

Preparation for the Critical Review

Here are some questions that may help you begin thinking critically about the documentaries that have been chosen:

- What are the creators of the documentary attempting to accomplish?
 - Does the organization that produced the documentary have an explicit agenda?
 - Do the creators simply want to transmit some knowledge?
 - Do they hope to alter the viewers/users behavior?
 - Do they hope to affect the way that the viewers/users view this kind of science?
- What kinds of **assumptions** have the creators made about the viewing public?
 - How interested are the viewers/users in scientific data? Scientific methods?
 - What are the viewers'/users' chief motivations?
- What happens to the scientific material as it is translated for the general public?
- How does the structure of each documentary affect the presentation of that scientific material?
- Each of these documentaries gives evidence of a distinctive approach.
 - How would you characterize the creators' approach to presenting environmental science?
 - Why do you think the creators took this approach?
 - What are the benefits of the approach that the creators have chosen?
 - What are the drawbacks of the approach that the creators have chosen?
 - Elements to consider:
 - narratives (re scientists or re experiments)
 - interviews (with scientists or with experiment participants)
 - humor
 - case histories
 - diagrams and graphs

Some of you already know that you prefer one of the two documentaries on your topic. You might use this preference as a starting point as you plan out your critical review, but, by itself, your preference cannot provide a meaningful thesis for your critical review.

Ultimately, your critical review should draw evidence from the two documentaries to support your advice to the Green Media Institute. Help them figure out how to evaluate documentary projects. Which ones might be worth investing in? What kinds of projects seem potentially misguided?

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