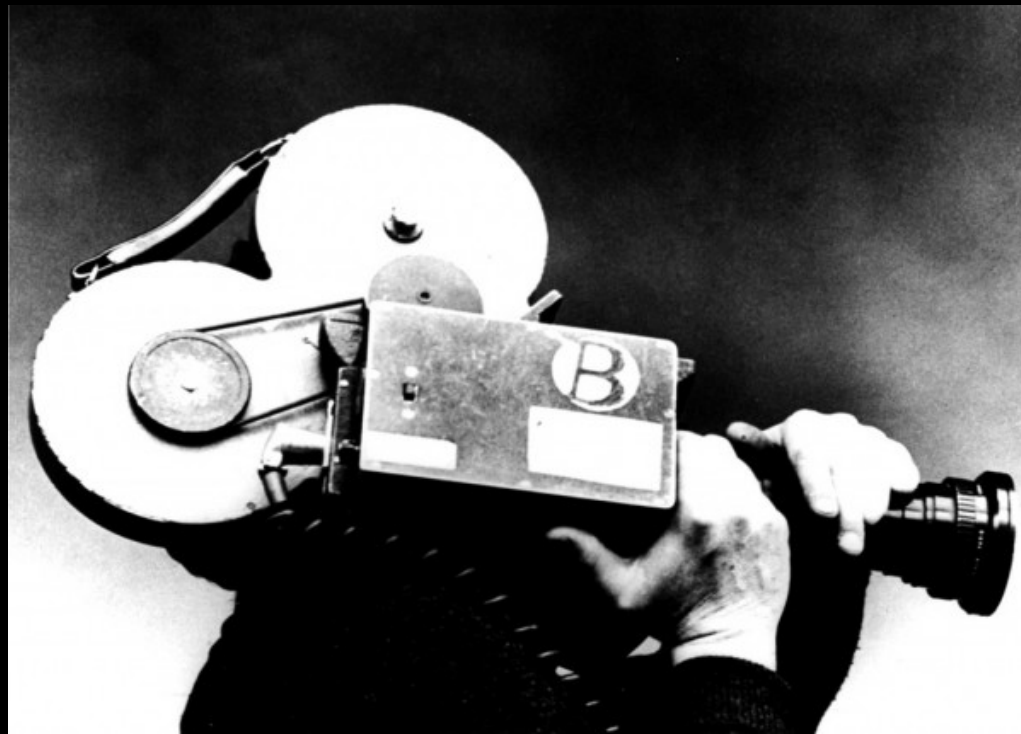


Notes 4: History of the Documentary Film



MODES OF DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING:

(1) EXPOSITORY

- **The expository mode addresses the viewer directly, with titles or voices that advance an argument about the historical world**
- **The expository mode raises ethical questions of voice: of how the text speaks objectively or persuasively (or as an instrument of propaganda)**

MODES OF DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING:

(1) EXPOSITORY

- **Emphasis is placed on the impression of objectivity and of well-substantiated judgment. This is often done via an unseen “voice of God” narration or an on-camera voice of authority that speaks on behalf of the text**
- **The viewer will typically expect the expository text to take shape around the solution to a problem or puzzle: presenting the news of the day, exploring the workings of the universe, tracing the history of an event or the biography of a person, etc**

EXAMPLES OF EXPOSITORY DOCUMENTARIES

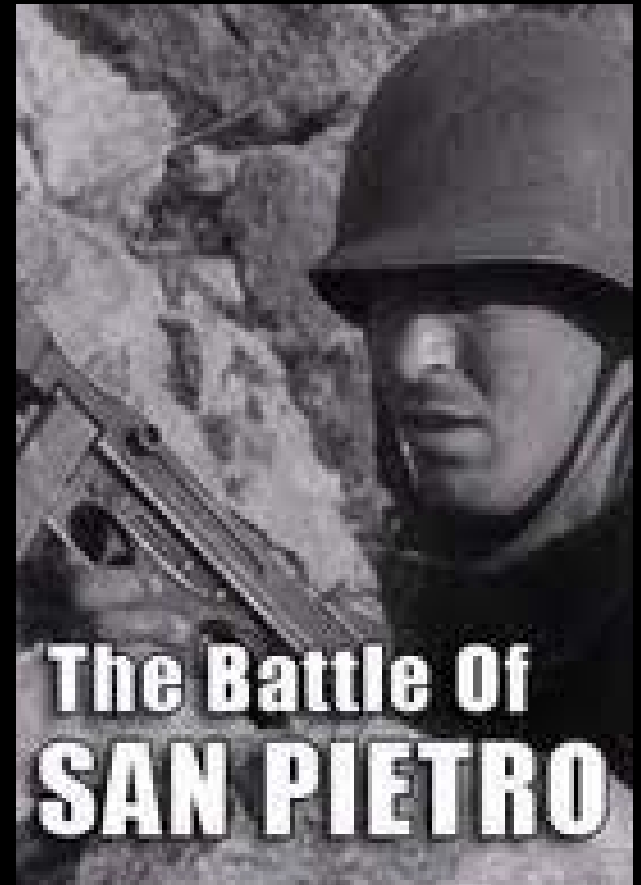


The Plow That Broke the Plains (Lorentz, 1936) Week 6

EXAMPLES OF EXPOSITORY DOCUMENTARIES



"Why We Fight" Series—*Prelude to War* (Capra, 1942)



The Battle of San Pietro
(Huston, 1945)

Both films—Week 8

EXAMPLES OF EXPOSITORY DOCUMENTARIES



Harvest of Shame (Murrow, CBS, 1960)
Week 10

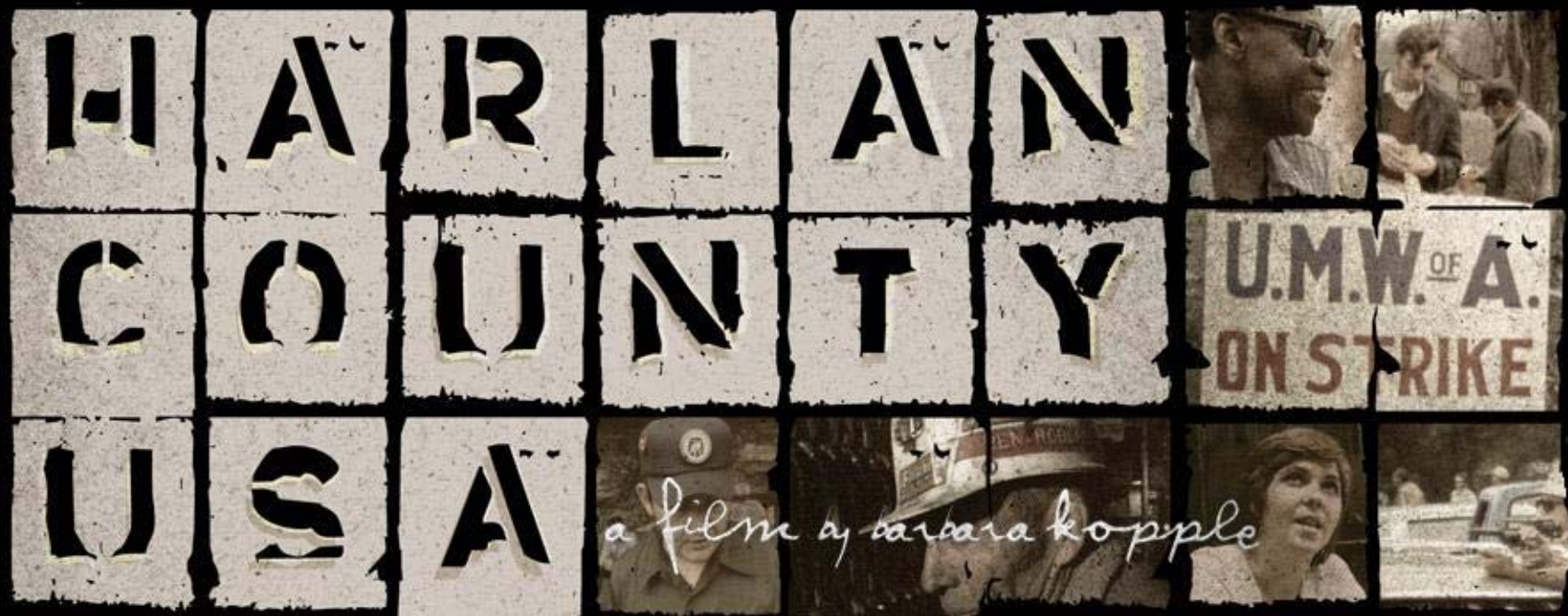
PROHIBITION

A FILM BY KEN BURNS & LYNN NOVICK



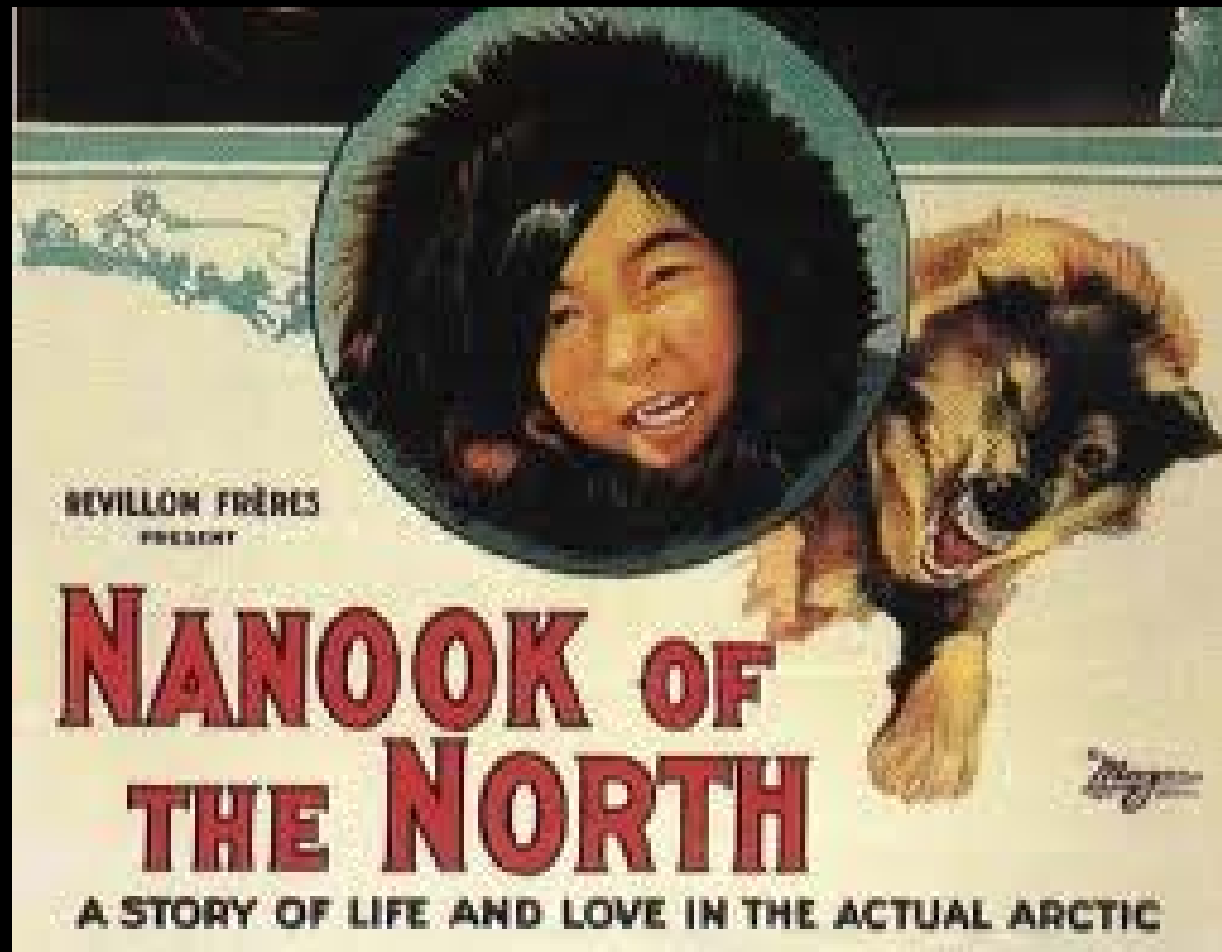
Prohibition (Burns, 2011)
Week 12

EXAMPLES OF EXPOSITORY DOCUMENTARIES



Harlan County U.S.A. (Kopple, 1976)

EXAMPLES OF EXPOSITORY DOCUMENTARIES



Nanook of the North (Flaherty, 1922)

Week 2

Robert J. Flaherty (1884-1951)



Robert J. Flaherty

- First American filmmaker to produce a feature length documentary, *Nanook of the North* (1922)
- Often dubbed the father of documentary filmmaking
- Began his career as an explorer/pro prospector

Robert J. Flaherty (1884-1951)



Robert J. Flaherty

- 1910—hired by Canadian railroad builder William Mackenzie to explore the east coast of the Hudson Bay—a journey that would introduce him to the Eskimos of the region

Robert J. Flaherty (1884-1951)



Robert J. Flaherty

- Between 1910 and 1912 Flaherty made 2 explorations of the islands of the eastern Hudson Bay. Traveling by foot, by sled and by canoe he mapped the region (one of the Belcher Islands is now named for him), took still photographs and got to know the native Eskimos.

Road to *Nanook*



Robert Flaherty with 'Nyla'

- 1913—Flaherty sets off on his third journey and brings along a Bell & Howell motion picture camera and films more than 17 hours worth of footage
- When he returned from his travels, Flaherty made one print of the footage in Toronto, but accidentally dropped a cigarette and burned the nitrate negative—only an unedited print survived
- 1920—John Revillon of Revillon Frères (a fur company) agrees to financially back Flaherty's film and expedition in the Hudson Bay

Road to *Nanook* (continued)

- 1921—Flaherty completes *Nanook of the North* and begins to look for a distributor in NYC. Every major American distribution company turns him down. Pathe Exchange agrees to distribute the film.
- June 11, 1922—*Nanook* debuts at the Capitol Theater in NYC. Although it was not the first documentary, or even the first film shot on location with non-actors, it was the first of its kind to receive mass popularity and critical acclaim.
- *Nanook* tells the story of the Eskimos' (Inuits') struggle to survive under almost unimaginably severe Arctic conditions. Flaherty recorded the everyday life of Nanook and his family who did what they normally would have done if the camera had not been there.



Nanook of the North (1922)