

Competition Theme & Storytelling Challenge

Building Bridges: Stories That Connect Us

What does “building bridges” mean?

Building bridges means creating understanding across divides — not just between people, but also between cultures, generations, histories, ideas, and even parts of yourself. It’s about finding connection where there might be distance or difference: in beliefs, experiences, geography, language, time, etc. Great stories — and great films — help us step into other perspectives, spark empathy, and imagine a future where connection is possible, even across barriers we once thought were too big.

Your Challenge:

Create a short film that explores what **building bridges** means to you. Your film can be inspired by something personal — a moment from your life, your family’s journey, your school, or your community. Or it can be entirely imagined.

Guiding Questions to Spark Your Story

1. Where have you seen bridges being built?

Think about moments in your school, family, city, or even online when people tried to understand each other across differences — like race, religion, culture, language, or politics. What worked? What didn’t?

2. Who in your life has changed how you see the world?

Has a friendship, conversation, or unexpected relationship helped you see things differently? What did it teach you about connection?

3. What does it mean to tell someone else’s story — or your own?

Have you ever shared someone else’s experience — or had someone else try to tell yours? What responsibilities come with being a storyteller? What makes a story feel honest and respectful?

4. How do you connect to stories from other times or places?

Think about a film or documentary you’ve watched in school. What helped you relate to it — even if it was about a different time, place, or experience?

5. How can you get creative in how you tell your story?

Would animation, music, documentary clips, spoken word, or fiction help you express your message in a powerful way? What format helps you say what you really want to say?

Creative Ingredients:

Choose **at least two** of the following ingredients to include in your film. Think of them as sparks — tools to add meaning, imagination, and personal voice to your story.

1. **Something personal or cultural**

Represent an object, sound, place, or tradition that's meaningful to a group member's identity — maybe a recipe, a family story, a language, a holiday, a song, or something passed down through generations.

2. **A connection to a big theme from history or society**

What do your experiences echo or connect to? This could include:

- **Cultural Identity** – immigration, belonging, family roots, growing up between cultures, traditions.
- **Oppression & Discrimination** – breaking stereotypes, navigating bias, or overcoming barriers.
- **Power in the Collective** – standing up for what's right, finding common ground after conflict.

3. **A literary or storytelling element**

Use a storytelling tool to make your film more layered or symbolic. This could include:

- **Metaphor** – A comparison that shows how two unlike things are alike without using “like” or “as.” Show something abstract through something concrete.
- **Symbolism** – Using a person, object, image, or action to represent a bigger idea or theme.
- **Irony** – A contrast between what is expected and what actually happens, or when a character's words contradict reality. Can be used for humor, critique, or emotional impact.
- **Allegory** – A story that stands in for something else.
- **Rhetorical Questions** – Questions asked to provoke thought, not answers — often used in speeches, poems, or voiceover narration to challenge the viewer or underscore a theme.



Get Creative!

You don't have to tell a story in a traditional way. Your film can be:

- Poetic
- Surreal
- Funny
- Fictional
- Animated
- Or something totally unexpected

What matters most is that it explores **connection across difference** — and reflects **your unique voice**.

Rubric: Student Filmmaking Competition

Total: 100 points

1. Interpretation of the Theme – 40 points

How well does the film explore “Building Bridges” through story and representation?

Criteria	Points
Clarity & Depth of Theme – The film deeply explores connection across difference and offers insight into identity, conflict, or understanding.	15 ____
Use of Required Creative Ingredients – At least two elements are clearly and meaningfully included (e.g. cultural object, historical theme, literary device).	10 ____
Authenticity & Respect – Representation of at least two groups is thoughtful, relevant, and avoids stereotypes.	5 ____
Emotional or Narrative Impact – The story resonates emotionally or offers meaningful reflection.	5 ____
Evidence of Thought or Research – Demonstrates insight into culture, community, or history.	5 ____

2. Creativity & Originality – 30 points

How fresh, imaginative, and compelling is the film’s approach to its subject and storytelling?

Criteria	Points
Story Development & Dialogue – The narrative is engaging and well-paced; dialogue or narration feels purposeful.	10 ____
Creative Problem Solving – Resourceful or innovative solutions to technical or narrative challenges.	5 ____
Visual/Narrative Innovation – Introduces a fresh take or unique voice, even within familiar themes.	10 ____

Genre/Format Experimentation – Thoughtful use of creative forms such as animation, poetry, or mixed media. 5 ____

3. Technical Skill – 20 points

How well are the film's visuals, sound, and editing executed to support the story?

Criteria	Points
Cinematography & Editing – Visuals are intentional; editing enhances the story.	10 ____
Sound, Lighting, & Acting (if applicable) – Clear sound and lighting support storytelling; performances are believable.	5 ____
Cohesiveness & Polish – The final product feels complete and professionally presented.	5 ____

4. Production Management – 10 points (AJFF Internal Use)

Did the student/group meet production management expectations, with timely delivery and clear planning to support the final project?

Criteria	Points
Deliverables & Timeliness – All required production materials (script, storyboard, call sheets, production notes) were submitted in full and on schedule.	5 ____
Planning Alignment – Materials demonstrate foundational planning and alignment with the final film — showing that creative vision and logistics were considered in advance.	5 ____

Total: ____/100 points

Comments: