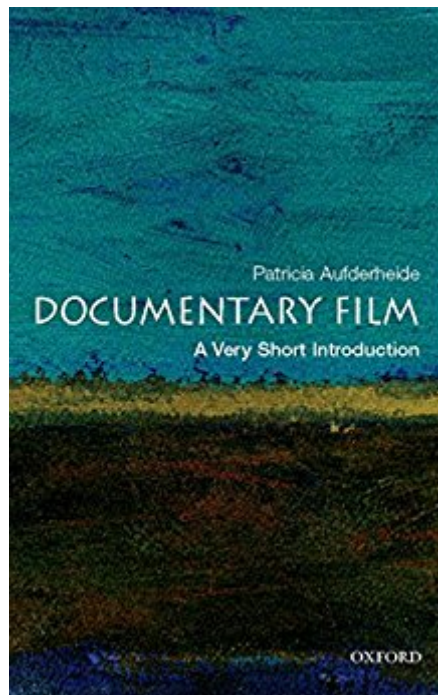


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# Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



## Synopsis

Documentary film can encompass anything from Robert Flaherty's pioneering ethnography *Nanook of the North* to Michael Moore's anti-Iraq War polemic *Fahrenheit 9/11*, from Dziga Vertov's artful Soviet propaganda piece *Man with a Movie Camera* to Luc Jacquet's heart-tugging wildlife epic *March of the Penguins*. In this concise, crisply written guide, Patricia Aufderheide takes readers along the diverse paths of documentary history and charts the lively, often fierce debates among filmmakers and scholars about the best ways to represent reality and to tell the truths worth telling. Beginning with an overview of the central issues of documentary filmmaking--its definitions and purposes, its forms and founders--Aufderheide focuses on several of its key subgenres, including public affairs films, government propaganda (particularly the works produced during World War II), historical documentaries, and nature films. Her thematic approach allows readers to enter the subject matter through the kinds of films that first attracted them to documentaries, and it permits her to make connections between eras, as well as revealing the ongoing nature of documentary's core controversies involving objectivity, advocacy, and bias. Interwoven throughout are discussions of the ethical and practical considerations that arise with every aspect of documentary production. A particularly useful feature of the book is an appended list of "100 great documentaries" that anyone with a serious interest in the genre should see. Drawing on the author's four decades of experience as a film scholar and critic, this book is the perfect introduction not just for teachers and students but also for all thoughtful filmgoers and for those who aspire to make documentaries themselves.

**About the Series:** Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, *Very Short Introductions* offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an excellent guide for any potential filmmaker or fan of the Documentary Film genre. Dr. Aufderheide is a leader in the field of documentary film (look her up on the web) and her affordable fact-filled guide is well worth the \$10. In a time when most authors write expensive 300-plus page texts, the "Very Short Introduction" series is a welcome alternative. The text includes an insightful list of the best 100 documentaries, and an extensive list of reading resources. I teach Advanced Documentary Film Production at the college level and Pat's guide is required reading for my course.

Aufderheide's small book is packed with information, but so beautifully organized you can actually find what you're looking for. Tight, cogent prose makes it both an excellent history of, and an inviting introduction to documentary film. And once you've read it, you have a nifty little handbook!

I'm constantly looking for new ways to expand my portfolio and directing a documentary film is definitely a project I'm considering. This book has been a great introduction to the goals/execution of making a documentary.

Professor Aufderheide, as I call her, is tough, passionate and extremely knowledgeable about this subject. I'm a graduate major in film studies at American University and took her course called History of Documentary. She is a tough cookie but a great teacher, and I had an amazing and challenging experience in her class. This book was a part of the text used in the class and I hate to call it a cliff notes type of book, well maybe a pocket guide would be a better description. But for such a small text it is packed with a great deal of knowledge for the film student or anyone wanting to understand the documentary film genre. I would recommend it to anyone interested in such topics.

Overall an excellent introduction. I made this review mainly to note an interesting typo (or slip of the keyboard) at the top of page 59. The author writes "Richard Paley's CBS" when, in fact, the boss of CBS was named William S. Paley. "Richard Paley" was the pseudonym adopted by the investigative reporter played by Warren Beatty in THE PARALLAX VIEW.

Good book to read, easy to understand, one of the better books I read for college.

I read the whole book in 2 sittings. Very well written and organized. A good read for documentary film lovers. Especially beginners.

I really like the way that he outlines documentary film types, but I think that certain examples could use a lot more description.

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