


REVIEW

The end, the beginning

Directed by: Archie Chew, 2020, 15 minutes.

<https://www.facebook.com/tetbfilm/>

<https://iview.abc.net.au/show/end-the-beginning/video/ZW3145A001S00>

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The future is a foreign country: we must do things differently there. There is an endless stream of dystopian (and occasionally utopian) novels and films. How are we to induct our students into thinking creatively and critically and optimistically about their futures? One way is through watching and discussing, then planning and making short films. Short films are particularly useful in the classroom since they can be easily shown and discussed as part of a lesson, and they are within the capabilities of students.

Film schools provide a source of some of the most inventive filmmaking and this humorous short film, *The End, The Beginning*, from Archie Chew, Alicia Easaw-Mamutilil, and Sam Herriman of the Australian Film, Television, and Radio School is a great example. This 15-minute film uses many of the techniques which are available to students to project themselves into the future: narrative, art, drama, voiceover, humour, models, and diagrams.

With a charming mix of cartoonish live action, models of the town, sardonic voiceover, and hand-drawn diagrams, in a quick moving drama, this film tackles some of the big issues confronting young people in the Anthropocene: with a depiction of young people taking action against the evils of corporate exploitation and environmental destruction with wit and optimism. It also provides a model to inspire your students to make their own videos as part of their activism.

The film starts with one of the consequences of our environmental choices (polluted air); imagines a response (selling clear plastic tents to enclose individual houses, Figure 1); projects the consequences (social isolation — separation of friends and family); and turns it into a narrative, the ‘Renegade Ecology Group’ played by Aria Ferris, Katherine Shearer, Ajila Gersbach, Tapi Matenda, who fight against it.

We start in a paddock with Skye (Aria Ferris) sitting on a barrel with her boyfriend Gregory (Finn Dunne). Gregory is breaking up with her because his dad (Greg Poppleton) is enclosing their house in a plastic tent. In the background the Air Toxicity Rating is Extreme (a hand-painted sign) and a cow dies (two farmers either side of a toppled model cow). We are introduced to Skye’s father (Sean Lynch) who is the villain, selling the ‘Sustainatent’, a plastic tent which encloses individual houses: ‘Hello there, my name is Tim Winter, do you have a few moments to talk about the end of the world?’ The film evokes the enclosed life by placing a piece of clear plastic between the camera and the enclosed house where people are going about normal suburban activities: mowing the lawn, kicking a ball, lying on a deckchair. Skye joins the ‘Renegade Ecology Group’, four girls who scheme to sabotage the enclosures but are defeated. Skye is separated from Gregory and her



Figure 1. 'Sustainatent', enclosing individual houses (Chew, 2020).

beloved grandmother (Jo Briant), but the film ends on a hopeful note with father and daughter escaping to reconcile on the beach.

This film is a great provocation to initiate discussion on our response to the current environmental crisis; to think about social isolation and family relationships, and to inspire students to respond to challenges they face creatively and hopefully using humour, narrative, live action, stop motion and animation. It is also great fun.

Reference

Chew, A. (2020). The end, the beginning ABC.

John Cripps Clark teaches primary science and technology and physics to pre-service teachers and has developed programmes to teach STEM and Physics to out-of-field in-service teachers. He works with colleagues in Canada and South Africa to develop online pedagogies and digital resources to teach science. He researches school gardens and Vygotsky and runs a Cultural Historical & Activity Theory reading group and the Film-Education-Philosophy group.