This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of documentary film by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their classes, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some web links that provide starting points for further research or discussion. In separate packages, there will also be support materials available with information regarding general viewing and teaching principles for documentary film and the fundamental aspects of making documentary films.

The Film

Brazilian artist Vik Muniz creates photographic images of people using found materials from the places where they live and work. His “Sugar Children” series portrays the images of deprived children of Caribbean plantation workers using the sugar from their surroundings. When acclaimed filmmaker Lucy Walker trains her camera on Muniz, he is cultivating a new idea for a project. He knows the material he wants to use—garbage—but who will be the subject of the new series of works?

Waste Land is a wonderfully resonant documentary that chronicles Muniz’s journey to Jardim Gramacho, the world’s largest landfill, located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. He collaborates with an eclectic band of catadores—self-designated pickers of recyclable materials—and photographs these inspiring characters as they recycle their lives and society’s garbage. Walker gains fantastic access to the entire process and, in doing so, offers stirring evidence of the transformative power of art and the dignity that can be found in personal determination.

The Filmmakers

Lucy Walker uses dramatic filmmaking techniques to make documentary films, following memorable characters on transformative journeys that grant unique access inside closed worlds. In addition to Waste Land, Walker directed a second feature documentary that premiered at Sundance 2010, Countdown to Zero, a terrifying exposé of the current threat of nuclear terrorism and proliferation.

Walker’s previous film, Blindsight, premiered at Toronto and received audience awards at the Berlinale-Panorama Publikumspreis, Ghent, AFI and Palm Springs film festivals and was nominations for Best Documentary at the 2007 Grierson Awards and British Independent Film Awards. Blindsight follows the emotional journey of six blind Tibetan teenagers who climb up the north side of Mount Everest with their hero, blind American mountaineer Erik Weihenmeyer, and their teacher, Sabriye Tenberken, who founded Braille Without Borders, the only school for the blind in Tibet. Walker’s first feature documentary, Devil’s Playground, examined the struggles of Amish teenagers during their period of experimentation (rumspringa). It premiered at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival and went on to win awards at the Karlovy Vary and Sarasota film festivals, three Emmy Award nominations for Best Documentary, Best Directing and Best Editing and an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Documentary. Walker’s credits also include Nickelodeon’s Blue’s Clues, for which she was twice nominated for Emmy Awards for Outstanding Direction in a Children’s Series, and several award-winning narrative short films.

Walker grew up in London, England, started directing theatre in high school and continued as an undergraduate at Oxford University, where her plays won prestigious Oxford University Dramatic Society awards. After graduating at the top of her class with a BA (Hons.) and MA (Oxon.) in literature, she won a Fulbright Scholarship to attend New York University’s Graduate Film Program, where she earned her MFA. While at NYU, she moonlighted as a musician and D.J., during which time she met Moby, who contributed the music for Waste Land.

Educational package written and compiled by Dimitra Tsanos dimitra.tsanos@tdsb.on.ca
Facts on Catadores (Waste Pickers)

A waste picker, recycler, binner, informal resource recoverer or a scavenger is a person who picks out recyclable elements from mixed waste wherever it may be temporarily accessible or disposed of. A person who scavenges for junk, food, materials or other items is also referred to as a scavenger.

The socioeconomic conditions prevalent in Third World cities differ markedly from those in industrialized countries. Third World cities are experiencing rapid urbanization brought about by fast population growth, as well as high immigration rates. Urbanization often takes place as the expansion or creation of new slum areas and squatter settlements. Typically, these settlements grow organically and lack any planning, resulting in twisting and narrow streets, as well as in the occupation of environmentally sensitive and disaster-prone areas, such as wetlands, river beds, creeks, flood plains and steep slopes. The physical characteristics of Third World cities, their rapid expansion and the lack of resources to provide them with the necessary infrastructure and urban services translate into an insufficient collection of the wastes generated, as well as their improper disposal on the streets, vacant lots and in municipal open dumps. Most Third World cities do not collect the totality of wastes they generate. Despite spending between 30 and 50 per cent of their operational budgets on waste management, Third World cities collect only between 50 and 80 per cent of the refuse generated.

Low-income neighbourhoods, slums and squatter settlements constitute the areas where municipal collection of wastes often does not exist. Residents of areas without refuse collection may resort to dumping their garbage in the nearest vacant lot or river, or simply burn it in their backyards. The improper disposal of solid wastes constitutes a source of land, air and water pollution, and poses risks to human health and the environment. Third World cities, preoccupied with extending waste collection and with improving final disposal, generally lack recycling programs.

A waste picker is different from a waste collector, in that the waste collected by the latter may be destined to the landfill or to the incinerator, not necessarily for recycling. Developing nations depend on rag pickers to reduce the waste reaching landfills.

VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

There are important themes in this film that have broad implications for students and their futures. Take time to activate your students’ background understanding of these themes before viewing. This will help them as they come to their own understanding and develop their critical abilities.

The following three subsections, on this page, are intended to provide you with a range of pre-viewing, viewing and post-viewing activities. They are followed by a set of questions based upon the film’s larger thematic domains, some follow-up questions and quotations, sample curricular outcomes, and a page of web links for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Show students the trailer for the film (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWPU5WNgQ2w). Have students work in small groups to try and identify themes or ideas conveyed by the trailer.

Discuss with students how effective/affective the trailer is as a media piece.

Have students use a graphic organizer to summarize the film as they watch it. There are three major themes that are intertwined in the film: human dignity, landfills and artistic expression.

Using Google Earth, show students the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Look at the surrounding region and discuss possible land-use conflicts and other social problems these neighbourhoods create.

In groups of four, have students look at the satellite photo of the landfill site. Since the landfill will be closing in 202, students are asked to suggest possible proposals for the new site. On a transparency, outline the entire landfill in black. Using red (residential), blue (industrial), green (open space), orange (commercial) and black (transport), have students create new land-use classifications for the area. Have students write out five of the major changes and explain why they chose these areas. As an alternative: if a smartboard is available, have students work in groups to come up with and illustrate their changes using different colours.

For homework, have students read one of the articles referenced in the web links on pages nine and 10.

Print several of the questions or quotations from page six on individual sheets of paper. Have students work in small groups or with partners to discuss if they agree with the ideas. Have them share the statement and what they think or believe about it with the class.

Set a purpose for viewing by having a discussion about one or more of the questions or quotations on page six.

Viewing Activities

Have students take notes on, or jot down connections to, one of the thematic domains on page four of this guide. Ask students to find proof from the film that supports their connections.

Have students use a graphic organizer to summarize the film or characters as they watch it. There are six catadores: Zumbi, Magna, Irma, Isis, Suelem, Valter and Tiao.

Stop the film at various points and have students provide summaries at each point.

Have students jot down five ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raised in their minds.

Post-Viewing Activities

Show the students their quotations from the pre-viewing activity and see if their minds were changed or opinions altered or enhanced by the film.

For homework, students will need to research the life of a water bottle (cradle to grave). They can use a flowchart to illustrate the flow, from the beginning stage of its production, to the end stage of disposal. The next day, discuss solutions to decrease the cycle (local economies), eliminate part of it (recycle) or eliminate it all together (reusable bottles).

For homework, have students research the waste disposal programs their local city provides. Research the process that is involved for each (garbage, green/organics, yard and recycling),
and how much is diverted from the landfill every year.

Ask students to describe what their photo would look like if they were a catadore. Have them describe how their photo shoot would be conducted, including the lighting, composition, background and props.

Have students research another landfill from elsewhere in the world. Some of the largest in the world include Guatemala City, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Managua, Nicaragua, Paris and Victoria. Have them present their findings to the class.

Have students research another artist who has used garbage for art. Have students share their findings in a class discussion the next day.

Have students create a proposal for a project that would reuse garbage or recyclable materials as an art display. Have them describe the photo in a manner that would allow the reader to imagine the photo without seeing it. Make sure they include the layout, materials, subject and colours. The five Ws could also help with this exercise (Who, What, When, Where and Why).

Have student complete an exit note (single small sheet of paper with one phrase or idea written on it) that demonstrates one thing they have learned, felt or decided as a result of watching the film.

Discuss with students their initial reactions to the various characters and situations confronted in the film. Did it change by the end of the film? Why?

For further ideas around how to explore this documentary, use the guiding questions on page five.
THE BIG QUESTIONS/IDEAS/THEMES

Multiple Perspectives
What is the subject of this film? Can you determine the filmmakers’ perspective on this subject? What evidence can you find in the film to support your view?

How does this film help you analyze and interpret points of view about issues that concern people?

Does the filmmakers’ perspective foster respect for diversity and an inclusive society? If so, how?

Identity
Whose story is told in this documentary? Whose story is not told? How does this story, and the way it is told, help you understand your own community/life?

How do the people in this film identify with their community? What are the common bonds among the people in this film? What challenges do they face in expressing their identity?

What film techniques do the filmmakers use to convey the identity of the people in this film?

Citizenship
What insights does this documentary offer about the ideals of good citizenship in the community depicted in this film?

How does the film deal with issues of freedom, equality, human dignity, and individual and collective rights and responsibilities?

Change and Continuity
How does this film help you understand a community’s values and its attitudes towards an issue at a particular time?

What changes do the people in the film experience? What causes those changes? What are the consequences of those changes for the people in the documentary?

Culture and Community
Which aspects of a people’s culture does this film focus on? Why do you think the filmmakers focused on those aspects?

How do the images, themes and message of this film help you understand the filmmakers’ attitude towards the subject? What do you think might have been the intended audience’s attitude towards the documentary subject?

Individuals, Societies and Economic Decisions
What economic systems are at work in this film? What are some of the causes and effects of the economic decisions made by the people in the film’s community?

Does money play a part in the decisions being made in the film and what does it tell you about their local culture?

Power and Governance
What system of government control do we see in this documentary? How is power distributed within this society? What are the implications of that distribution on issues affecting the people’s well-being and freedom?

Global Connections
What global issues are addressed in this film? What is the filmmakers’ point of view on the opportunities and challenges of those issues?

Adapted from NFB Documentary Lens: http://www.nfb.ca
EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Additional Questions for Pre- or Post-Viewing Activities

How do the six catadores’ stories make you feel? Were you sympathetic or judgmental? Why do you think the filmmaker chose these six individuals? Whose story touched you the most? Explain.

Why are unions, co-ops and associations important for workers? How was the ACAMJG Union important to the catadores?

Why are the aerial shots of the landfill not as effective to photograph as a close-up shot? What are they missing? How is this paralleled in the “pictures of garbage” project? How is this unparalleled with the city of Rio de Janeiro?

Would you rather be poor with morals or rich with no morals? In connection to this, near the end of the film, Vik discuss his preference of “wanting everything and having nothing, than to have everything and want nothing” which would you prefer?

Do you believe the catadores are, as Vik observes, proud of what they are doing? Explain.

Analogies can be useful to explain an issue. How is the landfill like a stock market? Explain. Use your own analogy to describe the same issue.

Why is the transformed garbage portrait more powerful than the original photo? Explain.

Do you think the garbage portraits project did more damage or good to the catadores?

What makes something a work of art? Do you think the black garbage bag or the pharmacy shelf is an art piece? At what point does an object in the natural world become art? What do you influences our opinions?

In Toronto, does everyone sort their garbage? Why would someone not choose to? What are some incentives created by the government to encourage this? Visit the city’s website (http://www.toronto.ca) to see if it has helped.

If you were Vik, and had to choose one of the catadores to photograph, which one would you choose and why? What do you admire about this person?

Why is it important to care about other countries and the conditions they live in?

Quotations from the Film to Explore

“He gives life to garbage.”

“This is where everything not good goes.”

“Chaotic, yet organized.”

“When you put your mind to something, you can achieve it.”

“The moment where one thing turns into another is the most beautiful moment.”

“Here’s wisdom a plenty, 19 is not 20, 99 is not 100.”

Other Quotation to Explore

“One man’s garbage is another man’s treasure.”
## EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE</th>
<th>OVERALL EXPECTATIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9 Arts</td>
<td>• use the creative process to produce artworks that demonstrate innovative connections among the arts.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• explain the socio-economic function of the arts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use materials and processes to create art objects that express their intent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• apply the elements and principles of design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• produce two- and three-dimensional artworks, using a variety of materials, tools, processes and technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• explain through critical analysis the function (e.g., political, religious, social) of their own artworks and those of other cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• demonstrate an understanding of connections between art and cultural identity or context.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 10 Arts</td>
<td>• explain the elements and principles of media arts as they apply to their own work and the work of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use the stages of the creative process to communicate their ideas individually and in groups (e.g., exploration, experimentation, production, evaluation).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use concepts and procedures from other art forms in creating media artworks.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• identify the impact of media artworks and productions on themselves and their community.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• produce a work designed around specific objectives and challenges (e.g., composition issues, subject matter, use of visual language).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• describe interrelationships among art, the consumer and the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 11 Arts</td>
<td>• describe the impact of art practices and materials on the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• analyze works of art in relation to their cultural, social, political and historical contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 Philosophy</td>
<td>• identify philosophical theories and presuppositions in natural science, history, art, social science and humanities, and other subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 Art</td>
<td>• analyze the socio-economic importance of the arts and their impact on the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• analyze and evaluate modern and contemporary Western works of art, as well as selected works of fine art, works in applied design and works in crafts from African, Oceanic, Central and South American, and emerging art communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 Politics</td>
<td>• explain the rights and responsibilities of individual citizens, groups and states in the international community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• compare the aspirations, expectations and life conditions of people in developed and developing nations.</td>
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</table>
# EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

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<th>COURSE</th>
<th>OVERALL EXPECTATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade 11 Geography</strong></td>
<td>• analyze the political, economic and social factors that contribute to disparities in economic development within the Americas.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• analyze the problem of underdevelopment in the Americas and explain the difficulties in alleviating it.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• evaluate the impact of human life on the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade 12 Geography</strong></td>
<td>• compare the cultural, economic and political aspirations of selected groups and the effects of their actions on local, national and global geographic issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• evaluate the effectiveness of short-term and long-term solutions to geographic problems and issues at the local, national and global level.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• analyze geographic issues that arise from the impact of human activities on the environment in different regions of the world.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• assess the effectiveness of measures to alleviate regional economic disparities and resolve conflicts related to them.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• analyze and evaluate interrelationships among the environment, the economy and society.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• analyze patterns of resource availability and use.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• analyze and compare the characteristics of major urban systems in different parts of the world.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• explain how humans modify the environment to meet urban needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• analyze various proposed solutions to typical problems of large urban areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• explain how the sustainable use of resources may be achieved through the cooperation of governments, businesses, industries, non-governmental organizations and citizens around the world, even though their environmental perspectives may differ.</td>
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WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film
The official website has the advertising poster for the film.
http://www.wastelandmovie.com

The trailer for *Waste Land* can be found on YouTube.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWPUIWNgQ2w

About the Filmmakers
Press notes on the film and the filmmakers—including the director, co-director, musicians and editors—and information about each of the catadores are found in this nine-page Word document.
http://press.sundance.org/15659?format=doc&press=1

About Jardim Gramacho Landfill
This 14-page document outlines the Jardim Gramacho Landfill at Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro, and the electricity generation and technology put into operation there.


About Vik Muniz
Vik Muniz's official website includes much of his work. Other links include articles, interviews and a bio on the artist.
http://www.vikmuniz.net

Books

About the Film
An online article titled "Waste Recycling and the Catadores of Brazil" is a great overview of the history of the catadores in Brazil.
http://www.icmrindia.org/Business%20Updates/micro%20cases/studies/Business%20Ethics/MCBE0012.htm

The National Movement of Catadores: A social movement of scavengers and garbage collectors of recyclable materials throughout Brazil formed about four years ago. Its stated purpose (translated from Portuguese): "We seek recovery of our category of collector who is an employee and has its importance." Links include many recent news articles about their successes.
http://www.mncr.org.br

http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fa20090101a1.html

Inclusive Cities is a collaboration of membership-based organizations (MBOs) of the working poor, international alliances of MBOs and support organizations committed to improving the situation of the working poor. Includes many articles about waste pickers.
http://www.inclusivecities.org/waste_pickers.html

Online Sources
Aperture Foundation: a non-profit arts organization dedicated to promoting photography in all its forms. Their aim is to foster both the development and the appreciation of the medium and its practitioners. Links include magazines, books, prints, events and galleries.
http://www.aperture.org

Spain’s Documentation Centre for Art and Nature (CDAN): "Stirring in the Trash. Waste and Recycling in Art Today" is an exhibit at the CDAN from Feb. 5 to May 9, 2010. Waste and recycling are the two concepts on which the exhibition is organized, using a selection of works by nine artists including Vik Muniz.
http://www.cdan.es/cdan_enlace.asp?IdNodo=5007

CDAN publishes a bi-monthly newsletter with listing and links to many art shows that deal with the interaction between art, human activity and nature.
http://www.cdan.info/web/Boletines/1002/Newsletter_1002__index.htm
WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

City of Toronto Solid Waste Management: This site offers a detailed overview of the programs the City of Toronto offers to its residents for proper waste disposal.
http://www.toronto.ca/garbage/index.htm

Strengthening Community Arts in Toronto: In 2003, Toronto City Council adopted Culture Plan for the Creative City, a 10-year action plan to guide the city’s cultural development. The plan sets out recommendations to develop the community arts sector in order to build vital and vibrant communities.
http://www.toronto.ca/culture/arts-services/communityarts.htm

This four-page document describes how Keele Valley (Toronto’s landfill from 1983 to 2002) worked. Some useful diagrams are included.

The Lifecycle of Trash, Garbage 101: This excellent diagram illustrates where garbage goes after leaving our curb.

Video Clips

Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage: This 18-minute clip from 2005 discusses capitalism and the impacts consumerism has on our world, which can be shown after viewing Waste Land. The short clip was turned into a paperback nonfiction book by Heather Rogers in 2006.
http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5934530156227758850#

This YouTube link contains many short clips of Gramacho landfill and shows what the landfill looks like. Good to show students before or after viewing the film.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61pWkglisDHO

Various Links for Lesson Plan Ideas, Media Awareness, Critical Literacy and Documentary Films

The Association for Media Literacy: This Canadian website examines how media impacts and influences culture.
http://www.aml.ca/home

Think Literacy: Cross Curricular Approaches, Grades 7-12: This excellent online 33-page document produced by the Toronto District School Board contains literacy exercises for students involving reading, writing and interpreting. An exercise “Reading Graphical Texts: Interpreting Photographs” can be found on pages 22 to 27.
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentsuccess/.../files/ThinkLitCanWorld.pdf

Using Documentaries in the Classroom: This teacher librarian’s personal website contains excellent resources for teaching with documentary films.
http://www.frankwbaker.com/using_docs_in_the_classroom.htm

Media Awareness: A Canadian non-profit media education and Internet-literacy resource library.
http://www.media-awareness.ca

Center for Media Literacy: A U.S. website which provides several resources for making, understanding and criticizing media.
http://www.medialit.org

The National Film Board of Canada website: On this site is an area with teaching resources and short documentary films that can be used as teaching aides.
http://www.nfb.ca

Hot Docs Looking at Documentaries: A teaching guide that sets out questions designed to help teachers include the study of documentary film in their curriculum.
http://www.hotdocs.ca/youth/docs_for_schools/2010_docs_for_schools_selections/