

What is a documentary film

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A Documentary Film Introduction To define what a documentary involves characterizing the content and the features of the film, which enables anyone watching a film to distinguish it as a documentary and not any other type of film. Another approach would be looking at how documentaries differ from other types of films. The word documentary was coined from a Latin word “ Docere” meaning to teach or else to educate (Juel, 2010, Web).

Documentaries are non-fictional motion pictures, which depict reality created with an educative or informative motive. The first person to use the term documentary to refer to a creative educative film was John Grierson.

Grierson essentially defined a documentary as “ Creative treatment of actuality.” This paper describes aspects that can be used to distinguish a documentary film.

One major factor distinguishing documentary films is their actuality and the fact that they are not scripted. However, some documentaries may be acted ones, used to depict or make the audience visualize and understand how an event may have happened. Documentary film is prepared with a purpose relevant to the audience and is intended to make a difference on their understanding about the subject matter (Nichols, 1992, p. 5-6; Nichols, 2001, p. 1-5).

A documentary could be based on a variety of themes, which included, morality, politics, aesthetic, or other subjects but must be informative and realistic. Modern day documentaries tend to overlap with other types of films due to invention of reality television where the documentaries appear to have some sense of fictional content (Renov, 2004, p. 5-10; Winston, 1995, p. 8-11)

Conclusion

A documentary is a type of a film that attempts to document happenings and tries to make them not lose their realism. A number of features are used to discern a documentary from other films and include the role, the narrative strategy, the actuality of the film, neutrality, the subject matter, and the factual way in which the ideas are presented.

Works Cited

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