

FUTURESTATES[®]



Gunny

Directed by Patrick Stettner

[C] COMMUNITY CLASSROOM
ENGAGING STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS THROUGH FILM

PRESENTED BY:
ITVS
Public Media's
Independent Voice



FUTURESTATES.TV

ABOUT

FUTURESTATES

Imagining tomorrow's America today,



SCENES AND BEHIND THE SCENES FROM *FUTURESTATES* FILMS.
TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT: *Gunny* by Patrick Stettner, *That Which Once Was* by Kimi Takesue, *Laura Keller-NB* by Mo Perkins, and *Beholder* by Nisha Ganatra



Futurestates is a series of independent mini-features – short narrative films created by experienced filmmakers and emerging talents – transforming today's complex social issues into visions about what life in America will be like in decades to come. Now in its third season, *Futurestates*, which debuted in March 2010, is available online at futurestates.tv.

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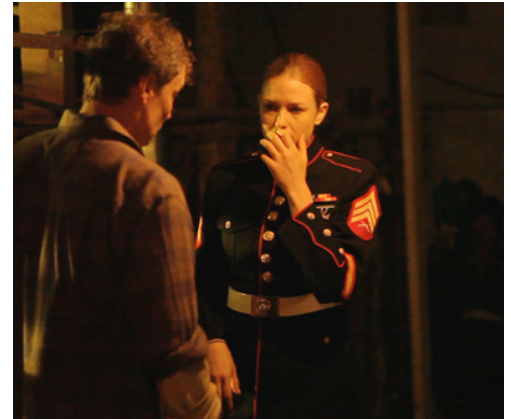
The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the Emmy® Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Monday nights at 10 PM on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens, and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue, and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting itvs.org. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

OVERVIEW



While all Futurestate
episodes use the future to
comment on our present-
day circumstances,

Gunny, which is about a returning female soldier who is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), is particularly timely. According to the *New York Times* in June 2012, “The suicide rate among the nation’s active-duty military personnel has spiked this year, eclipsing the number of troops dying in battle and on pace to set a record annual high since the start of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan more than a decade ago.” The futuristic element in the film is a new procedure that is intended to erase selective memories of whatever experiences may have triggered their PTSD and subsequent thoughts of suicide. The film is a powerful exploration of the lasting effects of war, told in a unique style that moves backward in time.



TARGET AUDIENCE:

Grades 9–12
ENGLISH OR SOCIAL STUDIES

PLEASE NOTE:

Please note that there is a strong implication that *Gunny*, the female protagonist, is involved in a sexual relationship with another woman.

DURATION:

The main lesson is designed to be completed within a **55-minute class period**, with additional and extension activities that can expand to three or four class periods.

The film itself has a running time of about **20 minutes**.

STANDARDS:

Common Core State Standards for Reading Literature:

Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots) and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Common Core State Standards for Writing:

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

BEFORE

(5–10) minutes

Based on the time available, ask students to consider one or more of the following questions and topics:

1. Be sure that before beginning the film that students have a working definition of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is “a severe anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to any event that results in psychological trauma, overwhelming the individual’s ability to cope,” according to the American Psychiatric Association.
2. Using the free online resource, [PollEverywhere](#), or an offline questionnaire, ask students try to guess the current number of US active-duty soldiers (greater than 1,400, 000), the number serving in Afghanistan (greater than 100,000, as of June 2012), and the number of suicides of active-duty soldiers between January and June 2012 (154 soldiers). The questionnaire should also ask students to share what they know about our current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, in terms of objectives, results, and history of involvement.
3. Additional previewing activity: if students have not been asked to view film critically before, you may want to consider taking some time to review [film terminology](#) with students, using the lesson on the *Futurestates* For Educators page.

DURING

(15) minutes

Because this film starts at the end and moves backward in time, students may need a little assistance to help them through the plot by using the Viewing Guide, which includes the days and times of the story. The chart asks them to track both the information they learn about Gunny as the story unfolds, as well as the visual and sound of each sequence.

If time allows, students would benefit from watching the film a second time to fully appreciate and understand the role that structure plays in the film. If time does not allow, you may want to assign students to take notes on only one half of the chart and to share their notes with a partner afterward.

SCENES AND BEHIND THE SCENES FROM *GUNNY* by Patrick Stettner

AFTER

(8–10) minutes

Based on the time available, ask students to consider some of the following questions and topics:

1. Working in pairs or small groups, retell the story of *Gunny* to one another in chronological order, being sure that all of the key plot points are addressed.
2. A lot of the information in this story is not directly stated, but needs to be inferred by the viewer, especially the scenes between Gunny and her father. Working with a partner, either write or act out a dialogue of what Gunny and her father are thinking to themselves, but do not say out loud.
3. In the scene identified as “six hours earlier,” it’s clear that one member of Gunny’s squad did not take the medication that erases memories. What was his argument against it and, based on what we learn through the film, why do you think Gunny decided to do the same?
4. Sound plays a significant role in this film. Think back on effective uses of sound effects: clocks, insects, crowd noise, etc. How were they used and for what effect?
5. The only two scenes that are not time or day identified are the opening and closing scenes. Where and when do you think these scenes take place and how do you think they relate to the rest of the story?
6. Ask students to identify whether they would take the pill or not. Then, encourage them to talk with someone in class who thinks differently and discuss the reasoning behind their choices.
7. Direct students to identify and discuss other traumatic events that could bring memories that one would like to forget (natural disasters, violence in other arenas, etc.) and ways we deal with these changes to our lives without the use of the pill that Gunny takes.
8. In some ways, Gunny is a passive character. Other than take the pill and get into the fight, she does not do much. What do her actions and her inactions reveal about her character? How has taking the pill affected her identity?

ASSESSMENT

(10) minutes

In a full paragraph, have the students respond to the following prompt: why do you think the director decided to tell this story backwards, what is the effect of this choice on the viewer, and how do you think it relates to the ideas explored about war and memories?



JOHN AND GUNNY ARGUE ABOUT THE CONTROVERSIAL NEW PROCEDURE.

ADDITIONAL MEDIA LITERACY ACTIVITIES

1. What happens when you rearrange the chronological order of a story? What do you have to do in order to help your audience to follow the story? These are valuable questions for writers, filmmakers, and other artists to consider. Give students a Xerox copy of a story they have already read this year or a story with a straightforward narrative; for example, “*The Most Dangerous Game*” by Richard Connell is widely available and is perfect for this activity. After (re)reading and discussing the chronological plot of the story, direct students to physically cut up the story, moving a scene that happened at the end to the beginning and re-arranging at least one other section. Students should then glue the sections onto blank paper, leaving some space between the re-arranged sections. Next, students need to fill in the spaces between the sections with dialogue, setting, details or other information that will help the reader to understand the new time sequence. Last, students should discuss the role that chronology plays in the creation and development of a story, as well as what you have to do to address your audience.
2. Look at the “*Making of ...*” documentary about this film. The director, Patrick Stettner, discusses the issue of the pros and cons of being able to take a pill and erase one’s memories of war. Based on what he says in the documentary, how do you think he feels? Why? How does he show this attitude in his film? How might the story have been told differently if he had different feelings about the subject?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Have students use the Predict-O-Meter tool on the *Futurestates* website. First, using the forms at the end of this lesson plan, students will evaluate up to three predictions from this film based on scientific facts and their own knowledge. Then, they have an opportunity to make a prediction of their own about an issue raised in the film and have it evaluated by another student. Finally, if they have made an interesting and a likely prediction, they can have it posted onto the *Futurestates* website.
2. Students should have an opportunity to interview a soldier who has served in combat. However, this needs to be handled very carefully since some veterans are reluctant to speak of their experiences. One of the best ways to go about this is to arrange for an active or retired soldier to come to your class for a presentation and Q and A that students have been fully prepared for. You can arrange for a speaker by contacting your local American Legion post, which you can identify at <http://www.legion.org/>.
3. Research the issue of suicides by active and veteran soldiers. A good starting place is this *New York Times* special debate section on the issue: <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/11/20/how-can-we-prevent-military-suicides/>. Then, become involved in a campaign to address this problem by writing a letter to the editor of your school or local newspaper, contacting your Congressman, or making a video, poster, or song about your findings that you can share with others to help work toward solutions.
4. Compare the experiences of soldiers in this film with sections of other fiction or nonfiction films. Suggestions for other films are *Born on the Fourth of July*, *Coming Home*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Gunner Palace*, *Restrepo*, *Iraq in Fragments*, and *Hell and Back Again*. As with any film you use in the classroom, be sure to preview any of the above films ahead of time since the material is often very graphic.

As you watch, note the conditions presented in the kids' current school and home life, by referring to details the filmmakers use (such as costumes, set designs, props, music, lighting, and other choices).

	Information Learned	Visuals Sound
Opening sequence		
0700 hr October 3, 2021		
4 hours earlier		
6 hours earlier		
19 hours earlier		
48 hours earlier		
79 hours earlier		
96 hours earlier		
Closing Sequence		

Futurestates

Predict-O-Meter

Log on to www.futurestates.tv. Go to the Predict-O-Meter. There are three rows of predictions. The row on the far left contains the predictions based on the *Futurestates* films, including *Gunny*. The center row consists of predictions submitted by viewers. The far right row contains dates of know events. For this activity, click on the green *Futurestates* predictions. The number that appears in each green square is the number of predictions related to the specified year. Be certain to scroll down to see all predictions for a given year. At the end of each prediction is the tag for the film associated with each prediction. Find as many predictions as you can for the *Gunny* film. Choose three predictions to evaluate using the rubric below. When the assigned evaluations are finished, create at least one prediction of your own. Your prediction will be evaluated by another student. If the evaluation is at least a “3”, you may post it on the *Futurestates* website.

FILM: _____ YEAR: _____

PREDICTION: _____

KEY- No:1 Somewhat:2 Yes:3 Don't Know:4	VALUE
Is the prediction based on scientific possibilities?	
Do the consequences of the prediction support the film?	
Does the prediction directly lead to the next prediction?	
Do known events in the past support the prediction?	
Is this prediction plausible? (This is your opinion.)	
Overall Total: (add up the values)	
Score: (Overall Total ÷ 5)	

FILM: _____ YEAR: _____

PREDICTION: _____

KEY- No:1 Somewhat:2 Yes:3 Don't Know:4	VALUE
Is the prediction based on scientific possibilities?	
Do the consequences of the prediction support the film?	
Does the prediction directly lead to the next prediction?	
Do known events in the past support the prediction?	
Is this prediction plausible? (This is your opinion.)	
Overall Total: (add up the values)	
Score: (Overall Total ÷ 5)	

FILM: _____ **YEAR:** _____

PREDICTION: _____

KEY- No:1 Somewhat:2 Yes:3 Don't Know:4	VALUE
Is the prediction based on scientific possibilities?	
Do the consequences of the prediction support the film?	
Does the prediction directly lead to the next prediction?	
Do known events in the past support the prediction?	
Is this prediction plausible? (This is your opinion.)	
Overall Total: (add up the values)	
Score: (Overall Total ÷ 5)	

PERSONAL PREDICTION FOR _____ **(film name)**

NAME: _____ **EVALUATOR:** _____

FILM: _____ **YEAR:** _____

PREDICTION: _____

KEY- No:1 Somewhat:2 Yes:3 Don't Know:4	VALUE
Is the prediction based on scientific possibilities?	
Do the consequences of the prediction support the film?	
Does the prediction directly lead to the next prediction?	
Do known events in the past support the prediction?	
Is this prediction plausible? (This is your opinion.)	
Overall Total: (add up the values)	
Score: (Overall Total ÷ 5)	

Should this prediction be posted to the website? _____

Teacher's approval _____

Date posted _____

If not posted, explain the reason for declining.

CREDITS

CURRICULA WRITER

John Golden

John Golden is currently a curriculum specialist for high school Language Arts in Portland, Oregon. He is the author of *Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in the English Classroom* (NCTE, 2001) and *Reading in the Reel World: Teaching Documentaries and Other Nonfiction Texts* (NCTE, 2006). John has delivered presentations and led workshops around the country in order to help teachers use film actively in the classroom as a way for students to improve their reading, analytical and critical thinking skills.

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SCENES FROM FUTURE STATES FILMS.

TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM RIGHT: *Gunny* by Patrick Stettner, *Advantageous* by Jennifer Phang, *Asparagus* by Robby Henson, *Laura Keller-NB* by Mo Perkins, and *Worker Drone* by Sharat Raju

