

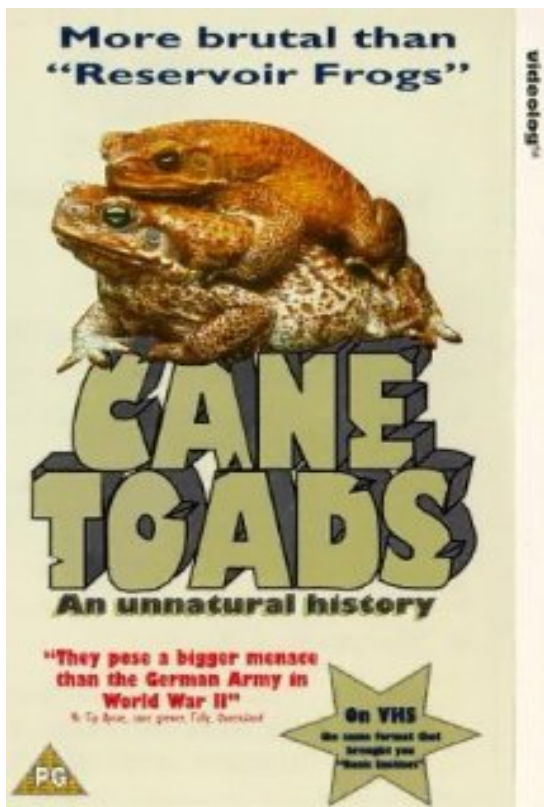
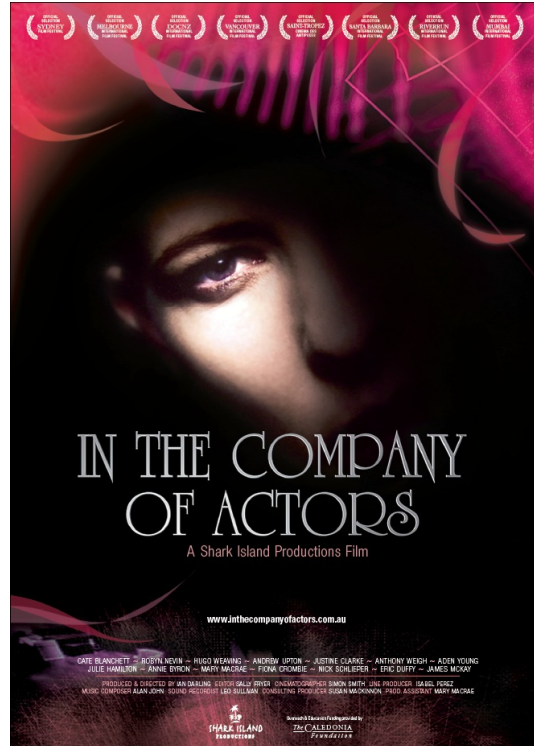


PAUL KELLY: STORIES OF ME

EXPECTATIONS OF DOCUMENTARIES

Student Activity 1: How does a documentary represent the world?

What do you think a documentary is? Look at the posters below and from them determine the conventions for a documentary. How do these posters confirm or challenge your expectations of the genre?





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Student Activity 2:

The statements below are based on various sources.¹ Tick which statements you agree with. If you agree, try to think of an example of a documentary that fits in with this view of representation.

Agree? (tick)	Statements
	Documentaries often cross between fact and fiction so they aren't real.
	Documentary makers use all their skills to manipulate the audience towards their own views.
	In a documentary we see only the view of the world that the filmmaker chooses to show.
	Documentaries are important ways of understanding social issues and problems and possible solutions.
	Documentary film is a type of public memory.
	Documentary gives an interpretation on historical issues.
	Documentary is "perpetual negotiation between the real event and its representation" with the "ultimate aim to be the authentic representation of the real".
	Documentary "is unable to give an undistorted purely reflective picture of reality".
	A documentary is a creative treatment of actuality.
	Documentary presents facts for examination.
	Documentary is not ever objective but takes a side.
	A documentary film is about factual events.

Now work in pairs and write an explanation of how documentaries represent the world.

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In 1926, the term documentary was coined by John Greerson who defined documentary as the 'creative treatment of actuality'². Most people would regard a documentary as being based on real or factual events but the definition is rapidly changing as 'creative treatment' and changes in technology allow us to represent reality to the point where the representations themselves can become a reality.

¹ From: Nichols, Bill (1991), *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Indiana University Press, page ix and Bruzzi, Stella 'New Documentary: a critical introduction' http://books.google.com/books?id=OPyZ0sb1k_kC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false

² Stewart C and Kowaltzke A (2007) *Media: New Ways and Meanings*, Jacaranda
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Student Activity 2: Small group activity

Place these types of text in order of 'reality', 1 being the closest representation of reality and 6 being the furthest away from reality.

Type of text	Reality ranking 1-6
Interview	
Historical re-enactment	
Reality show such as 'Big Brother'	
Documentary	
Current affairs show	
News report	

Does the order of your list differ from the order decided by other groups in the class?

What issues were raised in reaching your decisions?

Student Activity 3: Purpose of a documentary

Every documentary maker has a purpose in mind. The following have all been purposes for certain documentaries. Which do you think is the most valid reason for a documentary? Again, rank them in order of validity.

Are there any you would eliminate? If so, which one(s)?

Purpose	Validity ranking 1- 8
To inform	
To attack a perspective	
To persuade	
To entertain	
To educate	
To defend a perspective	
To critique	
To observe real life	

If you had a documentary made about you, how could people find out about your life and who you are?

- Who would speak for you?
- What might they say?
- What proof would they use?
- How consistent would the characterisation be?
- How would you organise the stories of you? (chronological/linear, circular, fragmented, flashback, by relationships, by ideas)

To explore the practicalities of making documentaries, continue at [MAKING THE DOCUMENTARY](#)

The idea of documentary relates to the methods of historians who rely on written documents and manuscripts as primary sources of evidence. Using all the tools of film-making: camera, sound, actors, images and words, documentaries create a sense of authenticity within the narrative form.

