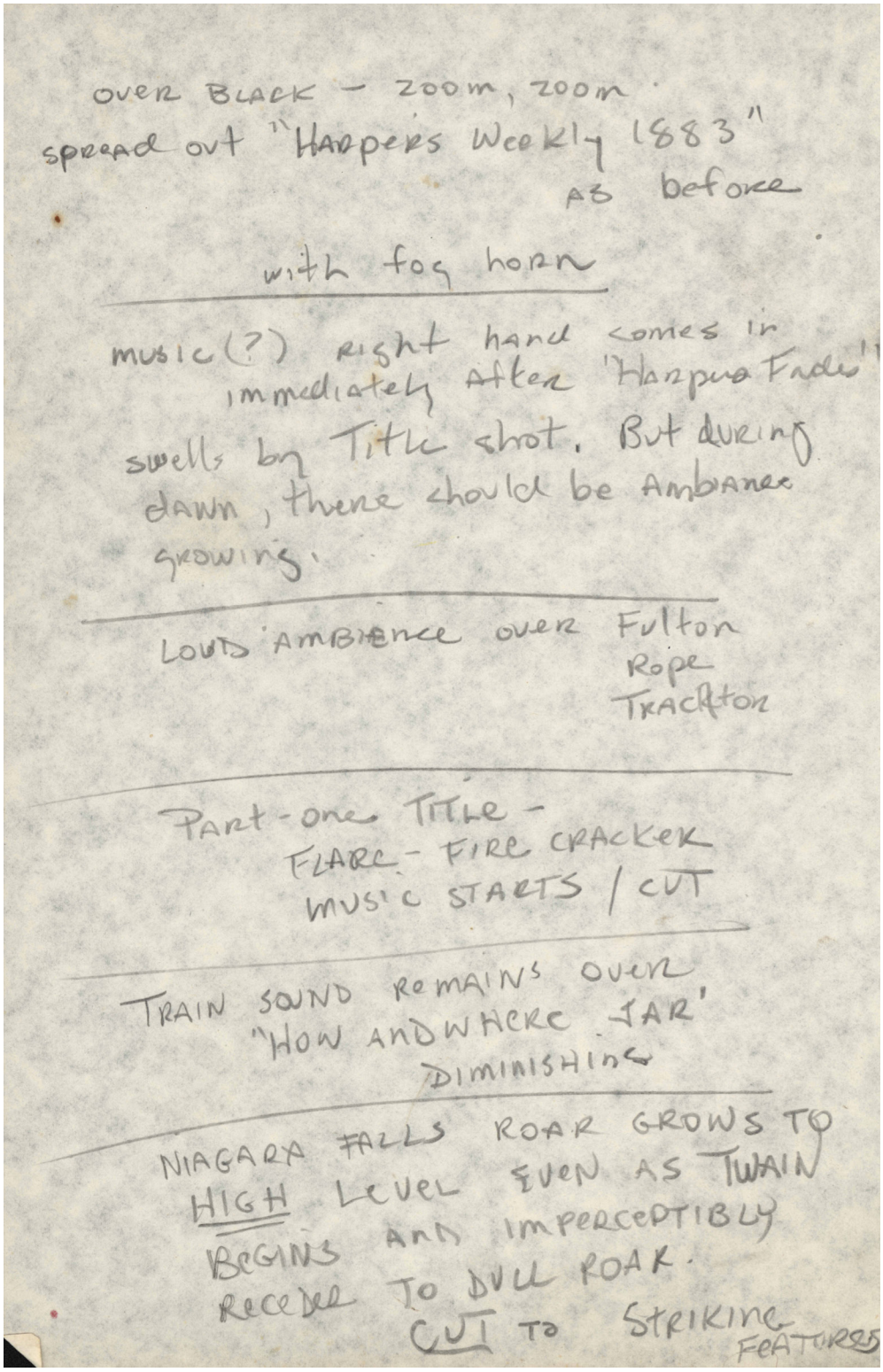
- You may not be able to tell much about the plot and imagery of the film from these notes. But right off the bat, Ken suggests the sound of a foghorn to help set the mood.

- After suggesting that the music should swell during the opening title shot, Ken then writes, "But during dawn, there should be ambiance growing." Ambiance here is a term that refers to sounds added to suggest the character and atmosphere of a place. What sounds do you think could be recorded to suggest dawn?

- In the very next note, Ken requests "LOUD" ambiance and then notates three visuals (Fulton Street, a rope, and a tractor) over which the ambiance should be added. What sounds do you associate with these three items?

- In his final note, Ken specifies how the sound of Niagara Falls should relate to overlapping dialogue. Why do you think he might want the roar of water to continue over the words of Mark Twain?

Now, watch the opening minutes of *Brooklyn Bridge*. Pay special attention to the soundtrack, and listen for the audio cues that Ken specified for on his page of notes. Do they sound like you imagined they would? And what is happening visually, as well as in the script, when these sounds become audible?



OVER BLACK – ZOOM, ZOOM.
spread out "Harpers Weekly 1883"
AS before

with fog horn

music (?) right hand comes in immediately after 'Harpers Fade' swells by Title shot. But during dawn, there should be Ambiance growing.

LOUD AMBIENCE over Fulton Rope Traction

Part-one TITLE –
FLARE – FIRE CRACKER
MUSIC STARTS / CUT

TRAIN SOUND REMAINS OVER "HOW AND WHERE JAR" DIMINISHING

NIAGARA FALLS ROAR GROWS TO HIGH LEVEL EVEN AS TWAIN BEGINS AND IMPERCEPTIBLY RECEDE TO DULL ROAR.
CUT TO STRIKING FEATURES

CHAPTER 24

The Artist's Responsibility

THE ARTIST'S RESPONSIBILITY

SUBCHAPTERS

Lead the Audience Into Hell and Lead Them Out

Allow Moral Differences to Coexist

Unite Through Shared Stories

CHAPTER REVIEW

Cinema has the wonderful ability to cross cultural boundaries and unite audiences around a shared experience. This power inspires Ken to believe that filmmakers have a responsibility to tell stories about what people share in common, rather than to use their platform to advocate for a particular political position. In an age of partisanship, fake news, and media manipulation for political gain, a truly urgent task is to remind fellow Americans of their interconnectedness and mutual humanity. Divisions in this country are real, and opposite points of view do exist—but filmmakers and other artists can create dialogue out of division, and allow contrasting perspectives to be heard.

Present all sides of the issue that you are exploring in your film. Try to portray differences fairly, and provide a path to understanding those points of view with which your audience strongly disagrees. Ken is adamant in *The Civil War* that the institution of slavery is unambiguously wrong, but he still presents the perspective of slaveholders in a nuanced way. Your goal should be to encourage viewers to hear the other side rather than dismiss it outright, and to develop a deeper awareness of how differences can coexist.

Some stories will take your audience into very dark places, and Ken believes that your responsibility is to lead them back out by the end of your film. This doesn't mean putting an overly optimistic spin on troubling subject matter, but it does suggest that the redeeming aspects of humanity should not be ignored. In war, for instance, humanity can be revealed both at its worst and its best. And though Americans have often gone terribly astray in their treatment of the 'other,' they have also created a profoundly important legacy in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights—codified ideals that challenge us to be our best.

ASSIGNMENT

Ken outlines in this chapter what he sees as the purpose of cinema. You may or may not agree with his guiding principles, values, and philosophy. So take a moment to think about your own goals for making movies. What values do you bring to your craft? What is your mission as a filmmaker? Take at least an hour to journal deeply about the following questions:

- Think about the core of who you are. What is your purpose or cause, the guiding principle for how you live your life? And how might that transfer to the stories you want to tell?

"I believe it is the artist's responsibility to lead people into hell, but I also believe it's important to lead the way out."

- What future do you envision for yourself? For your films? What are you working towards, and why?

- What is this impact that you want to have on the world? What is the impact you want your films to have on audiences? And whom are you most hoping to reach with your message?

Once you are finished, review your written thoughts and try to organize them into a two-to-four sentence mission statement that will serve as your guiding light when choosing projects, making decisions about storytelling, and convincing funders to support your film.

CHAPTER 25

Sharing Your Film

SHARING YOUR FILM

SUBCHAPTERS

Decide Your Outlet Options

Evangelize Your Film

Allow the Audience to Assign Their Own Meaning

CHAPTER REVIEW

Your work is not finished once you complete your film. Rather, a whole new phase begins with distribution, in which you share your creation with viewers. Films unfortunately do not obey the logic of "if you build it, they will come." You need a plan of action to answer the following questions: Where is your film going to be seen? Who is your audience? And how can you reach them?

Ken has found a unique distribution option through PBS, where he can reach millions of viewers on the small screen. However, public television is just one model, and a number of great alternative outlets exist. Cable television and streaming platforms enable you to monetize your film, but also to reach niche audiences and interest groups. The film festival circuit is rich with opportunities to network, cross-pollinate with other filmmakers, and engage in panel discussions and audience Q&A's around the issues in your film. You can also mix and match, and take a variety of distribution approaches to maximize your film's reach.

A good distribution deal will ideally enable you to recoup the costs of making your documentary. And although your distributor will also help with marketing, you are ultimately the best person to evangelize your film. Plan to spend lots of time selling your film, spreading the word on social media, networking, connecting with film bloggers, and taking your film on the road to festivals and community screenings.

The ultimate goal of making a film is to *share* your film. Celebrate this opportunity to tell a story that prompts thought and discussion about the issues you are passionate about. You have been empowered to impact audiences' hearts and minds. To paraphrase Ken, let the gratitude wash over you.

LEARN MORE

In this increasingly media-saturated world, finding a distributor who is the right match for your film can take some legwork. The International Documentary Association (IDA), an organization dedicated to serving the needs of independent documentary filmmakers, recently published this incredibly helpful guide for navigating today's distribution landscape, complete with three informative case studies. Other valuable IDA resources include this orientation to the legal landscape of distribution, loaded with advice to producers on how to best negotiate contracts, and this step-by-step rulebook for exploring your distribution options.

> "When we finish with a film it's no longer ours. It's yours. And that's an important thing. Are you willing to give your film away to everybody else? Let them have it? Let them own it?"

Learning to navigate the festival circuit is an essential part of getting the word out about your film. True, festivals do not generate income for your film (and in fact, many involve submission fees and travel and lodging costs that come out of your own pocket). But there are other perks to the festival experience: awards, laurels, positive reviews, and buzz. They are also fantastic places to network and meet potential collaborators.

Because of the cost of attendance, however, choose your festivals carefully. Everyone hopes to premiere at Cannes, Toronto, or Sundance—but if you don't, then you shouldn't necessarily just accept the first festival that wants your film. Go in with a clear strategy. Ideally, you should save smaller festivals for later in the run, and try to premiere at one of the more prestigious festivals in a major city. New York or Los Angeles, for instance, are great places to premiere because of how closely connected they are with the industry and the media. But don't overlook smaller festivals that focus on one thing and do it really well, which focuses on the convergence of interactive media, film, and music, or doc-centric festivals like IDFA, Full Frame, and True/False. Importantly, pay attention to the international market; try to attend at least one of the big foreign festivals such as Berlin or Venice.

For an exhaustive list of documentary film festivals, check out this resource from PBS. (Note that the top tier festivals are designated with an asterisk.)

If marketing and promoting your film seems daunting or distasteful to you, consider making room in your budget to hire an impact producer. Also called an engagement strategist or outreach coordinator (or sometimes a producer of marketing and distribution), this job title is gaining more and more traction in the doc world. The role is distinct from that of a publicist, who focuses on getting press and media coverage for your film. Instead, impact producers specialize in getting your film in front of as many audiences as possible, including community screenings at libraries, schools, churches, universities, and more. If you want help with audience engagement (that's the current buzzword), then consult this fantastic list of impact producers, published by PBS.

ASSIGNMENT

Imagine that your film is complete. How will you get the word out? One of the first steps you should take is to develop an electronic press kit (EPK). This is a key tool in publicizing your film and finding an audience, and it could ultimately land you a sweet distribution deal.

Complete the following steps to create a first draft of your press kit.

- Step One. Write brief biographies of the key team members on your film, such as the producer, director, writer, editor, cinematographer, and composer. Try to fit everyone's bio onto a single page.

- Step Two. Collect a half-dozen or so publicity stills from your film. Scrub through your film and search for striking visual moments. Ideally, these would involve strong portraits of your main characters, a key frame of action from the film, or a stunning beauty shot. Grab a still frame from each moment and store them in a subfolder labeled Stills. You may also want to include production stills, or photos of you or your crew at work on the film.

- Step Three. Create three synopses of varying lengths for your film, including:

  — A short, 60 to 75 word synopsis. This is the length that might appear in the program listings for a film festival, for instance.

  — A medium, 200 to 400 word synopsis. This length could work well in the About page of your film's website, for instance.

  — A full-page description (up to 700 words) of your film. This is called a one-sheet, and is particularly important in selling your film to a distributor. A one-sheet should include the following information: your film's title, your contact information, the film's genre, format and runtime, one or two key quotes from the film, and an in-depth, engaging synopsis of your film's story (taking care not to give away the ending).

- Step Four. Try including a page of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about your film. These could be drawn from questions you often get asked during Q&A's following your screenings, or they could simply address information about the making of the film that couldn't fit into your one-sheet.

- Step Five. Eventually, your film will likely have caught the attention of a journalist or two. Include excerpts, copies, or links to notable positive reviews, radio interviews, or articles that have appeared about your film. Then zip the whole package and send as an email attachment to any interested party.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Read through the one-sheet by Ken's initial distributor for *Brooklyn Bridge*, C.S. Associates, reproduced on the following pages. Think about the following:

- How well does this one-sheet pique your interest in seeing the film? What details in particular grabbed your attention?

- Of all the possible images to include from the film, why do you think C.S. Associates chose this particular photograph? What story does that photograph reveal? With what parts of the written synopsis does it most resonate?

- Outline the paragraph structure for this one-sheet. What do the first two paragraphs accomplish? How do the next three paragraphs differ? And what message is being conveyed in the last three paragraphs?

Brooklyn bridge

58 minutes 1982
16mm documentary
A film by Ken Burns
Academy Award Nomination

BROOKLYN BRIDGE is a visually brilliant, intellectually stimulating documentary about America's best-loved landmark. The bridge was a technical achievement of unparalleled scope. This film shows how great the construction problems were and how ingenious and courageous the solutions. It also explores the impact of the bridge as an inspiration for serious artists and an icon of popular culture.

Rare archival material coupled with the voices of Paul Roebling (great-grandson of the builder of the bridge), Julie Harris, Arthur Miller, Kurt Vonnegut, David McCullough and others, weaves the intricate story of the greatest engineering feat of the 19th Century. It is an epic tale of perseverance and innovation against all odds.

Building began in 1869. It was a herculean task that involved much self-sacrifice, especially by John A. Roebling, the designer (who died of lockjaw—the result of an accident while surveying the

site), and his son Washington, the chief engineer. During the perilous construction more than twenty men lost their lives and scores were disabled for life.

Washington Roebling was paralyzed in 1872 by caisson disease, known today as the bends. For several years he lived in excruciating pain and had to direct the project from his window. His wife, Emily, took on a critical role in creating the bridge. She nursed her husband and saw to it that his orders were faithfully carried out.

This film also traces the transformation of the Brooklyn Bridge from a spectacular and heroic engineering feat to a symbol of strength, vitality, ingenuity and promise. In the second half of BROOKLYN BRIDGE, a lively combination of modern cinematography, old movie footage, time-lapse photography and the comments of Lewis Mumford, Paul Goldberger and others reveals the bridge's aesthetic and emotional legacy.

BROOKLYN BRIDGE was nominated for an Academy Award and has won 11 film festival awards.

"...a beautifully realized labor of love...an unusually moving appreciation of the bridge as a functional component of our daily lives as well as a focal point of our imaginations." ***Vincent Canby,*** **New York Times**

"...a glowing tribute, with a fascinating account of the bridge's beginnings and its subsequent inspiration for poets, artists, moviemakers and just plain people." ***Judith Christ,*** **TV Guide**

S ASSOCIATES
27 BOOTH HILL ROAD · SCITUATE · MASSACHUSETTS 02066
UNITED STATES of AMERICA
TELEPHONE 617·545·9354 / TELEX 951506 WEON

Jump to Chasm

"The only thing that matters is not which is the right step one. It's that there be a step one."

—KEN BURNS