

NEW YORK CITY

MIDDLE SCHOOL FILM FESTIVAL 2009

— MY LIFE, MY LENS —



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STUDENT RESOURCE GUIDE

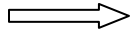
What's your story? 7th and 8th graders, do you want to make a short film based on your life? Now's your chance!

<p>If you ...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">are in 7th or 8th grade,have a story to tell about your life that you would like to share,want to write a film story that you can enter to win a summer film camp scholarship with the New York Film Academy (and hopefully get to make a short movie)	<p>...then this project is for you!</p>
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Applying for the Middle School Film Festival

To apply for and receive a scholarship to a **two week summer film camp** with the New York Film Academy, you must complete an **application form**, draft and submit an **original film story**, and complete a **personal statement** that includes why your story would be told best through film. If you are applying for the Film Festival, this guide is for you!

What is the **theme** of the New York City **MIDDLE SCHOOL FILM FESTIVAL?**



MY LIFE, MY LENS:

The theme of the film festival is, **My Life, My Lens**, which asks you to think about your experiences, your own history, and/or your goals for your own life. Tell the story through your eyes and show how it would make a great film.

What will you find in this Student Resource Guide?

- Basic steps to help you create your own **film story**.
- Tools to help you plan your story and get ideas.
- Information to help you apply for the Summer Film Camp with the New York Film Academy.

You might be wondering, what is a film story?

Well, a film story is a short story that focuses on the visual part of storytelling. This means you tell the story so that someone can “see” it. As you reflect upon moments from your life, begin to think about:

- 🎬 What you want the reader to “see” that shows what your story is about.
- 🎬 What are the experiences, the perspectives, the ideas, the moments, the people that could be a part of your story?
- 🎬 How will you share your story so that it motivates, captures or inspires you and the audience?

Set Your Personal Goal!

Writing a Film Story is not as tough as it sounds! You will first need to decide that you want to complete the work. Once you have committed to the project you are ready!

New York City Middle School Film Festival: Fall 2009

If your film story is selected, you will have the opportunity to make a short film with a team of your peers and share the film at the first New York City Middle School Film Festival, including screenings and online exhibitions. What a great way to share your creative and hard work!

Detailed directions for submitting the film story and the complete application are included on our website <http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/OCPD/MSFF>.

**APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY
APRIL 27, 2009**

Guidelines and Requirements

Film Story Submission Guidelines and Structure

A. Film Story Guidelines

Your film story must reflect the 2009 film festival theme, *My Life, My Lens*, and tell about a theme, experience, moment or understanding from your life and what those experiences mean for your present and/or your future.

Each film story should include:

- a well-developed idea based on your life and the theme of the film festival, My Life, My Lens;
- a clear theme;
- visual details that help describe the plot elements as scenes.

B. Structure

All film stories submitted should be written in the following format:

- a narrative structure
- no longer than three typed pages, 600 words.
- double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and
- 12-point Arial font.

Personal Statement Guidelines

Submit a written personal statement describing why you are a good candidate for the student film production summer camp and why your film story represents a compelling and unique idea that can be captured in film.

Your personal statement should not exceed one typed page or 200 words, double spaced with 12 point Arial font and 1 inch margins.

Other Application Requirements

In addition to your film story and personal statement, don't forget to complete the rest of the **Student Application**. This includes:

1. Student, educator, and school/CBO information
2. Signed Parent/Guardian Consent and Media Release Form
3. Signed MSFF 2009 Declaration of Originality

Download the full **STUDENT APPLICATION**, including detailed directions for how to submit your film story, from our website at:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/OCPD/MSFF>.

**APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY
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A Letter to Future Film Makers

Dear Future Film Makers,

I warmly welcome you to the world of film writing. My name is David Wilson and I just recently wrote and directed a feature length documentary film about my life entitled, *Meeting David Wilson*. This film chronicled an exploration of my family history and my quest to find answers about my life as I journeyed through my childhood in the city of Newark, NJ and my family's southern history. The film touched upon themes such as self exploration, race, and family history but it was ultimately about reconciliation and healing.



As a teenager, I would never have guessed that I would one day turn my life into a film. It wasn't until I became an adult that I realized that my personal experiences could help improve the lives of others. I encourage you to look into your own life and see what lessons you learned or stories you have that can help inform and/or entertain others. The day to day moments of our lives provide us with stories that are captivating, inspiring and just make us think. Everyone has a story worth telling.

Many of you already have the raw talent for filmmaking. If you know how to write poetry, music lyrics, or even tell a good joke, you'll find a few similarities with writing a film script. It's all about telling a story that your viewers can immerse themselves in and relate to. However, with film you have the opportunity to do so not only with words but with moving images that will help bring your story to life. My career as a filmmaker has given me the opportunity to creatively cultivate and transform ideas from life and real stories into film.

This will not be easy. It will require discipline and research. You will have moments of frustration but the joy of creating a film is an experience unique unto itself. With perseverance and determination, you will get there.

Best of luck as you write your film story. I am looking forward to seeing your work at the first New York City Middle School Film Festival.

With best wishes,

David Wilson

NYC Middle School Film Festival 2009: A Step by Step Guide for Students

Step 1: Get Some Ideas, but How?

A. Brainstorm – Think About Significant Moments in Your Life

Your life is full of amazing stories! Begin by thinking about your personal history or experiences and moments that really mattered to you. Though they should be most important to you, think also about how the stories might be meaningful to someone else.

Brainstorming is a process of generating a lot of information in a short time by letting your mind go. Think about the film festival theme, *My Life, My Lens*. Now, list all the possible memories and experiences that emerge from the words.

B. Free write – Let Your Ideas Flow

Free writing is another way of generating a lot of information by writing very quickly for a specific period of time. Non-stop writing! This allows you to focus on a specific topic, but forces you to write quickly so you get your ideas on paper.

Once you have noted all the significant events in your life, think about:

- Which of these events is most important to you and would be interesting to a reader or an audience?

Also, think about the **visual strength** of this event.

- Is it an event or story that a reader can “see”?
- What is the setting?
- Can you see it frame by frame?

****See Handout 1: Where to Get Ideas for Your Film Story, Handout 2: My Life, My Lens: Brainstorming Ideas, Handout 3: Free Write!, and Handout 4: Checklist: Getting More Ideas for Your Film Story for guidance on Step 1.**

Step 2: Choose an Idea for Your Story

Choose the focus for YOUR STORY!

Try to describe the essence of that moment using the sentence blanks below. Doing this will help you get a short, concise summary of your film story.

I am writing about _____

This is important because _____

Get Feedback! It is always helpful to get feedback from others. You may want to share your story idea with a teacher, family member, and/or friend to see if they think it would make a good story or a good film idea.

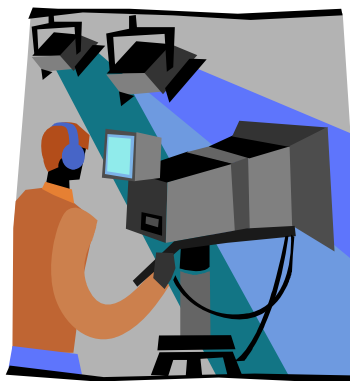
Organize Your Ideas

Organize all of the ideas connected to your story.

Think deeper about the elements of your film story—your characters, conflict, solution and setting. Be sure to connect back to the brainstorming you did around significant moments in your life.

Write the first draft of your story from beginning to end. Try to choose your words carefully and only use the words necessary to tell the story. Remember that your story should only be about 3 pages long – approximately 600 words.

****Use *Handout 5: A Collection of My Story Ideas*, *Handout 6: Film Story Organizer*, *Handout 7: Film Story Worksheet*, and *Handout 8: Writing Your Draft* to guide you through focusing your story, organizing your ideas, and writing your first draft for Step 2.**



Step 3: Make Your Story Rock!

Once you have written your first draft all the way through, you will need to edit and revise it. This means you will read it critically to make changes to make it better.

Does your story include a basic three part film story structure?

- **Part One** - the introduction or the idea of your story and character--“My Life”
- **Part Two** - the issue, problem, and the main idea -- “My Lens”
- **Part Three** - the ending and resolution – “Why This Matters”

Bring Your Story to Life

“As filmmakers, we can show where a person's mind goes...”
--Darren Aronofsky, Film Director

You want to be sure that you tell the story using very **descriptive** and **visual** words. Think about the following as you write:

- Write as if you want the reader to see a picture in their mind as they read.
- Write about your character in a way that makes him/her believable to the reader or audience.
- Write about your character in a way that makes the reader or an audience care about them.
- Write with sensory details – this means to write about how things smell, feel, sound, etc.
- Choose your dialogue carefully. Make sure that it matters, moves the story along or says something important about the character.
- Think about where your moment takes place and at what time. This will help give your story a strong sense of setting.
- Finally, think about the way your story ends. Have you crafted a powerful ending?

Hint: Refer to the Film Story Guidelines section on page 4. (These guidelines are also in the Student Application on the website: <http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/OCPD/MSFF>).

Step 4: Proofread and Edit – Getting Better Every Minute

This part is necessary to make sure that there is no spelling, grammar or other types of mistakes in your writing. You can use **Handout 9: Proofreading and Editing Checklist** provided or you can ask a friend or adult to help you proofread.

Step 5: The Personal Statement and Application – Get Serious!

Now it is time to convince the world that you have the best story to tell! Write a personal statement that is no longer than 200 words. In this statement you will tell why you want to participate in the New York Film Academy Summer Film Camp and why you think your story would make a good film. You want to convince the reader that you really want to do this!

Read through the Student Application

Once your personal statement is complete, be sure to read the student application carefully. Make sure that you complete all the necessary **paperwork**.

 **Detailed directions for submitting the film story and complete application are included on our website <http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/OCPD/MSFF>.**

Keep a copy for yourself before submitting.

If your film story and application is selected, you will be notified by email. This means that you will receive a summer camp scholarship with the New York Film Academy this summer. There you will be able to take your film story idea and turn it into a short film.

You have just reviewed all of the steps that we suggest you take to develop your film story idea and write your application. You may decide to use the following handouts to help develop your ideas.

Good Luck!

Handout 1: Where to Get Great Ideas for Your Film Story

NAME _____

DATE _____

The theme of this year's Film Festival is "My Life, My Lens," so the best place to get great ideas for your film story is from the **significant and unique moments in your life**. Use the following **chart** to take a walk down memory lane and list as many moments in your life as you wish. **You will use these moments to help you select and develop your film story.**

My Life	What did I Learn? What more do I have to Learn? How will I do this?
Important Moments	
Important Events	
My Culture	
My Relationships	
Sports	
Parties	
Other: _____	

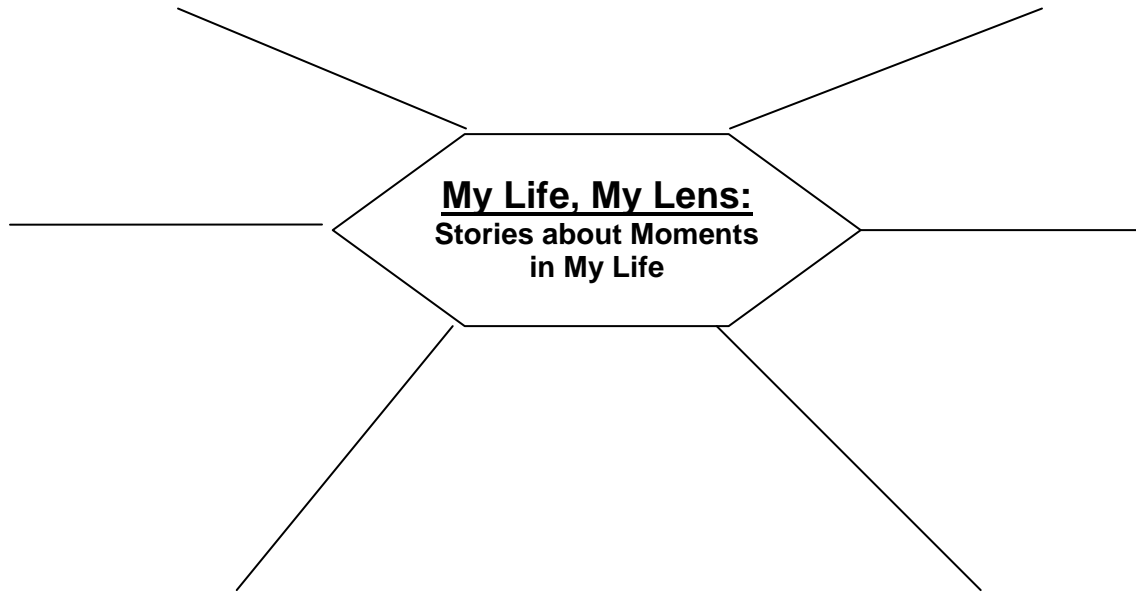
Handout 2: My Life, My Lens: Brainstorming Ideas

NAME _____

DATE _____

Instructions: Take 10 minutes to write down all the ideas that come to your mind about the theme, My Life, My Lens.

Be sure to include significant and unique moments from your life.



Handout 4: Checklist: Getting More Ideas for Your Film Story

NAME _____

DATE _____

Instructions: Use the following checklist with Handouts 1 – 3 to guide you as you are developing your film story idea.

Remember to think about significant moments from your life and the film festival theme, My Life, My

Additional Ways to Get Ideas for Your Film Story

- From your everyday life. Take a look around at everyday things and people, what they are saying and doing.
- What's going on in your world? Who are your friends? Why did you choose them to be your friends?
- Ask questions! Interview your family, friends and teachers about things they are thinking about.
- Events that you have attended: Birthday parties, sports, concerts
- Listen to the radio, the news, music
- Take a look through your favorite site on the internet. Take a closer look at something you have researched. Is there something that interests you?
- Take a trip down memory lane. Look through your old photo albums, clothes and other things you might still have from your childhood. What stories do they tell? What more do you have to learn about yourself?

Handout 5: A Collection of My Story Ideas

NAME _____

DATE _____

Remember to think about significant moments from your life and the film festival theme, My Life, My Lens.

Instructions: Think about all of the significant moments from your life that you brainstormed in **Step 2** and choose the top three moments to work with below. For each of your top three film story ideas give a brief description of the story. Make sure the story summary includes an important character or characters. After you have written a description of the story, rank them in order of preference using numbers 1-3, with number 1 the most preferred.

Need help figuring out how to write a brief description of your film story? Use one of these sentence structures!

I am writing about _____, and I am going to show that _____.	Or	(Somebody) _____ wanted _____ but _____ so _____.
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Top Three Film Story Ideas	Ranking (1-3)

**FILM STORY
IDEA
CHECKLIST**

Does your story idea incorporate:

- Something personal?
- A significant moment from your life?
- Dramatic ideas?

Can your story idea be developed into a film story that:

- Can be told visually?
- Can be told with limited dialogue?
- Can be told in a short film?
- Can be told with one or two characters?
- Takes place in a local setting?
- Others can relate to?

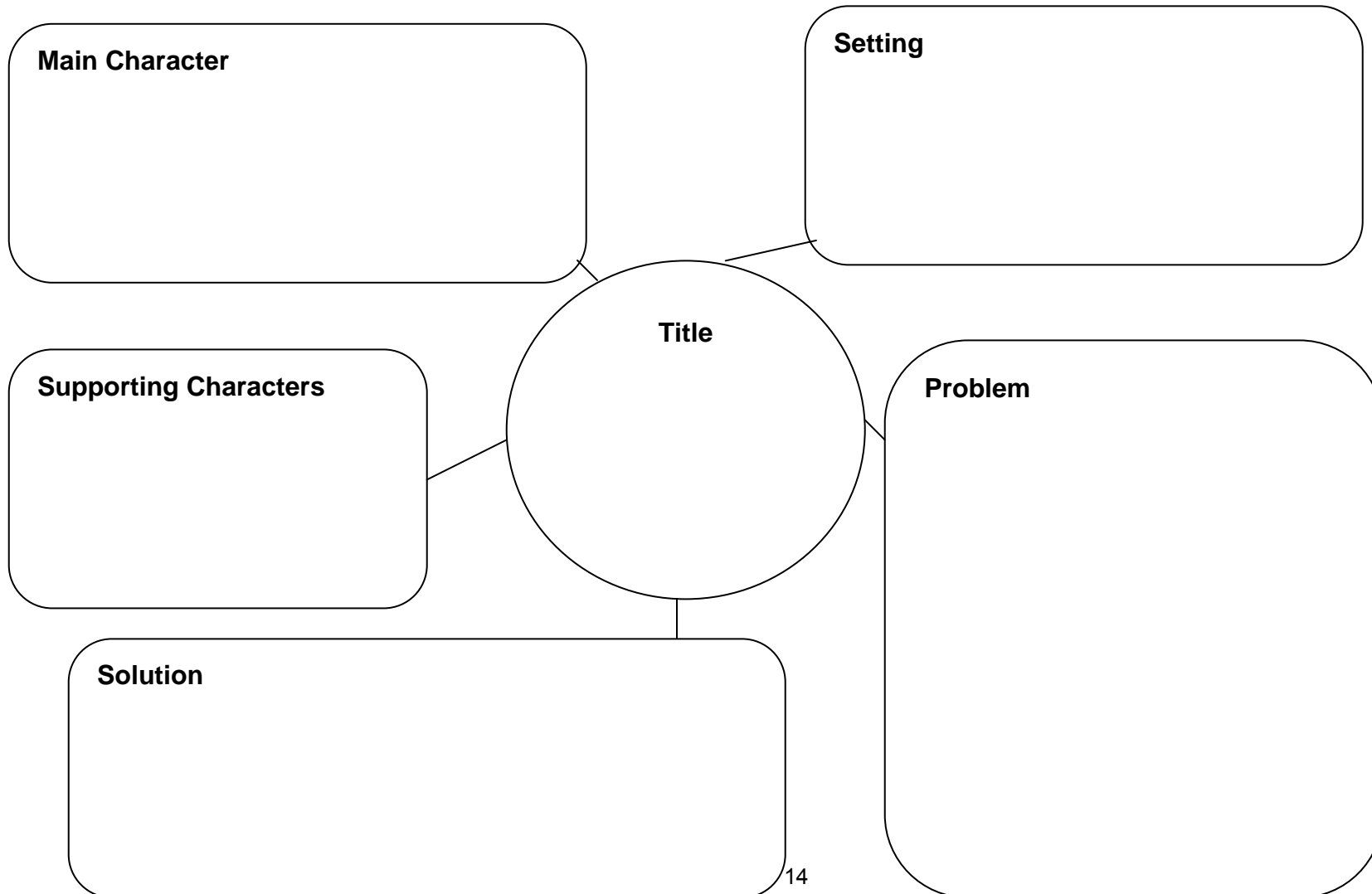
Handout 6: Film Story Organizer

NAME _____

DATE _____

Remember to think about significant moments from your life and the film festival theme, My Life, My Lens.

Instructions: Use the following graphic organizer below to think deeper about the elements of your film story. You may use words, pictures or sentences to describe your film story. Be sure to connect each of the elements back to the moments in your life that you are writing about.



Handout 7: Film Story Worksheet

NAME _____

DATE _____

Instructions: Now that you have selected a film story idea, use the following film story worksheet as a tool to help you think through the details of your film story.

Remember to think about significant moments from your life and the film festival theme, **My Life, My Lens.**

1. How would you describe your story? Comedy? Drama? Action?
2. The theme of the film festival is **My Life, My Lens**. How is this theme reflected in your film story?
3. Name two movies that are similar to what you are going for in your short film. What makes those films successful?
4. How different is your film story from the moment(s) from your life that it is based on?

5. A good story can often be described simply. Can you do this with your film? My film is a story about _____ who _____

Handout 9: Editing and Proofreading Checklist

Editing and Proofreading Checklist

Ask yourself these questions:

- Have I read the story aloud, one word at a time? Does it make sense?
- Have I eliminated unnecessary words?
- Does my story have an original, meaningful title?
- Have I maintained consistent use of verb tense?
- Have I used strong verbs?
- Have I checked the grammar and punctuation?
- Have I checked for spelling errors and typos (Especially these words: to/too/two; their/there/they're; your/you're; its/it's; past/passed; except/accept; effect/affect)?
- Are my sentences logically organized into paragraphs?
- Have I capitalized the names of people, places, and titles?
- Have I begun each sentence with a capital letter?
- Have I used quotation marks around spoken words?
- Have I used apostrophes for contractions?
- Have I used apostrophes to show possession?
- Have I indented each paragraph?
- In my dialogue, is it clear who is speaking?

Additional Editing Tips

1. Try this to check for varied **sentence structure** and length:

- With a pen in your hand, read your paper out loud. At the end of each sentence, make a slash mark (/). Look at your sentences: Are all of them very long? Very short? Is there variety? Have you used commas correctly?

2. Try this to check for **complete sentences**: Starting from the last sentence in your paper, read it backwards, one sentence at a time. This helps you focus on each single sentence.

3. Check **use of pronouns**: Draw a small square around each pronoun (he, she, they, etc.). Draw an arrow to the pronoun's antecedent/referent (a specific person, group, thing that the pronoun is referring to). Check for connection (do the pronouns connect to a specific person, group or thing you mentioned earlier?)

4. Check **transitional words and phrases**: Words like *next, then, earlier, moreover, in addition, on the other hand, sometime later*, etc. You should have *some* transitions but not *too many*. Make sure each transition word is used properly.

5. Use a peer **editor**: Ask another to listen to you read your story. Ask them if it makes sense. Do they have any questions? If they do, you still have work to do.