



YOUTH FILM CHALLENGE TOOLKIT

The best films, no matter the genre, tell stories well. Film is storytelling with the bonus of images to help illustrate the points being made. It makes sense to spend time thinking and planning how to convey the message you want your audience to understand when they view your film entry.

No matter what your intended message is, you should begin to think about 'unfolding it' as in storytelling terms. Your film will naturally have a beginning, middle and end--so we have put together some resources for you to enhance your storytelling skills and to apply to your filmmaking efforts.

Dive into the toolkit. If you are ready to submit your film, please visit planet911.org.

I. The Making of Great Stories

Are you ready to convey your message through the story of film? Want some extra pointers about how to make it memorable? We've got you covered with six great rules from Pixar!

Pixar, you know--that Academy Award, Golden Globe and Grammy winning film studio--they've identified Six Rules for Great Storytelling. We've summarized their [original post](#) below. They may come in handy as you figure out what story you want to tell!

1. Great stories are universal:

The best stories tap into things almost all human beings go through--things like birth, growth, emotions, change, conflict, etc.

2. Great stories have clear structure and purpose:

Professional playwright and improviser Kenn Adams made the greatest graphic to help figure out how a story can unfold. Pixar uses it a lot and so can you!

Give your story a backbone!

THE STORY SPINE

THE STORY SPINE	STRUCTURE	FUNCTION
Once upon a time...	Beginning	The world of the story is introduced and the main character's routine is established.
Every day...		
But, one day...	The Event	The main character breaks the routine .
Because of that...	Middle	There are dire consequences for having broken the routine. It is unclear if the main character will come out alright in the end.
Because of that...		
Because of that...		
Until finally...	The Climax	The main character embarks upon success or failure
And, ever since then...	End	The main character succeeds or fails, and a new routine is established.

Published at aerogrammestudio.com, ©Kenn Adams

3. Great stories have a character to root for (an underdog):

Who doesn't want to root for the character with mountains to climb to reach the top?

4. Great stories appeal to our deepest emotions:

"No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader," as the saying by poet Robert Frost goes. If you're feeling it (whatever emotion you want to convey) when you write it, there's a strong chance your readers will feel it too!

5. Great stories are surprising and unexpected:

Great stories aren't boring. It's the little things that can make for the biggest surprises, yo! Birds singing may not seem like a big deal. Birds singing in a war zone creates an image that feels loud.

6. Great stories are simple and focused:

K.I.S.S. = Keep It Simple, Silly! Don't make your plotline so complicated that your reader gets trapped in a vortex. Great stories are easy to follow.

Want to keep Pixar's Rules handy? Here ya go!

[Six Rules of Great Storytelling Handout](#)

Sample Videos from Youth Climate Organizations

- Here's a great video to check out by **Fridays for Future** that uses simple and effective messaging. Talk about great storytelling:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eT32UFzA7E8>

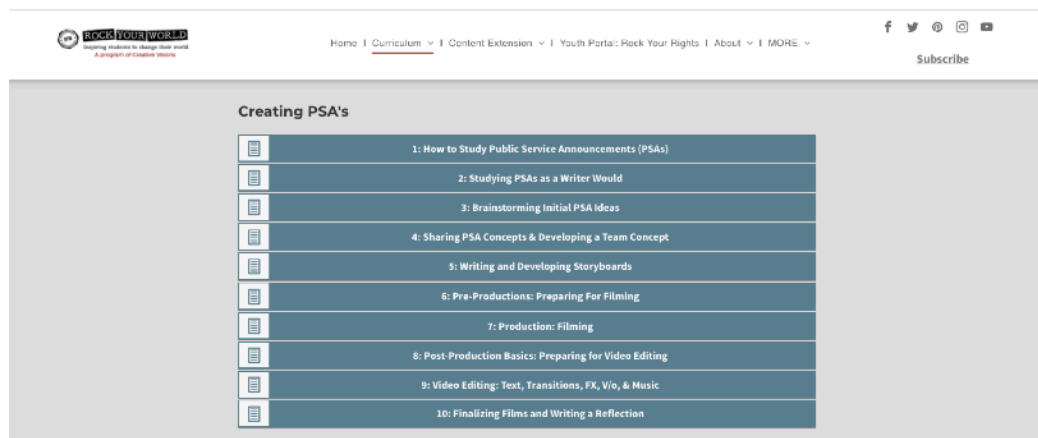
- An example of a message being effectively delivered through film without a traditional plot is this film about the demand for a Green New Deal made by **The Sunrise Movement**. Notice the excellent use of music and imagery:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khVNHxVZlu8>

- Here's an example of video that approaches the issue of fighting climate change like a Public Service Announcement (PSA). PSAs seek to motivate the audience to take action. **Earth Guardians** created this video to do just that:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrdBxVC9xZo>

For more resources about how to create a PSA style video, visit this segment of the [Rock Your World curriculum](#).



Alright--the time has come to get down to it. Think about your own stories **regarding climate change and environmental justice**. What do you need to tell? How are you going to tell it? If your story is super close to the heart, make it fictional. If you really just want to focus on the message and character development doesn't really factor into your idea for the challenge, then keep the following pointers in mind from the creators of the blog on [Film Creations, LTD](#):

Communicate Clearly

In order to convey a message in your video, you will want to make sure that you are able to communicate clearly. Writing a script or video outline will allow you to create specific topics that will be addressed through your video. Clear communication can also be achieved by dividing your video into three or more distinct segments.

Keep It Short

Your video will be more effective if it is kept short and direct. As you are planning out what type of message you would like for your video to deliver, it is a good idea to anticipate that your video will be no longer than three to five minutes. A video that is longer than a few minutes may fail to hold a viewers attention, resulting in the message being lost.

Create Bold Graphics

A video message can be emphasized using bold graphics and headings. Your video production team will edit your video so that key points are introduced through text. Adding graphics to your video will also provide your film with a polished and professional look.



TELLING VISUAL STORIES

Sometimes a film aims to focus on emotions more than a plot line. Visual stories tend to focus on feelings. Instead of planning out a story with a beginning, middle, and end, you have other things to consider.

- What is the story or feeling you want to suggest visually through your film?
- How do you want people to feel when they look at your piece? How can you create the right mood and tone to get that feeling? (color, composition, details, texture, size).
- Don't forget the power of a title! A great title is a north star--it guides your audience to the right reaction! Titles can come to you before or after you create your work. You're the boss!

Need some inspiration? Check out some of the [past winning entries](#) to the Planet911 Film Challenge.

II. READY, SET, SUBMIT!

We cannot wait to see your films and to ponder the stories and messages you believe are most important regarding our planet.

Thanks for sending us your creative responses and for taking part in the #Planet911 Film Challenge!

Go to planet911.org to submit.

Gain some inspiration by exploring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

What are the central issues that you want to address in your story or message? Your topic choices for entries this year have to do with environmental justice and voting for a sustainable future.



A great way to gain deeper understanding of these topics is through the global goals, also known as the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Sustainability and environmental justice are at the very heart of the 17 goals. Dive deeply in the [Global Goals](#) in order to collect details necessary for the crafting of your story and/or message!

If you are using a printed copy of this toolkit, here is a list of all of the interactive links mentioned in the toolkit that you can type into your browser to follow along:

Original Medium article for the Six Rules of Great Storytelling: https://medium.com/@Brian_G_Peters/6-rules-of-great-storytelling-as-told-by-pixar-fcc6ae225f50

Six Rules of Great Storytelling Handout: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xWwxQoxvHsYShZ7cCFZV1ZtWlqK5cfkq5UpTuMW6y6k/edit?usp=sharing>

Fridays for Future video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eT32UFzA7E8>

Sunrise Movement video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khVNHxVZlu8>

Earth Guardians video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrdBxVC9xZo>

Creating a PSA style video: <https://www.rock-your-world.org/making-films1>

Film Creations Blog: <https://www.filmcreations.com/deliver-message-video/>

Storyboarding Handout: <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/e216b10c/files/uploaded/Storyboarding-101-handout.pdf>

Printable storyboard: www.educationworld.com/tools_templates/template_storybrd_8panels.doc

Past winning entries of the Planet911 Youth Film Challenge: <https://www.planet911.org/planet911-challenge-gallery-and-voting>

Writing a Song: <https://www.rock-your-world.org/writing-songs>

Song example: <https://www.pacerteensagainstbullying.org/bullying-defined/video/>

The SDGs: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

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