studentfilmmakers

FREE CLASSROOM KIT
FOR TEACHERS

Lesson plan: the 1-Minute Film Challenge, theme “Light”

For: high school and college · **Time:** one class period to plan, one week to shoot and edit · **Gear:** any camera or phone · **Teams:** 1 to 4 students

December 2026 theme: Light. Make a film of one minute or less about light. Sunlight through a window, a flashlight in the dark, the glow of a phone, a candle, a city at night. Show us light, or let light tell the story.

GOALS

- Tell a complete story with a beginning, middle and end in 60 seconds or less.
- Use light on purpose: to set a mood, show time of day, or move the story forward.
- Plan with a one-line idea and a simple shot list, then shoot and edit on any camera or phone.
- Give and receive kind, useful feedback, and share the finished film with a real audience.

WARM-UP

Light hunt. In pairs, students film the same face for 5 seconds under three light sources (window, ceiling light, phone screen) and compare: warm, cold, scary or hopeful? Then darken the room and try one phone flashlight from the side, from below and from behind.

SHOOTING TIPS: LIGHT

- **Window light** is free and beautiful. Face the window for soft light; turn sideways to it for drama.
- **Golden hour** (the hour after sunrise and before sunset) gives warm, long shadows.
- **Practical lights** in the shot (lamps, candles, screens, string lights) make a scene feel real.
- **Silhouette:** put the subject in front of a bright window or sky and expose for the background.
- **Shadows tell stories too.** Light from below feels spooky; from one side, mysterious.
- **Lock exposure on a phone:** press and hold on the subject, then slide the sun icon down so bright areas stay detailed.
- **Bounce light** with white poster board or paper to fill in dark faces.
- **Mix colors on purpose:** warm lamps and blue daylight together look odd unless you mean it.

SHARING AND FEEDBACK

Screen each film, then use "Glow and Grow": every viewer names one thing that shines and one thing to try next time. Keep it about the film, not the person. Enter the films and invite families to watch the gallery and like their favorites for the Audience Award.

THE 60-SECOND STRUCTURE

0 to 10 s	**Hook:** Open on a striking image. Show the light right away.
10 to 45 s	**Change:** Something happens. A character wants something, or the light changes and the story turns.
45 to 60 s	**Ending:** Land it with one strong final image. A surprise or a quiet moment both work.

A short title and credits don't count toward the 60 seconds.

CLASS PLAN

10 min	Warm-up
10 min	Watch 2 or 3 one-minute films; name what the light is doing.
20 min	Teams write a one-line idea and a shot list of 6 to 10 shots.
5 min	Share ideas and set the shoot date.
Week	Shoot and edit. Day 2: screen in class, then enter.

GRADING CHECKLIST

Score each line 0, 1 or 2.

☐ 60 seconds or less, plus title and credits	__ / 2
☐ The theme "Light" is clear	__ / 2
☐ One or more lighting choices made on purpose	__ / 2
☐ Clear beginning, middle and end	__ / 2
☐ Steady, well-framed shots	__ / 2
☐ Clean sound; music used with permission	__ / 2
☐ Title and credits name the team	__ / 2
☐ Finished and entered on time	__ / 2
Total	**__ / 16**

Free to enter. Deadline December 31, 2026, 11:59 pm ET. Winners January 8, 2027. Ages 13+.

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