

MDMN 223 – Cynematography Class Project
| Spring Term 2024
| Hartland College

project breakdown

Math Test – A Short Film by Laura

Pre-production

Phase 1 Assignmnets

Brainstorming and Selection of a Short Film Concept

Research & Inspiration

Story Script Writing

Screenplay Writing

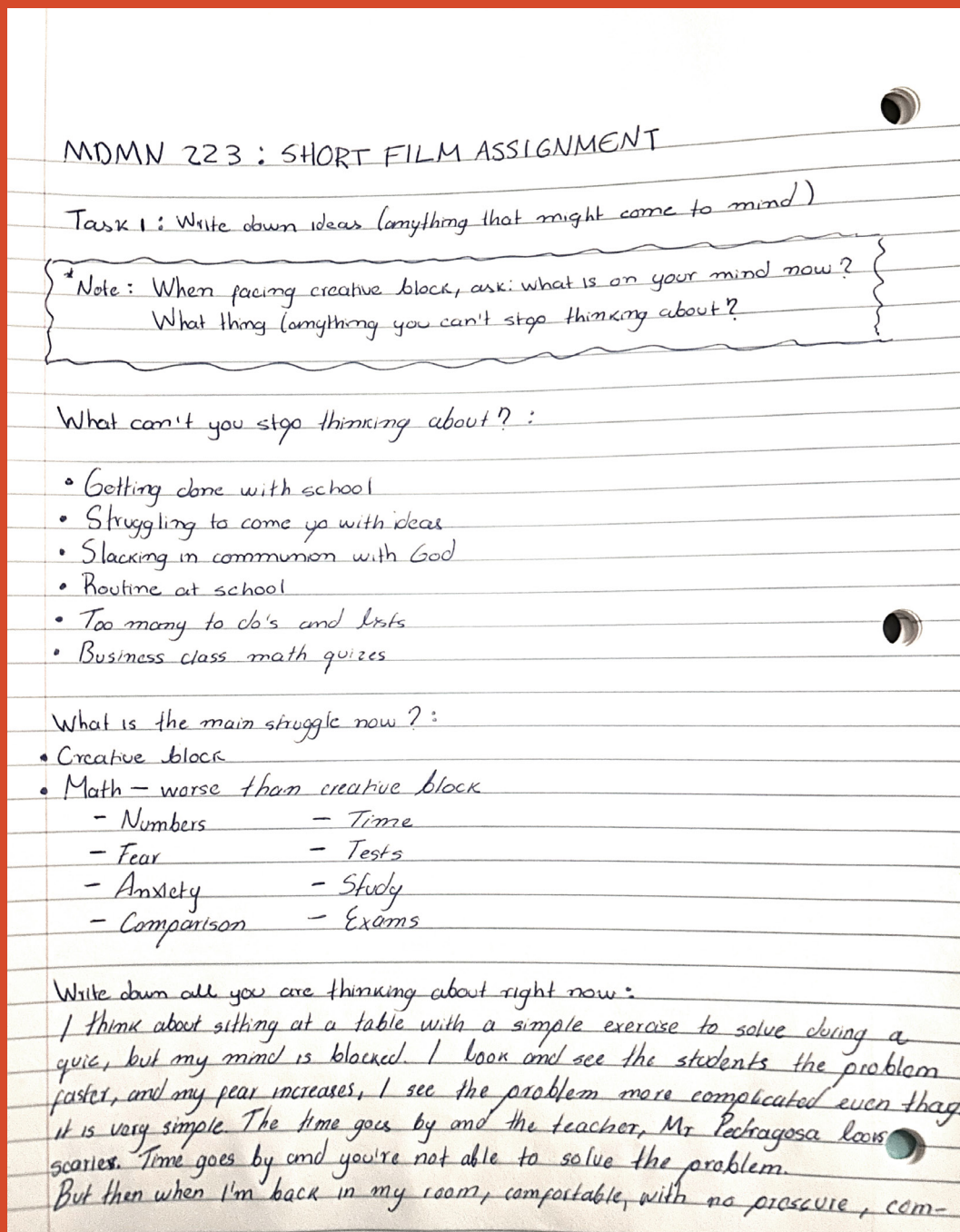
Peer Review & Script Breakdown

Visual Developement

Preproduction planning

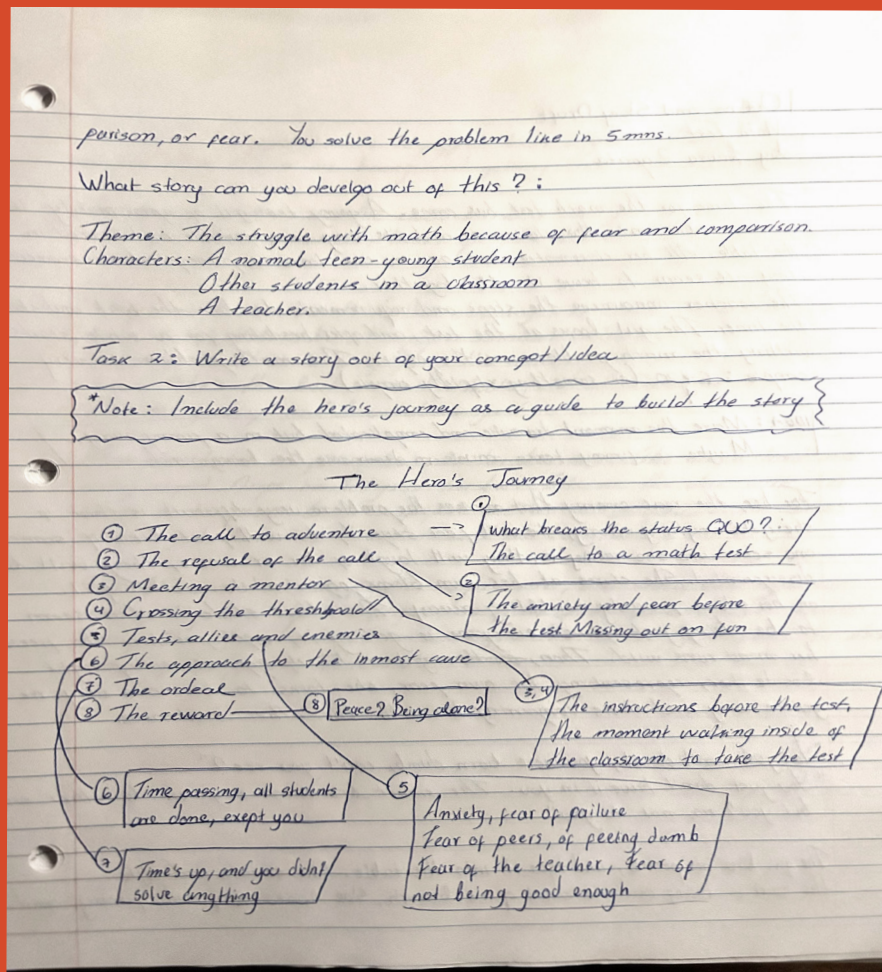
- **Crew Selection & actors**
- **Behind the scenes**

Brainstorming and Selection of a Short Film Concept



This short film was inspired by my personal experience with mental blocks during math exams. At the time of producing the video, I was focused primarily on a math class I was at risk of failing, and couldn't think about many other things. Since I was struggling to be creative, I decided to translate my experience and feelings into the film.

Research & Inspiration



The primary inspiration for this short film came from my own expressions and the mental and physiological responses I experience when feeling anxious during or before a test.

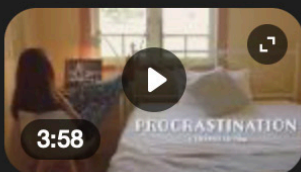
The short film *Procrastination*, by Tyfanny Lu, videomaker and influencer, helped me inspire and develop the approach of depicting mental blocks through facial and hand expressions.



YouTube · Tiffany Lu

Más de 1 M vistas · hace 5 años

Procrastination | Short Film



I was going to write a logline, but I procrastinated... :p Written, filmed, and edited by Tiffany Lu. Check out my website for more work!

Story Script writing

The initial outline of this story differs significantly from the final screenplay. The narrative evolved through peer review sessions to make it more adaptable for the screen, while retaining its core messages and remaining approximately 95% faithful to real events. The remaining 5% reflects changes made to consolidate multiple thoughts into single scenes that effectively represent them.

1 Outline and Story Draft
Math Test
by Loura Zapata

The time for the math test has come. A young teen girl of approximately 16 years walks into the classroom and sits very uncomfortable and scared in the table. All her classmates look ok, no one looks as preoccupied or scared. They all seem to have it all together.

The teacher announces the steps and requirements to take the test and starts the timer. The girl looks at the test, and after hesitating for a while, starts writing the math problem on the paper. The math problem is very simple: $6 + 30$ (or something stupidly simple)

IDEA: Make this moment dramatic and complicated but in a funny way. /
Maybe a funny tense music in dramatic the background

For her, the real enemy that makes the problem very difficult is that if she gets anything wrong, she will feel stupid, she will feel like if someone sees who she really is, they will laugh of her or worse, they will be disappointed. She stares at her own blank paper while another girl on her side is furiously scribbling away. The other students also seem to be doing just fine. everyone is getting it, except for her. She freezes, her mind runs wild. Then, ~~another girl~~ herself appears sitting right beside her, representing her own fear, she talks to her in a very negative way and starts comparing her with the other sentences.

"You just can't do it, you were born dumb, can't you see?"

"You just don't have it in you. The smart brains were given to other kids, but you? no, not to you."

The girl bites her pencil, and taps it into the table. She sweats and sighs. Her heart is racing and she can't quite breathe. She looks confused, funny and

Screenplay & Script Breakdown

[MEMN 223 CYNEMATOGRAPHY ASS III]

Math test

By Laura Z. Castrillon

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(For FREE professional screenwriting software check out [StudioBinder.com](#))

FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

The sound of laughter and a tennis ball hitting the racket fills the place.
A group of STUDENTS play tennis on the outdoor courts - energetic, carefree.
Two girls talk to each other as they stand up, laughing and with excited faces.
Not far away, on the edge of the yard, YETZLEY (16) sits hunched in a quiet corner, her back against the wall of the building.
Her notebook rests on her knees, filled with messy math problems.
She chews her pencil, eyes darting nervously across the page.
One of the TENNIS PLAYERS notices her and calls out:

TENNIS PLAYER
Hey, Yetzley! Come play with us!

Yetzley forces a weak smile.

Yetzley
I can't. I have to study for the test.
I need to pass.

The player shrugs and goes back to the game.
The others laugh and keep playing, carefree and confident.

Yetzley lowers her head again, scribbling numbers in desperation.

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The SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

The tennis game breaks up. Students gather their bags and head inside - cheerful, joking, confident.

Yetzley closes her notebook with a sigh.
She shoves it into her backpack, rises to her feet.

Clutching the bag to her chest, she follows the others toward the building.
Her shoulders are hunched, her steps heavy, her face anxious.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The confident students file in first, chatting and smiling as they find their seats.

Yetzley walks in among the last. She keeps her backpack in front of her like a shield.
Her body language is small, nervous, out of place.

She slips into a seat quietly and with a tensed expression, looking at the teacher who is standing in front of the class.

TEACHER
Good morning, students. Today you have a math test. So please put everything aside, except for the paper I have already placed on your desk. Remember, this test is worth 20% of your grade.
You have thirty minutes to take. Are you ready?
3, 2, 1, start.

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Script Breakdown

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set 1

set 2

The room falls silent except for the ticking clock.
Yetzley stares down at the test paper:

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Students around her scribble quickly, confident.
One GIRL beside her is furiously writing, smiling to herself.

Our Girl freezes.
Her breath quickens.
The paper seems to stare back at her while.

DRAMATIC MUSIC swells.

She bites her pencil. Taps it against the table.
She fills her paper with scattered equations and random symbols - nonsense.

Her mind runs wild:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Yetzley stares at her blank paper. Her pencil hovers but doesn't move.
The ticking clock grows louder.

(For FREE professional screenwriting software check out [StudioBinder.com](#))

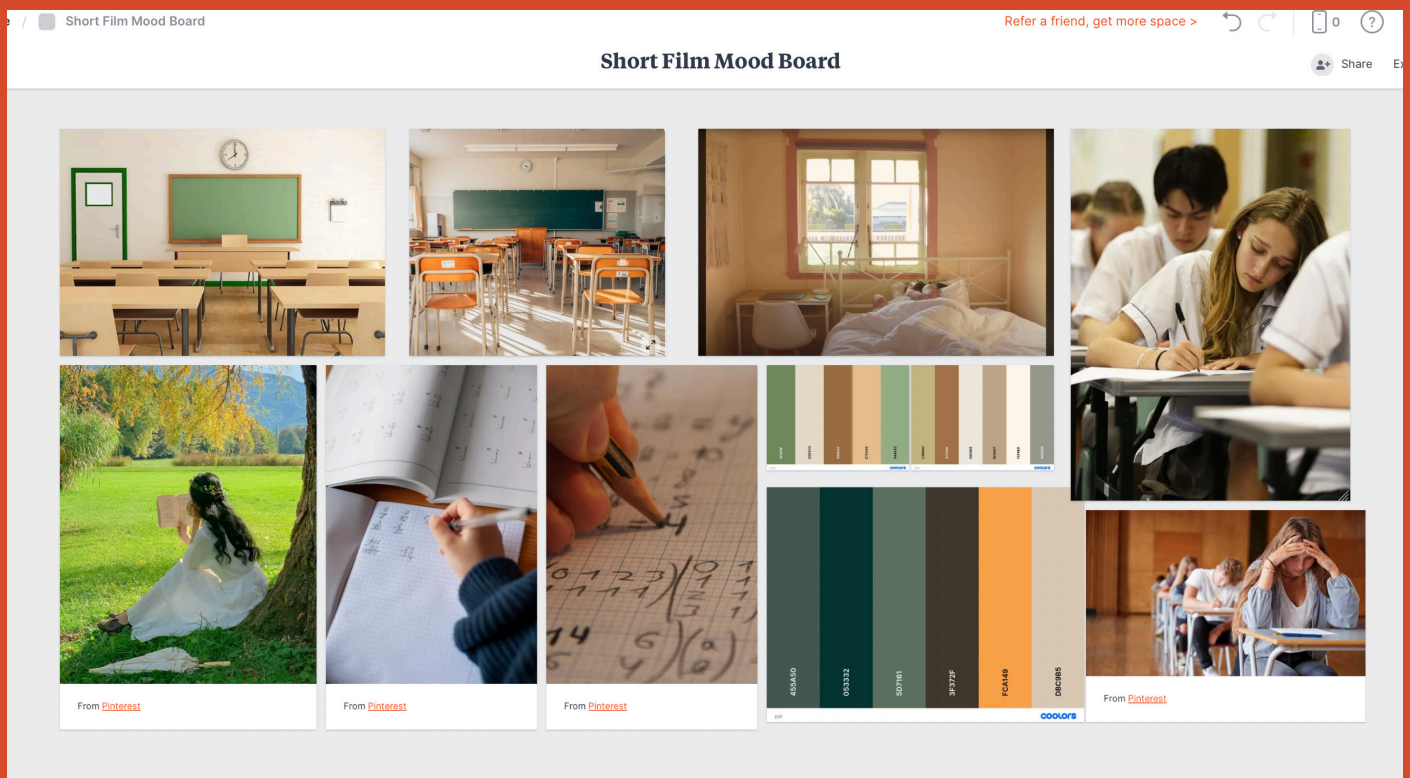
set 2

Visual Development

Inspiration Moodboard

This inspiration moodboard was created considering the only available locations I had for shooting, these colors and style would work better since I could not design a set. The colors and inspiration shifted and changed a little due to limited props, locations and shooting times. I had to adapt to what I had available.

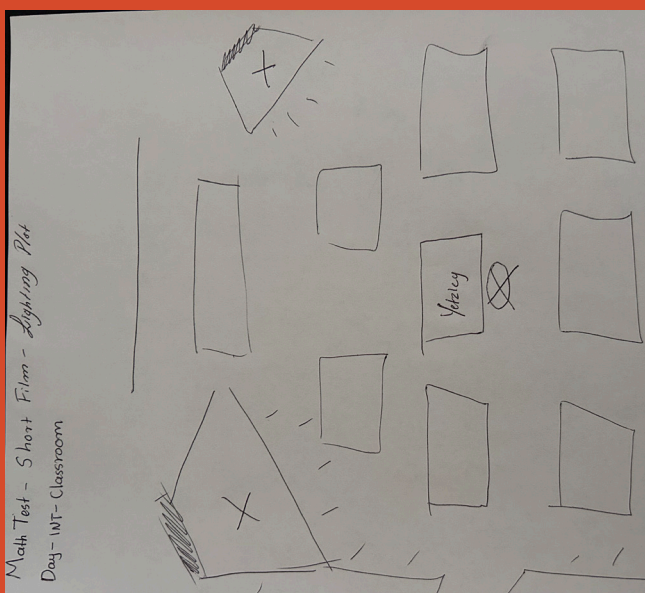
The environment I was working with was dominated by warm colors, so I adapted my approach accordingly, even though I would have preferred cooler, darker tones for the classroom scene. I embraced the warmer palette, and for the final scene, in order to convey a greater sense of calm, I chose to place the character outdoors under a tree in a peaceful setting rather than in her bedroom, as originally planned.



Visual Development

Location scouting and basic lighting plots

This short film was recorded at Hartland's academy classroom. This is a one classroom academy where only the staff member teens study. It was the best place available to record since the actors which were Hartland's highschoolers and they gave me only 4 hours to shoot my entire video.



Pre Production Planning

Crew (Hartland cinematography class peers assisted):

Producer: Laura Zapata

Writer: Laura Zapata

Director: Laura Zapata

Cynematographer: Laura Zapata (Main)

Cynematography and lighting assistants: Jason Tshuma, Marc E Cooker

Audio: Olesya S.

Post-Production: Laura Z.

Actors

This film was made with the resources I had at hand — friends who generously agreed to act, and the locations they could provide.

Shooting crew



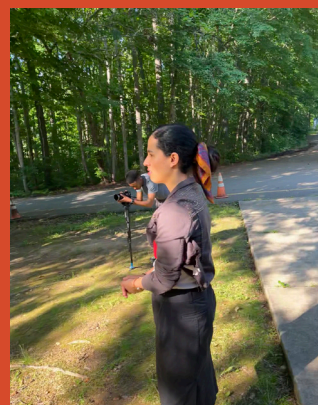
Friends who volunteered to act



Production

Phase 2 Assignmnets: Shooting

**Behind the Scenes:
shooting against time**



Set 1: Highschool Outdoors, pre-test anxiety

Some of the final shots

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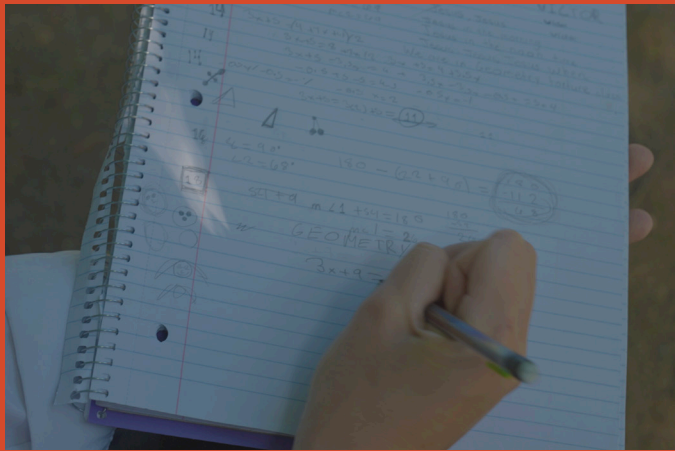
TENNIS PLAYER

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Yetzley forces a weak smile.

Yetzley

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Set 2: The Test

Some shots

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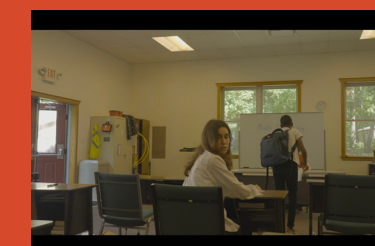
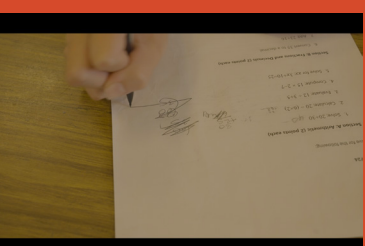
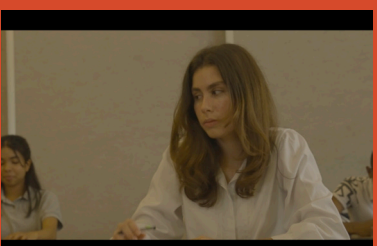
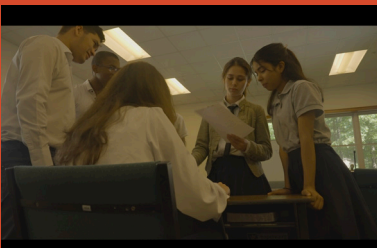
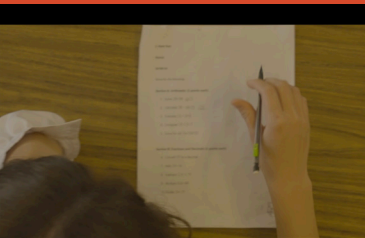
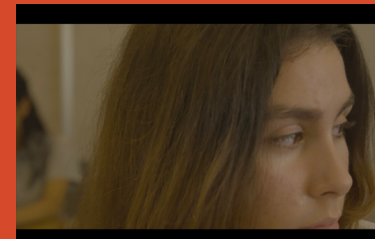
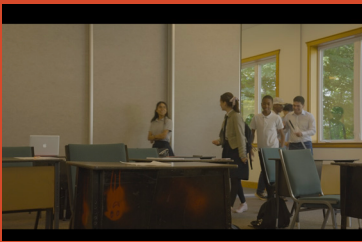
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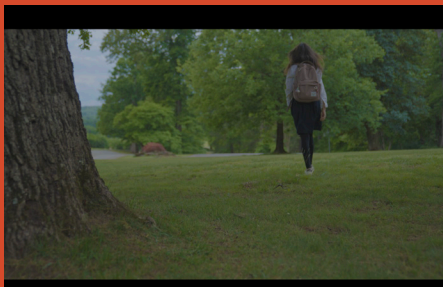
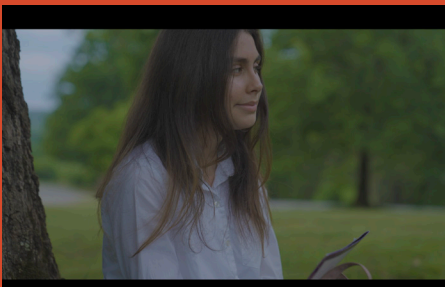
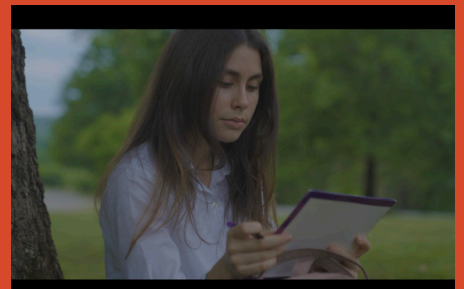
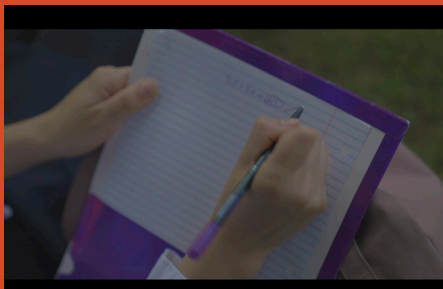
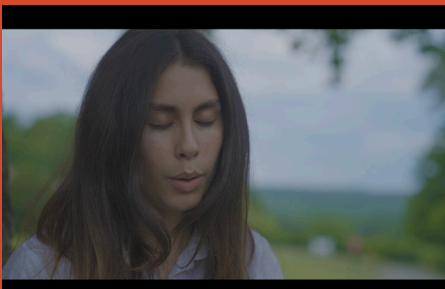
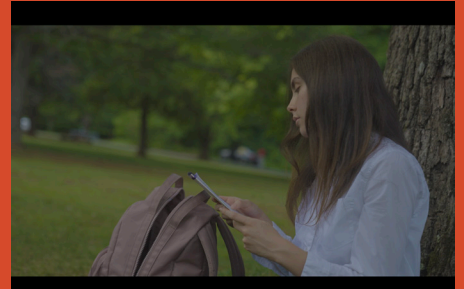
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Set 3: Finally at Peace



Challenges & Script Changes

The main challenge I faced while creating this short film was that it was my first filmmaking experience, making the entire process completely new territory for me. Beyond that, the greatest difficulty was time. I had less than four hours to complete the shoot, as it took place during final exam week when most people were unavailable to spend long hours repeating shoots.

This film was made with the resources I had at hand — friends who generously agreed to act, and the locations they could provide. The script was revised several times to adapt to these constraints. Because of the limited schedule and constant transitions between classes and exams, I couldn't capture as much coverage as planned. I also only had access to a single camera, which naturally limited the range of shots I could achieve.

Post-production snippet